

# THE NAME OF THE LORD

SERMON Preached on Sunday Morning June, 21st 1868, by

MR. JAMES WELLS

AT THE NEW SURREY TABERNACLE, WANSEY STREET

VOL. XI. - No. 502.

"For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same My name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto My name, and a pure offering; for My name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts: —MALACHI 1. II

THE fall of man took place by a kind of agency that should make the name of the Lord appear little. Satan's policy was to make his own plan appear to be a more benevolent plan of things than that of God himself. Satan having thus succeeded in persuading Adam and Eve that the gospel which he brought was better than that of God, they fell into the snare. And that has been the practice of the great and deadly enemy of the souls of men from that day to this—to lower God's blessed truth, and to associate everything with it that would have a tendency to make men despise it. This always has been the work of Satan. Hence it was that the prophets themselves were little and despicable men in the eyes of the carnal world. And the natural man will rake up all the real and ten thousand supposed faults of the people of God, and associate these reproaches with God's truth—that truth which is expressive of God's name—and thereby to keep men away from that which alone can save them. For the name is the representative of the person, and the person is viewed by the name, according to the law of association; therefore, if you associate with a name that which is bad, and nothing but that which is bad, it represents to you the person in that objectionable light. This was the policy also of Satan concerning the name of Jesus Christ. Saul of Tarsus had so heard of the Savior as to associate with His name all that men had ever laid to his charge. Well then, he said, if that be the case, then I ought to do all I can to stop the progress of the religion of Jesus; I ought to do all I can to keep men away from Him. Just so now, the salvation name of the Lord, by which men are saved, would not be great in their estimation if the Lord did not make it so. Hence we find in this chapter that the priests had lowered the name of the Lord, and exalted themselves, shut out God's truth, and led the people by their own traditions. But nevertheless, as said the apostle Paul, their unbelief shall not make the faith of God without effect, for the word of the Lord shall not return unto Him void, but it shall prosper in that which the Lord sends it to. Hence, in our text there is a positive declaration, and happy, thrice happy the people in whose experience the text is fulfilled: "For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same My name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto My name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts."

The text being long, we may condense it into a threefold form. First, the name of the Lord. Secondly, the service of the Lord, "in every place incense shall be offered unto My name, and a pure offering." Lastly, the encouraging conclusion, "for My name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts."

We have then, first, the name of the Lord. Now, we have said that the name represents the person; and I shall avail myself of what is said in this chapter in order to set forth how the Lord makes His name great unto His own people. I shall just take the reverse of what these priests did. Now, one thing that these people denied was the sovereignty of God's love. "I have loved you, saith the Lord," though I grant it does not mean His everlasting love, but only that national favor with which He favored the Jews; but at the same time, connected with this there is a reference to the eternity of His love. "Yet, ye say, wherein hast thou loved us?" Then the Lord comes into the great subject of the eternity of His love. "Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord; yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau." Here, then, they denied the sovereignty of His love; and to deny the sovereignty of His love, of course, is to deny the greatness of His love. First, then, we have to notice the greatness of God's love, and the first feature of that love is the sovereignty of it. Now, our experience must bring us to this—it must bring us to feel that the Lord was not under any obligation to set His heart upon us or to show us any mercy, much less to do what He has declared, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." Then the question comes, how do I know He has loved me with an everlasting love? Now, these priests denied this, they denied the sovereignty, and consequently denied the eternity and firmness of His love. This, then, is the rule to try yourselves by, is that great truth, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love;" to speak more plainly, if I can, is the doctrine of God's love in its eternity, in its immutability, acceptable to your souls? Are you brought to see and to feel that if He had not thus loved you freely, sovereignly, eternally, and immutably, that love could not be a foundation to rest upon; for this love is one of the foundations of Zion, and if the foundations be destroyed, what shall the righteous do? "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore in loving kindness have I drawn thee;" that is, with this same truth, with this same testimony. I know I need not to the greater part of you thus speak, because I know if you were told by anyone, even by an angel from heaven, that Jesus Christ, having loved His own, did not love them unto the end; that God hath loved the people, but not with a certain and an everlasting love, immutable, and that can never fail any more than He himself can fail,—if an angel from heaven should come and tell you—nay, I will put myself in also—and tell us that the love was not thus free, sovereign, eternal, and immutable, we should recoil, we should feel such a testimony to be repulsive to us. But let us have this love in the freeness of it, the sovereignty of it, the greatness of it, the eternity, immutability, and certainty of it, then we associate with the name of the Lord this great, this wonderful love. And where does this love appear but in the gift of His Dear Son? If we speak of its dimensions at all, we can measure it only by three rules: —first, by what God, himself is in his own greatness, eternity, and immutability; secondly, by what Jesus Christ underwent for us, wherein the waters that he passed through could not quench this love, and the floods that rolled around him could not drown it; and then thirdly, that eternal glory that follows from what Christ has done. When we thus look at this love, we see that the Lord has made his name remarkable for being a loving name. Where can such love be found as this love of God. And I only here say, that if in its own true form, it be attractive to you, then so sure as it is attractive to you, so sure it is yours. It is very pleasing when we can trace out something like a vital oneness between our souls and the wonderful love of God. And then if you look at what the love of God is, it is not much to be wondered at that it should have done such great things as it has done, and that it will still do great things; for eye has not seen nor ear heard the extent of the wonders of that love. So then, "My name shall be great." It has been in this sense great to some of us for many years. Then secondly! these priests treated the table of shew-bread, the table of the Lord, with contempt. They despised the table of the Lord, and said that it was contemptible. They liked something of a heathen kind, something, shall I say, of the fleshpots, the leeks, and the onions; something of the carnal pleasures of this world, the gains thereof, in preference to the table of the Lord; and so the table of the Lord; was to them contemptible. Now the table conveys the idea of provision. And while I enter upon this part with pleasure, I enter upon it with the deepest feeling of solemnity and sympathy for some perhaps even now within the sound of my voice. Perhaps one will say, Oh, the table of the Lord is not contemptible in my eyes; it is pleasing to me. Well, let us try this; let us ascertain what it is. The table of the Lord here does

