

ASSURANCE FOR EVER

A SERMON

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“Neither will I hide my face any more from them; for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, says the Lord God.” Ezekiel 39:29

THESE two chapters are reckoned very difficult to understand, but there is in them a note of time which forms a key by which the whole can be understood, and that note of time is given both in the 8th and 16th verses of the preceding chapter. The things herein recorded were to come to pass in the latter years, that is, the latter years of the Jewish dispensation, called in other scriptures the latter day. Then Gog and Magog, meaning the princely power and the multitude of people, did what is here described. The Romans, therefore, were the Gog and the Magog. They came in first and crucified the Lord Jesus Christ. They, that Roman power, in connection with the Jews, apostate Jews, followed that up by persecuting the saints of God; and then, when Christianity became heathenized, it incorporated in that heathen form the spirit of paganism, and still carried on the same persecution against the saints of God, for Roman Catholicism is nothing but the incorporation of heathenism into the Christian name. So it was thus carried on, and Gog and Magog, that is, those enemies, wrought the ravages which are here described, and they were also defeated by the people of God, as here described, and the people of God, in the midst of the ravages and persecutions which they endured, could and did sing that, While we are killed all the day long, when they have killed one they will kill another, and so they go on slaying us all the day long, one after another, yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. Thus, by new covenant mercy, by new covenant mediation, by new covenant operation, and by the new covenant presence of the blessed God, they gained the victory; and the whole of their advantages are summed up in the language of our text, “Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, says the Lord God.” Now, the details of this chapter, such as their being seven months in burying, and seven months in cleansing the land, all these minute points are explained in No. 36 of the *Surrey Tabernacle Pulpit*¹, and therefore I need not run into any of them this evening, seeing that the explanation is already in print, but will at

¹ This sermon is available at this link:

<https://www.surreytabernaclepulpit.com/files/Sermons/JamesWells/1859/DEATH%20AND%20BURIAL%20OF%20GOG%20AND%20MAGOG.html>

once proceed to notice the language of our text, apart, in a great measure, from the preceding parts, except three or four verses that precede it. There are, then, three things to notice. First, *the people to whom this promise is made*. You will at once perceive it is a great promise and a positive promise: “Neither will I tide my face *any* more from them.” Secondly, *what is meant by hiding his face from them*. Thirdly, and lastly, *the reason here assigned why he will not do so*: “For I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, says the Lord God.”

First, then, *the persons to whom this promise is made*. They are described in the preceding verses. First, they are called, “all the house of Israel.” And now I want for a few moments your attention rather carefully, while I try to show that “the whole house of Israel” does not mean the whole house of Israel nationally; that it does not mean the whole house of Israel after the flesh; that it does not mean the Jews in distinction from other people; but that “the whole house of Israel” means the whole election of grace, whether Jew or Gentile. This I have, in the first place, to prove, because our text embraces all these. It is a covenant promise to a covenant people: “Neither will I hide my face any more from them.” Hence, then, in one of the preceding verses we read, “Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name.” Now, the whole house of Israel here will mean Christian Israel, the whole that are chosen in Christ, irrespective of nation, or any natural or providential distinction whatever. Go back to the 11th chapter of this book, and you get these words, which are upon this subject very instructive. The Lord there said to Ezekiel, “Son of man, your brethren, even your brethren, the men of your kindred, and all the house of Israel wholly” now mind that, “all the house of Israel wholly, are they unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, Get you far from the Lord: unto us is this land given in possession.” Now observe here, “All the house of Israel wholly, are they unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said.” Now, these inhabitants of Jerusalem were a part, and a large part, too, of Israel after the flesh, but they were no part of Israel after the spirit. Now, “your brethren” that is, Ezekiel’s brethren, his kindred, and you know of what spirit Ezekiel was; our text will show of what spirit he was, that he was well established in the eternity of the gospel, “your brethren, the men of your kindred, and all the house of Israel wholly,” that is, all believers, all who were one with Ezekiel in these eternal truths, “are they unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem” the unconverted Jews, the apostate Jews, “have said, Get you far from the Lord: unto us is this land given in possession.” And have we not had the same spirit in the Christian dispensation in times past? Has not Popery taken the Bible from us, and has it not said, Get you, ignorant people, far from the Lord: unto us is this Bible given in possession? You cannot understand it, you must not be guided by that, you must be guided by us; it is our Bible, not your Bible. Jesus Christ belongs to us, not to you, a parcel of ignorant people like you, and therefore get you far from the Lord; if you ever come nigh we must bring you to the Lord; we must bring you by our transubstantiation and by our intercession and by our doings. Why, it is the same spirit. So then, the expression, “all the house of Israel wholly” means all that were brought to receive the truth, to believe in the truth as it is in Jesus. But a vast amount of trash has been written and preached about the Jews returning to their land. It is the very worst nonsense. The gospel recognizes no difference between Jew and Gentile; all the difference that the gospel recognizes is between believer and unbeliever. Therefore, there is no hope for either Jew or Gentile, as I so often say, but the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, then, the whole house of Israel, which men take to mean the Jews, and keep looking and looking to see whether their captivity is to be turned, why, it will never be turned; their work is done, their mission is ended, they are wanted no more. We no longer want the blood of bulls and calves; we no longer want Aaron and his robes; we no longer want a literal

