

THE RIGHT GOSPEL.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY

MR. JAMES WELLS,

(OF THE SURREY TABERNACLE,) IN

ST. JAMES'S HALL, PICCADILLY,

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“He shall have judgment without mercy that hath showed no mercy ; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.” James ii. 13.

THE apostle in the commencement of this chapter reminds the persons to whom he is writing, that religion is founded on an incorruptable and eternal principle ; and therefore he exhorts them to have the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ—in no respect of persons—but that their faith shall be founded not on the opinion of men, not on persons, but on principles. We have seen in the Old Testament age, the Jews perpetually bringing themselves into captivity to other nations, by following persons instead of principles: when they had men who led the people right, the people went right; when an idolatrous king arose, the people followed him. The various erroneous systems of the present day originate in men following persons instead of principles. If you ask me, what these principles are to which I refer, I will tell you, that there are two principles which form the foundation, the very essence, of real religion. But men begin with these

principles at the wrong end. The two principles are these: (1,) "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy might." That is the first principle, love to God, which is manifested no where, but in Christ Jesus the Lord. But amongst men, we find those who have got hold of the second principle; and if you talk to these on the subject they will declare to you, "I have never wronged any one seriously, and I forgive those who have wronged me. I have done as well as I could towards my fellow creatures, and there I hope the matter will rest." But this is only the second principle of the law, you must have the first principle of love to God. Do you ask, how is that brought into the soul? When a man is brought to feel the principle of everlasting love, as revealed in Jesus Christ, then he receives the Lord in his salvation relations, which to this man becomes a principle. We prize a man of principle; and this principle of love to God becomes the motive of action towards God; and out of this love towards God, arises the second principle of love towards man, "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

The second principle, however, will not avail us without the first. There are indeed the two extremes—there is the direful and righteous wrath of God, as revealed by his eternal law, and till a man is brought to see the terrors of that law and to tremble, he will not seek to escape from it. But when he sees and knows something of what stands against him as

a sinner, his concern will be to find out a way of escape. The Philippian Jailor trembled at his position ; and that was his lost condition, and this made him to exclaim, "What must I do to be saved?"—to escape from this eternal wrath—to be brought to the love of God? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved!" said the apostle. The Lord brought the jailor into a state of mind which made room in his heart for the truths of the gospel, so that he would be glad to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, who redeemed him from the curse of the law, who has met all the demands of the law and justice, in whom "mercy and truth have met together ; righteousness and peace have embraced each other."

Your religion must depend on a principle, all principle depends on God, so that your faith stands not on the wisdom of man but on the power of God ; so that having this fellowship with God, this love to God, you can afford to be kind to your fellow-creatures, because it is grace which makes one to man differ from another. We high doctrine people (for we are high doctrine people, and are not ashamed of it, but glory in it,) we high doctrine people are the last people in the world who ought to be persecutors, or angry with others because they do not see as we do. "Who maketh thee to differ ; and what hast thou that thou hast not received?"

Before I commence my sermon—for I have not commenced it yet—I tell you plainly, and speak the truth in love, that my desire in coming to

this place this evening is, that those who know not the truth, may be brought, (if it is the Lord's will,) to feel concerned about their state; so that on retiring from this Hall, you may feel you have heard that Bible truth which will meet you at the judgment seat! I pray that that may be the case. This is one thing, I have in view; and another is that those who are wavering between truth and error, where the Lord has already begun to rend the veil of ignorance, may rend it still further, and bring them into the glorious light of the Gospel. I wish also to speak the word of truth to those who know the truth; and another end I have in view is to get all the money I can for "*The Christian Blind Relief Society.*"

I shall try (1,) to describe to you how that mercy is obtained and frees us from condemnation. I shall (2,) describe to you the character which shall have judgment without mercy; and (3,) the triumph of mercy over everything antagonistic to it: "Mercy rejoiceth against judgment."

First, then, some shall obtain mercy without judgment,—without condemnation; that is, mercy which shall free them from condemnation; I shall lay several points before you—for I do like points—something definite—and I shall tell you my first point at once; it is this, that in order to obtain mercy, to be free from condemnation, you must be brought into the bond of God's covenant—a covenant sealed by the blood of Jesus Christ. No man was ever yet saved without being brought there, or ever will be.

