

SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT.

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GLORY IN THE LORD.

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A Sermon

BY MR. JAMES WELLS.

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“But the king shall rejoice in God; every one that sweareth by him shall glory; but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.”—Psalm lxxiii. 11.

WE have here, in the first place, that which the natural man stands, perhaps, more at a distance from than he does from any other aspect or feature of godliness. To rejoice in God, and to triumph in God, to be happy with God and to find our all in God, and to be as willing, if called upon to do so, to give up everything pertaining to this world as God is willing we should do so—what a mystery this is to the natural man! He cannot perceive wherein lies the secret of people rejoicing in God. To be religious he thinks is a gloomy sort of thing; yet his conscience tells him that he ought to revere his Maker; but as to rejoicing in God, as to delighting in God, as to making that his daily and supreme delight—why, he cannot make out what people can see in godliness to be so taken with it as that. And yet every sinner that knows his lost and ruined condition, and knows something of God’s mercy, knows the meaning of the Lord’s word when it saith, “Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.” The poor prodigal never had understood what it was to rejoice as he did had he not been humbled down under a sight and sense of need. Truly, then, the Saviour came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. And all the people of God are kings; they are one with the Saviour, and being one with him, they spiritually reign while they are in this world, and thus rejoice in God.

There are three things I will notice in this beautiful scripture. First, we have David rejoicing in God as an example to encourage others to do the same. Secondly, as a type; “every one that sweareth by

him;" here we have a character in David pointing out the great truth that the people are to avow themselves on God's side by one that is greater than David; namely, by Jesus Christ. Thirdly, *the judgment*; "the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped."

First, then, *we have David rejoicing in God as an example to others*, and as being a means of encouraging others to come to God. Let us trace this matter out. First, then, as the Lord had been pleased to appear as he had to David, and to enable him to slay the lion, and the bear, and Goliath, and to enable him by faith to do what he did, he hereby rejoiced in God; and he so well knew the Lord that, though the words were not then written, he understood the doctrine of them well, where the Saviour saith, "Him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out." I am going, therefore, in this first part to point out what it is to come savingly to God, in order to do as those that have gone before us did—rejoice in God. Let us then take some of the circumstances of David's life to illustrate this. Now, first, we read that all that were in distress—the word "distress" there means poverty, privation, they were badly off,—and that were in debt," and it means that they were so in debt that they neither had wherewith to pay the debt nor any hope of obtaining wherewith to pay, "and discontented, came to David," as a type of Christ, "and he became captain over them." Just so it is now; we find out our spiritual poverty, our poverty as sinners, that we are poor, destitute sinners. And these people had been under Saul's government; and we have been under the government of Satan, of sin, of error, of the world; and when the Lord is pleased to convince us of what poor creatures we are, we then begin to look about. And they heard that God was with David; well, perhaps David's God will receive us also; and so they came to David, and David received them. Just so with us; if our poverty, if our state as poor and needy creatures, drive us to Christ, as they were received, so we ourselves shall not be cast out. And they were in debt—this debt, of course, though literal, has a spiritual meaning as well. We owe to God a perfect obedience that we can never render, and we owe sufferings that we can never terminate, that we can never lessen. And that is a very solemn scripture upon this matter—when I look upon an assembly like this, and think within myself that in a few years not one of you will be left upon the face of the earth; and yet such is our state as debtors that it stands thus—"Agree with thine adversary whilst thou art in the way"—ah, God himself is thine adversary; thou art his adversary, and he is thine adversary; he is against thee, that is, if you do not know your need of his mercy, and are not seekers after him—"lest the adversary deliver thee to the judge," and that judge will be the law; for thou wilt be judged by