temple; we no longer want a local worship; it is not at Jerusalem, nor in this mountain now, but they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. Thus, "I will have mercy upon the whole house of Israel." And what does the Lord say to that whole house of Israel? Why, while others despised them because this whole house of Israel abode by the truth, the Lord says, "Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come." Now then, Christian, if you love God's truth, and if in the mystery of his providence he places you where you would not be, and if he girds you and guides you to where you would not wish to go, never mind that, not more than you can help. "It is the Lord, let him do as seems him good." Whatever may be your circumstantial captivity, or however you may be led in a way that you would not, there is the promise, "I will be to them as a little sanctuary." He will be with you there. And see the circumstances that took place in Babylon, to prove the Lord was with them there. Ah, the fiery furnace could not hurt them there; the lion's den could not hurt them there; and all the power of Persia, raised against them by Haman, could not hurt them there. "I will be to them as a little sanctuary." Thus, then, the promise is to the whole spiritual house of Israel. Mark the 11th chapter then; "All the house of Israel wholly, are they unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said." Do not you see the distinction there? We must mark this, and then we shall understand the following Scriptures in the New Testament. In the 9th of Romans the apostle says, "They are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall your seed be called." That is, as Isaac was a receiver of the yea and amen, the positive promise of God, that was Isaac's standing, so all the true Israel are led just in the same way as their first father. Their first representative father was Abraham, and God gave the eternal world to Abraham by positive promise; "In blessing I will bless." So, the true Israel is led to receive the positive promise. How the apostle delights in this when he says, "The Son of God was not yes and no, but in him was yes;" he has brought things to a close, settled matters. And "our word toward you was not yes and no." We have come to tell you it is done. "Forever, O Lord, your word is settled in heaven." And "all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen," positive, settled.

"All is settled,"
and if rightly taught you will say,
"And my soul approves it well."

Then again, in the 11th of the Romans, "Blindness in part is happened to Israel;" that is, Israel after the flesh there, "until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." Christ is the fulness of the Gentiles, and every Jew will remain in the dark till Christ, the end of the law and the end of sin, comes into the soul of the Jew; every Gentile will remain in the dark until the sun of righteousness, who is the end of the law and the end of sin, shall shine into the Gentile sinner's heart, to give him the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And when this fulness of believing Gentiles is brought into the hearts of other Gentiles, and into the hearts of Jews, then their eyes will be opened. They have blindness in part, and it happens to be that part essential to salvation. They have come into the doctrine of a supreme God, but they understand not the Son of God; they understand not the mediator of the better covenant; but when this fulness of the Gentiles, Christ Jesus, comes in, then shall the veil be taken away, "and so all Israel," all this believing Israel, all this Israel that are made to feel their emptiness, and receive Christ as their fulness, "so all Israel shall he saved." "for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins;"