Having made that assertion, I shall now come to the proof of it: those for whom the Lord intends mercy; he causes to feel that they are guilty—without Christ, without God; and, he makes them what the Scriptures call “hunger and thirst after righteousness”—“Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.” The poor sinner feels himself destitute of righteousness, and he listens to the invitation—“Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price.” Some people think that this is a universal invitation—that it belongs to everybody—but do not let us dispute about that, let us ask a better question than that; the best question you can ask, is, “whether it belongs to *you*—whether *you* thirst for the waters of eternal life?” As a poor sinner, do you feel encouragement from such passages as this? When the woman of Samaria refused Jesus water, he said unto her—“If thou knowest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living waters.” What sayest thou to this? Whether it belongs to all, or not, is a matter of doctrine; the question is—does it belong to you? John saw “a river of water, as clear as crystal,” expressive of the purity of God’s truth; and every one that thirsteth; young and old, male and female, learned and unlearned; it matters not

what their lives and characters have been—a Mary Magdalene—the thief upon the cross—God says, “every one that thirsteth, and he that hath no money.” Till you feel you are destitute, you will not see your need of spiritual things, which, if they come at all, will come freely.

“Buy wine and milk, without money and without price.” The wine signifies, spiritually, the blood of the Everlasting Covenant—the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ; and the “milk” means “the sincere milk of the word,” as Peter expresses it.

We, who are in the presence of our Maker, here, this evening, must, in a very few years (all of us,) be in his eternal presence; and the question is, whether we are to be sharers in his mercy? Are we thirsting for his mercy? Are we looking to the God of mercy, or are we not? The great point for us is, whether this mercy belongs to us, or not.

“Wherefore spend ye your money for that which is not bread; for that which satisfieth not?” Why this wearing yourself out, to make yourself holy and righteous, whereas you are not able to do it? Come unto me, says Christ, ye who are trying to make yourselves holy, and I will be your holiness—your righteousness and your life.

And now what is the *remedy*? That which I just now suggested. How many are there here, who will sneer at this remedy? Who will have the daring, the blindness, the hardness, the ignorance inwardly to sneer at the remedy. What is the remedy?—“Hearken diligently unto me, and your soul shall live; 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.”

Amidst all the preaching in this great Metropolis, how little is known of God’s covenant! Yet, “the

secret of the Lord, (that is, the counsel of the Lord,) is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant."

This, then, is the first step towards obtaining mercy. Dream not of doing what is called "your part." If you have been tested by God's holy law, you will have felt that you can do nothing, and that nothing but the blood of the everlasting covenant can take your sins away. These are they who shall have mercy without judgment — that is, without condemnation, for "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

The second point to which you must be brought, is, that of the certainty of God's truth. "Let the wicked forsake his way." The word "Let," is God's imperative mood, and the meaning is, "the wicked SHALL forsake his way." "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" You cannot get rid of your sins, as Sampson broke his green withs; nor are your sins such a load that you can run away with them, as Sampson did the gates of Gaza. No! When you feel their guilt and burden, you will then groan, and acknowledge that nothing but an Almighty Burden-bearer, can bear such a burden as your's. "My iniquities have gone over my head and they are too heavy for me to bear." Ah, my friends, what a mercy it is that they were not too heavy for Christ—that his Almighty shoulders not only could, but did bear them! He has put away our sins, by the sacrifice of himself, "for he will abundantly pardon." This is what the poor sinner wants. Abundantly pardon, means three things:— (1) freely pardon, (2) fully pardon, and (3) that he will proportion pardons, or, as the margin reads "multiply" pardon. Who can help loving such a God as this? We are subject daily to infirmities,

and God multiplies pardon, till they become, in their accumulation, as numerous as the sands of the sea-shore; or, as the particles which compose the globe; or, as the stars which bespangle the firmament of heaven. In this way he glories in the greatness of his mercy. Is it sure that I shall obtain this pardon? Yes! If thou hast a sense of thy need of it—a heart to seek it, and a faith to believe the Lord's word concerning it. Hear what the Lord hath said: "As the heavens are high above the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts; for as the rain cometh down, and as the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." May God give you grace to try it, and you will find him true, as millions have found him true before, and as millions more, we trust, may find him true: "my word (he says, that is my word of mercy and of pardon,) shall not return unto me void." Point me out a single instance where God has sent his word, and it returned unto him void, without accomplishing the thing whereunto it was sent? When he sent it into the valley of dry bones, there was a great shaking, and they came together without human assistance, bone to bone, then the sinews, then the Lord clothed them with flesh, and covered them with skin, and breathed into them, and they stood on their feet an exceeding great army. It is just possible, looking at the methods of interment in the East, that there were many other corpses in the same grave were Lazarus was, and if Christ had directed his words as much to

others as he did to Lazarus, they would have come to life again, and enjoyed the sweet freedom—"Loose him and let him go!" This is the second point, without the certainty of this truth, do not dream that you can obtain mercy.