the law; "and the judge deliver thee to the officer," to justice, "and thou be cast into prison; thou shalt not come out thence till thou hast paid the last mite;" of course that means the prison of hell. Now David rejoiced that the Lord had received him, and so he received these, that were in debt, as we have said, and discontented. Happy the man that is made discontented with everything short of Christ, with everything short of the mercy of God, with everything short of the gospel of God. Happy the people that are discontented with everything short of the true gospel of God. "Blessed," saith the Saviour, "is he that is not offended in me." You know this point, your need of the gospel has been a wonderful stay to you; the Lord has preserved thousands of his people by making them discontented with everything short of that yea and amen gospel which hath in it all the grace and all the mercy that we can need. Hence the expression that you will hear in town and in country, at home and abroad, from the man that knows his poverty, and knows what a sinner he is, and is thus made discontented:—Weil, he saith, whether I am saved or lost, whether the Lord loves me or not, whether my name is in the book of life or not, whether Christ died for me or not, whether I am regenerated or not, nothing but a free grace gospel is any use to me; and therefore I do not go to hear any other; not from any partiality on the one hand to any sect or party, nor any prejudice on the other hand to any people or class; but I feel that if that gospel which is yea and amen doth not save me, no other gospel can; I feel that if I am not saved entirely by grace from first to last, I cannot be saved at all. Now I do not say that this is an evidence so strong as to wholly satisfy you, or put your doubts and fears to silence; but I will say this, that if you are not one of Christ's sheep, any gospel will do for you; and if nothing but his gospel will do for you, that is a proof that you are one of his sheep; for those that are not his sheep will not hear his truth, but those that are his sheep, they hear his truth, and his truth is his voice, and they follow him, and he gives to them eternal life. What we want, then, in order to rejoice in God, is to know our poverty, and then the riches of his grace will become the way in which we shall rejoice in God; to know our debts, and then the redemption therefrom by the blood of Christ will become the way in which we shall rejoice in God; and to feel discontented with everything short of his gospel, then his gospel will become the way in which we shall rejoice in God. Let us go on a little further, and see how David keeps up the idea of rejoicing in God, in order to bring others to rejoice in God only. Now after the people to whom I have referred were gathered in, and David became a captain over them, then came some troubles. And so you

that are brought to God, afflictions, troubles, and adversities will come, and the Lord will appear for you in those adversities. Presently all that David and those that were with him had was taken away, and the city set on fire, and everything burned. They then pursued after their enemies, but there was one part of the people so faint that they could not go over the brook Besor; but the others were strong, and did go over the brook, went on and gained the victory, and returned with abundance of spoil. Now just mark how beautifully David keeps to the Lord. There were some among them that had gained the victory who did not seem conscious altogether of the way in which they had gained it; they said, As for those that have not gone with us to the battle, not because they would not, but because they could not, they shall have none of the spoil, they may take their wives and children, and depart. Now what is David's answer? "Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the Lord hath given us"—still abiding by the Lord,—“who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand. For who will hearken unto you in this matter? But as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the staff; they shall part alike.” Here is David, you see, still cleaving to the Lord. Now you can understand this spiritually without my occupying your time in spiritualising it. There are, then, infinite and eternal blessings in Christ; and some of you get on faster than I do; some of you go on from conquest to conquest; some of you take in much more spoil than I do; and are you going to turn round and say, Why, our minister is a poor, weak, stand-still creature; he has not got far in God's love, God's mercy, God's grace, and God's salvation, like the rest of us, that have gone on so far, and left him behind? Those that have done the most must fall back upon what the apostle saith,—“I have laboured more abundantly than them all, yet not I, but the grace of God that is given me.” So he looks round to all the people of God, and saith, “Ye are all partakers of my grace.” So Littlefaith says, Well, I don't get on much, but I cannot leave the truth, I cannot go away from that, I cannot forget that, I cannot neglect that, and if I lose my life, I feel I must tarry by the staff. Thus, then, David said, “They shall part alike;” and it is added, “It was so from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day.” So that David's good example of rejoicing in the Lord brought those to God that were in distress, and in debt, and discontented; and by David rejoicing in the Lord, and making the Lord everything, he thereby produced peace among those who otherwise differed. If king Saul, when David slew Goliath, had understood that it was not David—he was the mere instrument,—but that