that is, God's covenant takes away their sins. He takes their sins away that their sins may not take them away; he puts their sins away that he may retain them without their sins, and keep them in his presence forever. And then again, it here says, "I will have mercy upon the whole house of Israel." So, in the 11th of Romans we are told that they are to obtain mercy through our mercy. Thus, then, the promise is to the whole house of Israel, and the whole house of Israel means the whole believing house of Israel, called in another place "the election of grace;" and "the election has obtained it, and the rest were blinded." Perhaps someone may say, Well, is it needful for me to understand this? Yes, sir; because if your soul be not brought into God's truth it cannot be saved. Is it needful for me to receive this? Yes, sir; for if you do not receive God's truth to the exclusion of error, where God is you never can come; especially as this is that order of things by which alone, we can be saved. Thus, then, it is a positive promise to the whole house of Israel; the whole house of Israel made up of people that are brought, and shall be brought, to receive the truth as it is in Jesus. Then the Lord goes on to say, "After that they have borne their shame and all their trespasses, whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid." Now let us be careful how we understand this: "After that they have borne their shame and all their trespasses, whereby they have trespassed against me." How do they bear their shame? By a substitute. How do they bear their trespasses? By a substitute. That is how it is done. So, when you receive Jesus Christ, then you come into this covenant, then you come into this house of Israel.

Ah, say you, is not that getting rid of the difficulty in a wrong way? How can they be said to bear the blame if Christ bore it for them? Why, because they are one. But, in order to bring the matter down in a way that it can be clearly understood, let us put it thus. Suppose a wife gets deeply in debt in a way and after a manner in which her husband is responsible, and suppose she does so recklessly, and thereby degrades herself in the eyes of man, and she is very much reproached. By-and-bye the husband steps forward, and pays off the last mite of her debt, and her disposition is by this act of the husband so changed, that she could never do so again. Then afterwards we will suppose someone meets her and says, "Ah, you are a pretty wife, look at the debt you have contracted." "Oh, we have paid it;" meaning, "my husband has." She says "We," because she recognizes the oneness. "We have paid it." "Did you pay it?" "Well, my husband did; and my husband and I are one; we paid it." And her disposition is altered. Now just so with the Church; the Church was involved in an infinite debt, a debt of obedience and a debt of suffering. But she was Christ's bride before she fell, she was Christ's bride before the world was; and as sin overcame her, and she became subjected to it, he stood his ground; four thousand years rolled on, and he never moved from his ground. He stood his ground, from everlasting his goings forth were,

"He saw her ruined in the fall,
Yet loved her notwithstanding all."

And when the time came, though it demanded such a life as he lived, and the last drop of his precious blood, to pay the mighty debt and ransom her soul, yet pay the debt he did, work out the redemption he did, love the church he did; he stood by her, does stand by her, and will never leave, never forsake her. This is the way in which they bear their shame, by a substitute, Christ Jesus the Lord. Well, but then it says, "Their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid." What do you make of that? say some. Well, I will tell you what I make of it. Some of you know not the Lord; you are