Perhaps some of you are saying—"that's your way:" yes, it is my way; but, it is my way, because it is God's way. I tried every other way, and could not find mercy anywhere else, nor will you. "He has saved us and called us, not according to our works, but according to his purposes and grace in Christ Jesus:" and again—"according to his mercy hath he saved us." It is mercy from first to last, but that mercy must be in accordance with holiness, law, justice, integrity and the solemn purposes of God: all this harmonises in Christ Jesus our Lord. This is point the second: first the bonds of the covenant; and secondly, the certainty of God's truth.

The third point to which you must come, is the New Covenant Paternity of the Most High. This is the last point in this part of my subject. Some people say—God is our Heavenly Father, and the Father of us all. This is the language of people generally, but let us look at it, friends. There is a great difference between God's creation paternity, and God's salvation paternity. That God is our Father, the Father of all our race, by creation, I freely admit; but, in that same creation, where he is the Father of us all, for one God has created us, there he is also a legislator, and he gave a law to Adam, and Adam violated that law, and we all sinned in Adam—we all died in Adam: and therefore, everything we had in God's creation paternity, we lost. What are our lives, but for the kind providence of God, in taking away ten thousand bitters, or rather overcoming them, and throwing many sweets into the cup of life: but

for this, we should have a very hell upon earth. Look at those countries, where our fellow creatures are living in a state of savageism; what is it, but a hell upon earth? And it is one of the greatest honours that England enjoys, that she has translated this blessed Book (the Bible,) into one-hundred and twenty-one different languages. Her mission has been great, and her achievements have been wonderful, in this respect: but, while we are thus sending the Scriptures abroad, let us not forget that we have sinners at home—that we have heathen at home, for what is an unbeliever but a heathen? Therefore, in the creation paternity, of the Most High, we have nothing but sin and death, condemnation and tribulation, anguish and woe, and that to all eternity. So much for God being the Father of us all.

But, there is another Fatherhood—a point that some of you would not come to for all the world; but you *must* come to it, if you will have mercy. I must now quote a Scripture, which we high doctrine people are accused of being too fond of quoting, but we don't quote it oftener than we are obliged: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, according as he has chosen,"—to choose, is to adopt, and therefore, adoption and election, though the words are different, the act in substance is the same—"he has chosen us in Christ, before the foundation of the world;" he has chosen to become our Father in Christ Jesus. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God naturally, and needed no act of adoption to make him the Son of God.

That unless your name is in the Lamb's book of Life, you must be cast into the lake of fire—the Lord has spoken thus to the people, who were his after the flesh,

(the Jews;) but we shall turn the words and accommodate them to those who are his spiritually: "Oh, Israel, return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity; take with you words and turn to the Lord; say unto him, take away all iniquity and receive us graciously." This referred to the apostacy from the true God; and as the whole human race apostatised from God, we are therefore by nature without hope, and without God in the world. Every man, therefore, and every woman by nature is an apostate from God. We stood, before the fall, in friendship and fellowship with God; but by the fall, we apostatised from him. "Return unto the Lord thy God; take with you words, and say unto him, take away all iniquity." On what ground? On the ground of his own promise! How is that iniquity taken away? First, by imputation; imputing it to his dear Son. Secondly, Christ has taken away our iniquities by the sacrifice of himself. Thirdly, the Holy Ghost puts it away, delivering us from this evil world, and unites us to the pure truth of God, and the glorious advantages of the everlasting gospel. "Ashur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses, neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy." My hearer, hast thou been brought to feel that thou darest not call God thy Father; that thou darest not call Christ thy Saviour; that thou darest not believe that he laid down his life for thee, the fatherless? The sinner must be brought to feel himself fatherless: to feel that God will not be your father only as he condescends and pleases to become so; that it lies entirely with him, and when the soul is brought to feel its orphan state, the Saviour says, "I will not leave you comfortless;" or, as the Greek

word has it, "I will not leave you orphans." I found you orphans, cut off in the first Adam; I found you without hope, without life, and without health; I found you in a low and ruined state; but I will not leave you in that state. No! I will bring you into this new covenant relationship with God as your Father, with "whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." These are they who shall have "mercy without judgment."