it was the Lord, then Saul would not have envied David as he did. So David still rejoiced in God, still cleaved to God. You do the same;—don't you suppose that you are getting on temporarily, or spiritually either, independently of him; it is he that gives, it is he that guards. Well, say you, but see how the ungodly, many of them, prosper more than I do. True, but what is the end of their prosperity? The end thereof is destruction. Therefore it is your privilege who are the children of God to recognise God's hand, to look to him, and he will not say you nay. Now when Abiathar escaped the sword of Saul, David still abode by the Lord, still rejoiced in the Lord. He said to Abiathar, "Fear not, for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life; but with me thou shalt be in safeguard." And so, if we are brought to God by Jesus Christ, why, that that may seek our life seeks his life; but with him we are in safeguard. But time forbids my enlarging here, or else, if I went on, I should be tempted to remind you of how David's companions grew in boldness. Why, they became ere long skilful in war, fit for the battle, could keep rank, could handle shield and buckler; their faces were as bold as lions, and they were as swift as roes upon the mountains. There is no such thing as wearing out, in one sense, in the service of God; the longer you are in God's service, and the more you know of him, the more bold and decided you will be for him, and the more swift you will be to do any service that he has for you to do. David, then, thus abode by the Lord, and rejoiced in the Lord. Is it any wonder such a man as this died so happy as he did." Read the last two chapters of 1st Chronicles; there he is very near his dying hour; and what does he say? See how he speaks of the sovereignty of God: "Howbeit the Lord God of Israel chose me before all the house of my father to be king over Israel for ever; for he hath chosen Judah to be the ruler; and of the house of Judah, the house of my father; and among the sons of my fathers he liked me, to make me king over all Israel." And so David goes on to enumerate what he has been enabled to do for the house and for the service of God, and hands the plan over to Solomon; and he goes on speaking of the goodness of God, and rejoicing in God with all his heart. I hope I shall not be misunderstood, but what a remarkable thing it is that David does not in either of these two chapters just before his death make the slightest reference to his sins. Ah, say you, but his sins were awful, some of them. But there is not the slightest reference made to them; as though he should say, "My Father has done with them, and I have done with them; Jesus Christ, they are laid to his account, and I have done with them; the Holy Spirit has testified their abolition; they are put away, and I have done with them. And there was "an everlast-

ing covenant, ordered in all things and sure ; this is all my salvation and all my desire." The best of men and the best of women need the same mercy. I do not say that they have been subjected to the same circumstances, but they have the same sinful nature ; and if they have not sinned in that way they have in some other way, some in one shape and form, some in another. I am sure Mr. Hart is perfectly right when he says—

"Of that mighty multitude,
Who of life were winners,
This we safely may conclude,
All were wretched sinners,
All were loathsome in God's sight,
Till the blood of Jesus washed their robes and made them white ;"

and now they sing his praises.

And how did this same David die ? Oh, how wonderful the grace that can roll in such a tide of mercy as to swallow up every sin, defy every obstacle, and go rolling on in all the grandeur and majesty of the eternal God ! Why, it is said of David that he died "in a good old age ;" and if you want to know what a good old age is, go to the 92nd Psalm :—"Those that be planted in the house of the Lord"—and David said, "I am like a green olive tree in the house of my God ;"—"Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age ; they shall be fat and flourishing ; to show that the Lord is upright ; he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him." He hath declared he will show mercy, and nothing can hinder him. And I have made up my mind years ago that, as long as I live, not a sinner that I have to speak to that is conscious of his state, if he is ten million times blacker than hell itself, shall despair, if I am enabled so to set forth the boundless grace of the great Redeemer, the infinite efficacy of his blood, the eternity of God's mercy, and to proclaim that gospel described by the poet when he says,—

"The gospel scorns conditions,
And breathes salvation free as air."

Here are they that will indeed crown him Lord of all ; here are they that feel they are saved by infinite and eternal mercy. "He died in a good old age, full of days ;" days of past mercy, days of present mercy, days of prospective mercy ; "and riches," rich in faith, heir of the eternal kingdom ; "and honour ;"—wherein was his honour ? His honour laid in his faith ; he received that that cured his dishonour, he received that that put away his shame. "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, unto whom the Lord will not impute sin." So David went on rejoicing in God all his lifetime, rejoiced in God when he died ; he is rejoicing in God at this very moment, and will rejoice in God to all eternity.