not afraid of hell; you are not afraid of God; you are not afraid of your sins; you are not afraid of his threatening? The world is your land, and you dwell safely in your own eyes, in your own eyes, and you go on trespassing against the Lord, you go on despising his judgments and his mercies; you go on and feel safe, peace and safety, peace and safety, peace and safety; utterly unacquainted with the shame to which you must ere long be exposed, utterly unacquainted with the solemn fact that your sins are written by the hand of God as with an iron pen, and he will make you accountable for the whole. None makes you afraid; none but God himself can make the daring sinner tremble at what lies before him. Bye-and-bye, when conviction enters the mind, Ah, he says, I can dwell in that land no longer; I thought myself safe, but now I see that sudden destruction may come at any moment. I thought myself pretty good, but now I see that shame is to be the promotion of fools. I thought myself just as well off in respect to my destiny as other people; but now I see there are some that shall come forth to shame and to everlasting contempt. Thus, then, while in a state of nature you dwell safely. You go home tonight, lie down and sleep as though there was no danger of your soul being in hell before the morning. You leave your house tomorrow morning, attend to your business, make your plans, and go on as though all was safe; not knowing that some circumstance, some hidden fault in your system, may sweep you in one moment from time into a vast eternity, and you lift up your guilty head in hell. So, it is a land of safety, then, that is, a false safety. But when conviction enters, ah, then you will seek God's mercy; then you will be glad to hear that there is One that came to seek and save a sinner like you; then you will be glad to hear there is One that has despised the shame, endured the cross, borne the sin in his own body on the tree, and whosoever believes in him shall receive remission of sins. So, you will now seek the blessing, seek the mercy, and hereby become manifested as one of the house of Israel. Now you are brought to know him, your safety shall be real. Before it was a fancied safety, but now it shall be real. Your happiness before was as uncertain as mortal life; but now it is certain, settled.

“Solid joys and lasting pleasures
None but Zion's children know.”

All other wells must ran dry; all other brooks will prove to be deceitful; all other gourds must be blasted; but here is a fountain that ever flows, a God that will never cease to love, to bless, and to do you good; and if brought thus to seek his mercy, here stands the promise, “I will hide my face from them no more.” And when you once realize his approving presence, oh, what peace will flow into the soul, and Jesus Christ will indeed then be supremely and indescribably precious. Thus, then, the whole house of Israel means the Christian house of Israel, and they bear their shame and trespasses by a Substitute; he has taken them away, and now their sin may be sought for, but shall not be found. This life, while they were in a state of nature, was their land of safety, though a very dangerous safety, and none made them afraid. Thousands of sinners under the heavens laugh even at the sacred word of the great God; thousands under heaven laugh at the almighty power and judgments of the great God. Ah, sinner, well for you if your eyes should be opened now, and you should be brought to see the solemnity of these eternal things; I was reading yesterday morning a little book containing an account of a poor girl, who had sunken as low in vice as a poor creature could sink. The Lord opened her eyes, made her see and feel the awfulness of her state; and in her soul trouble she said to one, in her own plain and simple language, “Them sins of mine make me sweat.” And I liked the words. Ah, I thought, poor girl, you are now in heaven. She died, and died happy; the Lord broke in upon her, and showed her mercy. I thought directly of these words, that Jesus Christ sweat great drops of blood for us; our sins made him. to sweat drops of blood. And I

have a strong sympathy, too, with the expression, for I look back at the time when I was in that terror that it will not perhaps be disagreeable to you to say it, I cannot help saying it with the girl, "Them sins of mine made me sweat." When I was brought first into soul trouble, the perspiration of my poor body and the terrors of my mind were terrific to the last degree. I shall never forget it. Ah, none but those who are brought into the secret place of thunder, and brought under a solemn sight and sense of what they are, can know what such experience is. The Lord, as I have said, broke in upon her mind, poor girl, and she died as happy as she had before been sinful and miserable. Ah, religion! treasures untold reside in that heavenly word. It is indeed more precious than silver or gold, all that this earth can afford. Thus, then, the Lord will have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, mercy upon them all. Look at that; mercy upon them all; mercy for the low, mercy for the high, mercy for the young, mercy for the old; mercy for the ignorant, mercy for the learned; let them be what they may, it is all mercy. He grasps them all in his mercy. He finds them all under sin, and has mercy upon them all; he concludes them all in unbelief, that he may have mercy upon them all. Thus, those that are saved shall sing of his mercy, rejoice in his mercy, walk in his mercy, and glory in his infinite mercy, and that forever.