Brought into the bond of God's covenant; into the certainty of God's truth; into the sonship of Christ; into salvation paternity. Let us look at him a little further. In his dying hour. He dies in the Lord. There is no sin, no condemnation, there can then be nothing laid to his charge. When this man rises from the dead, he will have to give an account of himself, but not of his sinful self, but only of his christian self,—for Christ has given an account of his sinful self on Calvery's cross! At the judgement day, I shall give an account of my Christian self, and the account that I shall give will be this—it is already prepared! it is already written!—"unto him that loved me and gave himself for me, washed me from my sins in his own blood, to make me a king and a priest unto God!" We are to appear before the judgement seat of Christ, to give account of the deeds done in the body, not "good and bad," but "good or bad." Though you have charity, and give all your goods to feed the poor, though you give your body to be burned for some human system, yet without the love of the gospel, you are nothing. It must be faith in Christ, and if thou hast not this, thou wilt not die in the Lord; and not dying in the Lord, thou wilt have "judgement without mercy." Thou wilt have to give an account of thy sinful self, and a dark account it will be. Thou mayest make thyself appear fair be-

fore man : but all thy thoughts, and words, and actions are photographed in heaven, in God's eternal book, and thou wilt have to meet every one of them ! Oh ! then what praise must resound from the lips of him whose iniquities are blotted out, whose sins are pardoned ! " I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, and will not remember thy sins," he says. Look at the man seeking mercy, look at the position to which he is brought, look at him on his dying bed, look at him at the judgment day, and then behold him as cycles and cycles of ages roll along, glorious, triumphant, holy, happy, even as Christ himself !

" Religion what treasures untold
Reside in that heavenly word ;
More precious than silver and gold,
Or all that this earth can afford."

My next point, which I have partly anticipated, relates to him that shewed no mercy. There is no person in this assembly who would admit that he had " shewed no mercy." If you were all examined, you would all claim to have done some acts of kindness ; and so you would wrap it up, would you ? And so you would quiet yourselves, would you ? And so you would rest yourselves, would you ? But let me come to closer quarters with you. If you have shewn mercy it was only your duty to do so. Have you not read such a scripture as the following ? " He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward." Have you ever received a prophet kindly because he was a prophet ? Have you ever received a high-doctrine man ? " Oh, I don't like them," say you. Well, you would not shew him mercy, because he was a free-grace man. Then you will have " judgment without mercy." You have mercy on everything, but no mercy on Jesus Christ.

“Well, but,” you say, “these men are not Jesus Christ.” No, but they are members of him, and “he that offendeth (scandalizes or persecutes) one of these little ones that believeth in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.” If you are a lover of the brethren, you may shew your love in ten-thousand ways. The love of the brethren is one of the evidences of your being a Christian: “We know,” says one, “that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” Again, “He that receiveth a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man’s reward.” Perhaps you say, you do love righteous men because they are good; but this means a righteous man who feels himself to be a poor ungodly worm of the earth, a leper from top to toe. A righteous man is a man that feels there is nothing but badness belonging to him as a sinner. A righteous man worketh not to make himself righteous, for he knows it is no use, but he believes on him who justifies the ungodly, and that man’s faith is “accounted unto him for righteousness.” Do you like such a man as that? You say you “cannot go so far as that;” then you cannot go far enough. All the time the leper had a free place about him, the priest would not pronounce him clean, but as soon as the poor leper was a leper all over, the priest pronounced him clean. We must be brought to feel ourselves altogether unclean; that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. “Ah! these people who are thus justified,” you say, “I hate such people?” Then you will have “judgment without mercy.” As you show no mercy to the gospel, the gospel will shew no mercy to you. But I will not be needlessly unmerciful; still I must say this, that he that shall give a cup of cold water

to a disciple, because he is a disciple. By a disciple, I mean a learner, and I am only a learner myself. Many persons look on Christians and find fault with them, but I will tell you the plan to do away with all that. In the first place, the people of God are called "vessels of mercy;" and we are only in the process of being finished; we are only perhaps half finished, and what is ugly in us as vessels, is only by reason of our unfinished condition. You look at us on the judgment day, when we shall be raised up incorruptible, shining brighter than the most brilliant star in the firmament of heaven. Only a learner! You go into a school, and a particular boy appears a dunce, he knows it, but he is plodding along. We are all learners, and you prefer to notice our infirmities, and lose sight of the little we do know. You despise us, and rather give us a cup of hot water to kill us, than a cup of cold water to refresh us. "But he that gives a cup of cold water to a disciple, shall by no means lose his reward." You say perhaps, "I hate such people!" Then you will have "judgment without mercy." Cain shewed no mercy to Abel; he hated him for the truth's sake, therefore he had judgment without mercy. The ungodly world showed no mercy to Noah; it had judgment without mercy. Pharaoh showed no mercy to the Israelites, and he had judgment without mercy. The Jewish nation showed no mercy to Christ, and they had judgment without mercy. The Lord has terrible penalties in store. Jezebel would have shown no mercy, and she shall have judgment without mercy. Judas showed no mercy to Christ, and he shall have judgment without mercy. Showing mercy means what is done for the truth's sake.