Bless God for such a Bible! How many have we heard say, Ah, if the Old Testament saints had walked more consistently, we should have had a better Bible. But the poor sinner that knows his own heart says, We should not have had one half so good. And again, say some, if the New Testament saints had walked more consistently, we should have had a better New Testament; we should not have had Peter's fall, and we should not had this, that, and the other; we should have had a better book altogether. But the poor sinner that knows his own heart says, We should not have had one half so good. Therefore I love it as it is. It mortifies human pride, but it saves the perishing sinner, rolls in the tide of mercy, pardons every sin, heals every wound, defies every foe, and glorifies God to eternity. Every heart and every tongue will indeed roll this great Emmanuel's praise along. Away with your cold, half-way, lukewarm systems, saith the Saviour, "I would that ye were either hot or cold." But, say some, is it right to doubt and fear as some of you do? Salvation is not a matter of mere right and wrong; salvation is a matter of mercy, salvation is a matter of grace, salvation is a matter of divine sovereignty. People talk of the gospel as though it were a mere rule of right and wrong. The gospel is right, for it meets the law and stops its mouth, it meets justice and answers its demands, brings mercy and truth together; and now, says the gospel, I will do just as I like. If I like to take up that vile Manasseh, and make him brighter than an archangel, I will do so; if I like to take up a Magdalene, or a thief on the cross; or if I like to go into the infamous sink-hole of Corinth, where they are devils incarnate, and say to Paul, "I have much people in this city;"—why, Lord, they are the next door to hell!—"I have much people here;" and the apostle said to them that the testimony of Christ was confirmed in them, for if he could save them he could save the vilest wretches that ever were. Now this is God's way; therefore the gospel is not a mere matter of legal right and wrong; God has a right to do as he pleases. That is how the matter stands. If we had nothing better than right and wrong to look to, not a soul could be saved. To come to right and wrong, it is right you should go to hell, the best of you; you have no right to heaven, you have no right to any mercy, o any promise. How came you to possess it? "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

"What was there in us to merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?
'Twas even so, Father, we ever must sing,
Because it seemed good in thy sight."

The gospel of God's grace can do anything. We do not live in a day when people are much troubled about the meaning of the Scrip-

tures. Says one, there is the unpardonable sin, I am afraid I have committed that. Some make it consist of one thing, and some another, when the fact is there is no such thing in the Bible. I will not stop now to prove it; read my sermon upon that question; and after you have read it what will you do? Why, you will do as those did that heard it,—say there is no such thing in the Bible as an unpardonable sin; nor is there. But there is a sin never to be forgiven. That depends upon circumstances. What is called the unpardonable sin, I may just observe, stands simply in this position. The Saviour saith to the Jews, “ye shall die in your sins.” Now does not that seem to seal their doom? Does not that seem as though there was no hope? And so you read of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, never to be forgiven. But that depends upon circumstances. Now to the same people, a little further on in that same chapter, after saying, “ye shall die in your sins,” he repeats it, but adds something else to it—“I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins; for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.” But suppose they are brought to believe this, then they do not die in their sins. This is rather a deep subject, and requires thought and meditation, and biblical knowledge and reading, and that is in a great measure out of fashion now. I wish I could so preach as to persuade people to read the Bible more, to think of the Bible more, and to understand it better. The Bible is a wonderful book. I have been preaching out of it now forty-one years, and it was never more fresh to me than it is now.