There is another point I must notice; the Lord says of these people that he will by them be sanctified in the sight of all nations. Has that been fulfilled? It has. Oh, how many nations in the apostolic age saw that little hand. God opened the eyes of thousands upon thousands of sinners, and they said of that little band of apostles, "God is in you of a truth." And Cornelius was so affected by this discovery that he fell down at Peter's feet, very different from some people that would tread a minister under their feet. Cornelius fell down at Peter's feet, and would have worshipped him; but Peter took him by the hand, and, lifting him up, said, "I am a man as you are;" I am come to tell you of the same tidings by which I am saved; I am come to tell you of the same Jesus Christ. And so God was sanctified in them in the sight of many nations, and so many nations in that day were joined unto the Lord, and were brought under the privilege of my text, "I will hide my face from them no more."

One more item upon this part, then we will take another field, and see what we can find there. The Lord said in the preceding verse, "I have gathered them into their own land," out of the enemies' lands in which they were, "and have left none of them anymore there." You know the word none is an abbreviation of no one; therefore "no one;" or if you put into a more suitable form still, put it in this way: Not one shall be left there; not a hoof shall be left behind. See, then, the certainty of the glorious gospel of God, in finding out the Savior's sheep. There stands the declaration, 'Not one shall be left'. Now that looks as though it referred to the house of Israel literally; but if you take it so, it is not true. They are left, they are left to this day, and they have been left now many, many centuries; and if God does not take them in hand they will always be left. But not one of this true Israel shall be left. Thus, then, here you have the whole Christian house of Israel; secondly, their sin, and shame, and trespasses, are borne by a Substitute, they reckoned as crucified with him; and thirdly, they are brought to know their need of this Substitute, and to cleave to him with purpose of heart.

Now then, secondly, I notice *what is meant by hiding his face from them*. First, it means disapprobation. So, the Lord will no more disapprove of them. He has constituted them one with Christ, thrown a Savior's work over all their faults, and there they are approved, and he will never disapprove of them again. He disapproved of them in the first Adam; he disapproves of them in

themselves, I mean in what they are by nature; he disapproves of them in all that they may do, that is, while in a state of nature, for “by the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified.” But now, “I will no more disapprove of them.” It is very likely that the poet knew something of trial, something of trouble, and something of the capriciousness of the creature, when he recorded those words,

“Careless, myself, a dying man,
Of dying men’s esteem;
Happy, O God, if you approve,
Though all beside condemn.”

“I will no more hide my face.” No, his face shines in Jesus. “Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of your anointed.” Here they see his face; here they serve him; here they walk in his presence; here they have the light of his countenance; here he makes his face to shine upon them; precious blood blotting out every sin, precious righteousness bringing them up into the light of his countenance. And you observe that this way of approbation is everlasting; his approbation of them in Christ will remain the same, because Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Second, to hide his face means to turn away from them. But mark the 32nd of Jeremiah, “I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good.” Why, it is possible for the dearest friend you have on earth to turn away from you some day; you cannot tell. I do not wish to suggest anything gloomy; I ought to be one of the last in the world to do so, because I have experienced for forty years so much of the Christian friendship of such vast numbers of Christians, not only from those among whom I am favored, to labor, but from others as well where I have labored in my travels. Therefore, I would be the last to make light of Christian friendship and Christian love, and Christian kindness. Still, at the same time, those that we now know as our Christian friends will not live forever; we may outlive them, it is true they may also outlive us; but be that as it may, there may be circumstances perhaps by which some should never dream of may turn from us. Hence the apostle laments this: “All they which are in Asia be turned away from me;” I have got too high for them, or rather they have got too low for me. And again, “Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth.” Now, “I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good.” Oh, then,

“To you we owe our wealth and friends,
And health and safe abode;
Thanks to your name for meaner things,
But they are not my God.”