not mean the ordinance of the Lord's Supper; that is a mere ceremonial table, a mere outward sign, and forms no part of our salvation. The table of the Lord carries with it the idea of provision. Let us just state what this provision is, and let us see whether it is that for which we hunger and thirst, and whether it is pleasing in our eyes. It is described thus, when one with a heart full of gratitude to God spoke of it— "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" – and that by a gracious rule – "according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world;" that is, he blessed us with every blessing that should answer the purpose of that choice: therefore it is that he made the children not being yet born, having done neither good nor evil, that the purpose of God according to election should stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;" that is to say, that it should be of God. And therefore, all the provisions of the gospel are contained in that great declaration, "He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings." What do we say, then? Is not this contemptible in the eyes of the professing world generally? Ah, this provision! these blessings which are in Christ! The exceeding great and precious promises which are in him; —these are contemptible in the eyes of the world. But those that know their need will bless the Lord for such a provision; and it is all embodied in the one great provision, Christ Jesus the Lord. David speaks of this provision thus, "Oh, how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee!" What kind of fear of God does David there mean? If you go to Jer. xxxii. 40, 41, you will get there the men to whom this great goodness belongs. The Lord there says, "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts" —mark this, after the order of this everlasting covenant in which God will never turn away from them; and in order that it may be the same on their side that it is on his, he says, I will put my fear in their hearts that they shall not depart from me. I will never leave them and they shall never leave me." This is the God they are to fear; that is, to respect, to hold in honor, to serve and to glorify. And then the Lord says, concerning their plantation in Christ, including their happy destiny, "I will plant them in this land" —this new covenant land, wherein I will never turn away from them to do them good— "assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul;" and they themselves stay there with their whole heart and with their whole soul. Now, "How great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, which thou hast wrought before the sons of men." And those who are thus brought to see that their eternal welfare lies here in the greatness of God's goodness, as manifested in the gift of his dear Son and all the blessings which are by him. David goes on to speak of how the Lord will deal with such people, and what his own experience was: "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man; thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues." And another scripture says, "They shall be hid from the scourge of the tongue." And another scripture says, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" See, if you get a few scriptures together, how much light the one throws upon the other. And then David joins in and says, "Blessed be the Lord; for he hath showed me his marvelous kindness in a strong city." So that he looked at salvation as the walls and bulwarks of the city of God, and that there were all the blessings there that he could need. And yet David tells us in the same psalm that he sometimes feared he was cut off from it all: "I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes; nevertheless" – he says "thou heardest the voice of my supplications." And it is this fear that we are cut off from before his eyes that often brings us to the knee of prayer, and the Lord, hearing and answering that, brings us into the knowledge of that great truth of this blessed provision as beautifully set forth by the Lord himself, when he said to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee; my strength is made perfect in thy weakness." So, then, we associate with the name of the Lord his great and eternal love; his name is great because it represents him in his great love; and then associate the name of the Lord with that great provision which he has made to carry out the great purpose of election. Ah, how sweet the thought! We cannot need a single blessing in life that God has not already provided; and we cannot need anything when we come to die that he has not already provided; and we shall not need anything when we rise from the dead that he has not already provided; and we shall not need anything to all eternity that he has not already provided.