So then David rejoiced in God. Let the sinner be what he may, if he has but a grain of faith in God, whether he has been the subject of what is called the unpardonable sin or any other sin, it does not matter, they must all be swallowed up by the power of Emmanuel; the sinner must be saved, Satan must be defeated, grace must reign, God must be glorified. Say some, You will get a pretty name to talk like this? Never mind; I shall soon be out of the world, and shall not hear much of it, and I don't care about it while I am in it; so I give them licence to say just what they like, only my text says, “The mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.” We see, then, that when David came to die, there is not a word about his sins. Now all the people of God, no doubt, hate sin; but there is a stress laid upon that as an evidence of interest in Christ which will not bear investigation. Did the Lord say to Peter, Peter, dost thou hate sin? He would hardly have known what to make of that. Why, if I say yes, I shall be reminded of what I have just done. The Lord knew it would shut Peter's mouth; so he asked him a question he could answer—“Lovest thou me?” There Peter was all right; he could answer, “I love thee.” And that is

the question the Holy Scriptures everywhere put. The Pharisees put it the other way; and there are thousands and thousands of graceless men and women that boast of their hatred to sin, when at the same time their hearts are full of blind enmity against God's eternal truth. Hence when Christ came into the world, and showed his love to poor sinners of every kind, class, and degree, this gave the offence; but bless the Lord, the truth still stands that he came into the world to save sinners, and each saved sinner will say, "of whom I am chief." When I come to die, I shall not want my sins then; I do not want them now, and I shall not want them then. Well, say some, perhaps they will plague you. I do not think they will. How do you mean to die? Well, I will tell you how the Lord enables his people to die. Just as the Lord was in the cloud between the Israelites and the Egyptians, let those Egyptians represent your sins pursuing you when you are leaving this world; but then there is the Lord between you and your sins, and how can they reach you or touch you? "The one came not near the other all night." What a sweet thing is the mediation of Christ, and the eternal mercy of God thereby.

I hardly dare enter upon the second part—*David as a type*;—"every one that sweareth by him shall glory." Here David, as well as in many other respects, is a type of Christ; and to swear by him in the sacred sense here intended means to avow yourself on God's side by Jesus Christ. If you avow yourself to be on the Lord's side in a wrong way, then you see you will deceive yourself. A man may have burning zeal, so that he may give not only his goods to feed the poor, but his body to be burned, and all professedly for God, and yet the man may not be right. All decision for God acceptable to him must be by faith in Christ. You must receive Christ's righteousness, and by that righteousness by which you are exempted from condemnation, there you are to stand out for God, and you are to receive Christ's atonement. As the apostle saith, "We joy in God, by whom we have now received the atonement;" and by that atonement you are to stand out for God. If you are brought thus to swear by him, to avow yourself on his side by Jesus Christ, then there is that righteousness and that atonement that pleads your cause, and you will have no reason to give up your position. But if you avow yourself on God's side by your works, and conditionally, you will soon fail, and have to give up your position; whereas, if your decision for God, like all the prophets and apostles, is by faith in Christ, then you will never have to give up your position, because his righteousness and his atonement will keep your standing good, and your infirmities and faults from time to time will lay you under deep necessities to the atonement of Christ, and to

the blessings which are by him. Now every one that thus avoweth himself decided for God, if that vow be by Jesus Christ, then the vow stands good, and such shall glory in God. Again, there is one more feature very important in this decision for God, and that is, we must be decided for God not only by Jesus Christ, but by the truth of God. Now once more let me say, in the hearing of this assembly, that the word "truth," in the gospel sense of the word, simply means God's sworn promises—"In blessing I will bless thee," and these sworn promises accord entirely with the righteousness and atonement of Christ. Hence in the 65th of Isaiah,—“He who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth;” that is, you see, in this sworn covenant; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth;” that is, he who hath undertaken by Christ Jesus unconditionally, absolutely, and eternally to bless. Mark the words, “Because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes.” Thus, friends, if our decision for God be right, it will be the way in which all our sins are forgotten, passed away, and hid from God's eyes, all troubles forgotten, all sorrows, by Jesus Christ and by this interposition of the Most High, are for ever passed away. So that every prophet was a thorough hyper-Calvinist, every apostle was a thorough hyper-Calvinist. Some people when they read the language of the prophets in the old covenant cannot make it out; but then the prophets had to do with two covenants; one was temporal and conditional; there they appear like free-willers; but then they had another covenant, ordered in all things and sure; there they appear by the righteousness and atonement of Christ, and by the truth of God. Thus, then, every one that thus shows himself sacredly bound to God by Jesus Christ in his righteousness, atonement, and truth, shall glory.