He will never turn from us, no, bless his dear name. Did Jesus Christ ever turn his face from us? Did he not set his face towards us under the law? Did he not set his face towards us in death? and did he not set his face towards the disciples when he rose from the dead and appeared to them? did he not set his face towards them when he left the earth? did he not set his face towards them when he ascended his throne, and poured out the eternal Spirit upon them? did he not set his face towards them in all their troubles? witness the Philippian jail, Peter’s deliverance twice from prison, and a thousand other things, just showing that he did not turn away from them. “I will not hide my face;” I will not disapprove; I will not turn away. Third, it means also to give them up. I will hide my face from you, I will not see you, I will have nothing more to do with you. Will he give them up?

"What, give up his sheep? He never did yet, and he never will, no. Those words have thrilled through my soul many times, that you have sung, namely,

"He will never, never, never,
Leave his church a prey to hell.
All is settled,
And my soul approves it well."

He will not give you up to a reprobate mind; he will not give you up to your sins, and let your sins do as they like with you; he will not give you up to tribulation, and let tribulation do what it likes with you; but he will have his way in the whirlwind and in the storm; the clouds are the dust of his feet. Satan at your right-hand hopes that God will give you up. Why, says Satan, surely the Lord has given you up. Why, Joshua, he has given you up. Well, Joshua would say, I am afraid he has, but I am not sure of that yet, and if I perish, I will perish looking to the messenger of the covenant. There he stayed, and found the Lord had not given him up. Well, Job, the Lord has given you up, and you had better anathematize him and die out of the way. No, I won't. I don't mean to give him up. Well, but look at it; if there were not something dreadfully wrong would you be afflicted like this? God has not told me that he afflicts me for anything wrong. Satan wanted to have me, and the Lord let him have me so far; but I believe it will work for good. Work for good! you high doctrine pillar, you confident iron bar, you brazen well, you defended city, stubborn. Work for good? How can it work for good? Have you not lost everything? We will suppose a friend called and so talked to him. The same friend comes a few years afterwards "Please, do you know where Mr. Job lives?" "At that mansion." "That mansion, does he?" "Whose flocks, are they?" "Job's." "Whose herds, are they?" "Job's." "Whose children, are they?" "Job's." "Whose servants, are they?" "Job's." "Why I cannot make this out. Only a few years ago he had not a halfpenny to call his own; everything was gone; his wife, and servants, and all had given it up, made sure the Lord had given him up. Well, I cannot make this out at all." I dare say not, but the Lord could; he made it out well, and Job made it out well, and Job was delighted, and realized the blessed fact that the Lord had not given him up. So, then, the Lord will not disapprove, he will not turn away, and he will not give his people up; no never, never. Ah, Lord, says Satan, I do long for one thing, and that is that you should let me have that Peter, for he is a zealous, blundering, sort of fellow, I shall soon get him into hell out of the way. Well you may get him into your sieve, Satan, if you will, but I cannot give him up. "I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." No, Peter, I cannot give you up. And he would not and did not give him up. Peter was hardly down before the Savior's pure but piercing eye caught the eye of Peter, penetrated his heart, and he went out and wept bitterly, overwhelmed with the love and compassion of the dear Redeemer; all carrying out the delightful truth, "I will no more" in the penal sense of the word, "hide my face from them." So, he will not disapprove, he will not turn away, he will not give them up. Why, you have no desire to have done with the Lord, have you? Not if in your right mind; and if you have not, he will not. Woe unto us all if such a thing were possible! But, bless his dear name, he sometimes preserves us in brine, and that, as the old divines would say, is better than rotting in honey; and he leads us through the fire, to soften our hard hearts, and to fill us with all that godly sorrow that shall give an intensity to our petitions at the throne of his grace. While he does not give us up, he will so deal with us that we shall not give up his blessed truth. The apostle at the end rejoiced that he had fought a good fight, finished his course, kept the faith, saw the crown in view. To hide his face also of course signifies to let things ultimately take their natural course, and that would be the damnation of the soul. Oh,

what a mercy for us the Lord reproves, and checks, and tries in a variety of ways! What for? For the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.