I now come to the last idea. Mercy rejoicing against judgment. You will understand this in the

legal sense of the term—that is to say, that we are, all of us, by nature under the judgment of God; and the Lord Jesus Christ arrested that judgment, when he came to Calvary's cross, there was a kind of conflict which should prevail—Judgment with its sword of justice, or atoning power. “*It is finished!*” That was mercy rejoicing over judgment, and prevailing over everything which must for ever have destroyed us. I should rather prefer rendering this passage, “Rejoiced *over* judgment.” Let us take the Apostle Paul's illustration. He says: “The Law has no glory by reason of the glory which excelleth.” The law looses nothing by our justification, but gains eternal honour. Justice looses nothing by our sanctification, but gains eternal honour. Christ went to the end of hell, where we could not go; Christ reached the end of the penalty of sin, which we could never have done. Therefore, the warfare is accomplished, and mercy rejoices over judgment. Mercy is here justified, as if it should say, “Now that the Mediator has prevailed, I am so delighted to pardon the guilty, to save the lost, to clothe the naked, to heal the wounded, to enrich the poor, and to turn enemies into friends.” I am so delighted, that I am free to roll forth like a mighty tide, and gather up poor sinners, to waft them into God's presence! I rejoice therein! The Father, Son; and Holy Ghost rejoice therein!” It will be a scene of universal rejoicing to all eternity!—then mercy rejoiceth over judgement. That is one idea. I have two more, then I close.

The second is the experience of the true Christian. Saul of Tarsus is brought under judgment—trembling, he falls upon the ground, saying, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” Why was he kept so long as three days without sight? Why in order to make

that welcome to him which some of you hate! And what is that? Eternal election in Jesus Christ. There he laid three days, and could not help himself. Judgment prevailed over him. Presently Ananias came and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord God of our fathers hath chosen thee!" Did Saul say he hated that? No! Judgment had laid his sins upon himself—a burden with which he could not raise himself up. "God hath chosen thee!"—the Lord attended the word with power; he arose, and went his way. Where to? To college. Not he—he had been there three days. God put him to college; and that did more than Cheshunt, or Oxford, or Cambridge ever did yet; these places cram the brain, and make poor little things swell up with importance—but they never break the heart. Soul trouble was Saul's college: he conferred not with flesh and blood, but went immediately to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. Here mercy rejoiced over judgment. Up he rose—he cared not what he endured for such a God as this. But his experience will never save you. You also must be made to tremble. Thus saith the Lord, "to that man will I look who is of a poor and contrite spirit, and who trembleth at my word." If thou fearest the judgment of God, and art ready to look to Jesus, mercy like a mighty tide shall roll in and overflow the banks of thy sins; and, as the waters bore the ark over the highest mountains, so shalt thou be borne over the highest of thy sins, by the mercy of God which rejoiceth over judgment.

The last point is the judgment at the last day. Christ is omnipotent, and the whole globe is as nothing in his hands—no more than a grain of mustard seed would be in your's. By one display of his omnipotence, he will destroy this globe and

raise his unnumbered millions in the twinkling of an eye. Then will mercy rejoice over judgment! and then will burst forth that song, "O grave, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Thus shall mercy rejoice over judgment. In conclusion, the Apostle advises us, "Be ye, therefore, steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

This would be a very good text to preach another sermon from, if not too trying to your patience. But I shall now conclude by asking you to help "The Christian Blind Relief Society." There are 30,000 of our fellow-creatures in this country who are deprived of the precious gift of sight. This is a privation which is exceeding great. It is such a denial. I never heard of a blind man who succeeded very far in any profession, or in anything else, although some of them are very clever mechanics; others are somewhat learned—but they never become great men. "Why," say you, "was not Milton a great man?" That is no exception. He collected the materials by which he wrought up that great epic poem, which will go down to generations yet to come, while he was yet in possession of sight. If Milton had been blind from his birth, *Paradise Lost* would never have been on our tables. The object of this Society is to reach those who are Christian blind men and women. "Those of just your creed," say you. No such thing: but men and women of all denominations, whose characters will bear investigation. The object of this society is to sympathise with all such, and it certainly has done a great deal of good amongst many of those who are real Christians. Can you do better this evening than to devote a portion of your

substance to such an object? I think not! May the Lord help you to give a thank offering! I often feel when ruminating over the sacred pages, what a privilege it is to be in possession of the faculty of sight. Though there are contrivances by which blind persons may read, still it is not without many drawbacks and difficulties. I believe, and I hope I am right, that you will help liberally such an object as this.

A collection of £34 was then obtained.