Lastly, *the judgment*,—“the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.” I will mention six or seven lies, and you know it is said, “Let God be true and every man a liar.” Now the first lie, or if you prefer the word “falsehood,” the first falsehood that all men tell is concerning our state by nature. Every man is a liar there; no man while in a state of nature gives a true account of what he is as a sinner. Oh! how many falsehoods we tell concerning our state by nature until we know what our state is! When David was brought to know his state, he confessed it, “That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.” And those the Lord intends to save, he will convince them while they are in this world, and stop their mouths from telling falsehoods concerning their state. See the Pharisee, what falsehoods he told before God concerning his state, but the Publican's mouth was stopped; he could not tell any falsehood as to his state; he felt that he was a sinner,

and therefore cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner." And those whose mouths are not stopped by conviction here, will be stopped in judgment at that tremendous day. The second falsehood wherein the mouth shall be stopped will be concerning the certainty of the judgments of God. Oh, said the people, the flood will never come. Said the inhabitants of the cities of the plain, the fire will not come. Oh, said the Egyptians, we do not fear; no harm will come to us. Oh, said the Jews, the judgment will not come; our land will prosper, our temple and city are safe; and said the rich man, the judgment will not come. But let me tell this assembly in all those cases the judgments did come; and they are only the shadows of the one tremendous judgment to come. There is a hell, there is a fire that cannot be quenched, there is a worm that dieth not; some are there; and if we are living in that state, and lying concerning it, disbelieving God's testimony of his judgments, and saying the judgments will never come, we shall find to our cost that they will come. Happy, then, if God hath warned us effectually of things not seen as yet, and if we are moved to take refuge in Jesus. So, then, the mouth of them that speak lies concerning their state by nature and concerning the judgments of God, shall be stopped. Thirdly, another falsehood that is very general, is concerning regeneration. A little water on the forehead, that will do,—call it regeneration; a little reformation, make the man a little bit decent and decorous, that will do. What fearful lies are told to set aside the quickening power of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. They will find at last that their little drops of water on the forehead will stand a poor chance with the flames of hell; for all that live and die that are not born of God must be lost. So, then, they lie concerning regeneration, to make it consist in creature formality, instead of consisting in the quickening power of the eternal Spirit; their mouth shall be stopped; and if stopped here, and brought to know their need of the Holy Spirit, what a mercy for them! Fourthly, concerning the redemption of Christ. How many are there saying that some are lost for whom Christ died. But there is none lost for whom he died; his sheep shall never perish, his work is perfect; and all who say the contrary, their mouths will, in God's own time and in his own way, be stopped. And then again, as to the everlasting covenant,—ah, what falsehoods are told concerning that. But those that speak lies in this and in many other respects, their mouths shall be stopped. But supposing we are delivered from these falsehoods, and brought to know the truth, then our mouths shall never be stopped; no, the Lord opens our lips, and our mouths shall show forth his praise to all eternity. I am sure you will recognise at once the force of such a scripture as this. You see a lie must come to nothing. Hence the numbers, for

instance, that have prophesied some one thing and some another; you see their prophecies, being false, have come to nothing. Falsehoods may stand for a long time, even a man's lifetime, and even from generation to generation. What is Popery but one huge lie, that has stood and will stand down to the end of time; but then it must come to nought by and by. But God's truth cannot come to nought, truth cannot fall to the ground. Therefore if thou art a receiver of the truth, decided for it, and decided for God by Jesus Christ and by his truth; then as the truth cannot come to nought, thou canst not come to nought, but thou wilt grow in grace and in the knowledge of him, and it shall be your portion to rejoice in God, and for ever to glory in him.

"Thus, then, let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but he that glorieth let him glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight, saith the Lord" (Jer. ix. 23, 24).

THE
SERMON

PREACHED AT THE

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