What he once intended to give us he is of the same mind now: "With him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

Then, again, these priests made very little of the sacrifice; they offered the blind, the lame, and the sick. Do you not here see another point of distinction between the true people of God and those who are not his people. Those who are his people are brought into the greatness and eternity of his love; those who are his people, finding out by the Lord's teaching their own destitution, are brought into the knowledge of the great provision, the infinite mercy, that he has provided in and by his own dear Son. These priests offered that which was blind, lame, and sick. Do you not see that that which they trifled with is, to the Christian, the most sacred thing possible? Those priests under the law that were taught of God felt the sacredness and solemnity of every department. I do not know anything that the Christian feels more sacredly upon than he does upon the great subject of the sacrifice of Christ—the sinlessness of Christ, the perfection of the atonement of Christ, the innocence of the blood of Christ, the divinity, eternity, and certainty of the righteousness of Christ; the spotless Lamb, the faultless Lamb. I do not wonder at the soul of a believer having an abundant entrance into heaven. What is it brings you there? Why, it is faith in the blood of Christ; it is the purity, the innocency, the efficacy, the holiness the justice, the perfection, the omnipotent and eternal power of the sacrifice of Christ, So, then, "My name shall be great among the Gentiles." Does not the Lord's name, then, represent to us this great love, and this great provision, and this great sacrifice? And, besides, the word of God declares concerning us that "there is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that doeth good, not one;" and that "they that have done evil shall come forth to the resurrection of damnation;" and all have done evil. Ah, then, how is the exemption made? By morality? That is the doctrine of the day. "They that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation. Ah, men say, if you reform your life, and do to others as you would, that others should do unto you, that moral distinction that you make will be your acceptance with God at the last; that will give you at the last an abundant entrance into the eternal kingdom of God. This is what the people of old said, and this is what the word of God everywhere denounces; for "by the deeds of the law," that is, of the creature, "shall no flesh living be justified." Besides, there is not a Christian upon the face of the earth that does not commit sin enough in his heart in one five minutes to damn his soul to all eternity; and the Christian is made sensible of that. What is the consequence? The consequence is that the sacrifice of Christ rises to an infinite height in that man's estimation, and his comfort is that he is to be judged not by his flesh, but by his faith. Not, according to your flesh be it unto you, but "According to your faith be it unto you." Faith gives you a new standing, a new position. God has put you into where there is no sin at all, for in him is no sin, and the people are in him. So, that their acceptance and their abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom are entirely as they stand in him. Nothing else can give us acceptance. "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." His blood alone cleanses from all sin. The Christian reads out in this sacrifice the good will of God. I know very well a minister in public ought to be very careful what he says about the experiences of some of the people of God; for "a righteous man falling down before the wicked is as a troubled fountain and a corrupt spring;" and a minister sometimes ought to be a little cautious. Still I will venture upon this path a little way, and yet none will understand me but the real Christian. Now the apostle says, "Be not conformed to this world," which, of course, is enmity against God's truth, both the profane and the professing world; "but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Now Jesus Christ in his atonement is the expression of the goodness, the acceptableness, and the completeness of that will. How does the Christian soliloquize upon this subject? Here is God's good will; what am I? Nothing but evil apart from his grace, from his Christ, I am nothing but evil, a leper, a sinner, and only a sinner; bad altogether, like the figs you read of in Jeremiah xxiv., "which cannot be eaten, they are so evil." Acceptable? I do not know but one to whom I am acceptable apart from the Lord's grace, from the Lord's Christ. I am not acceptable to God apart from his Christ, and I am not acceptable to you apart from God's grace, and I am not

acceptable to angels, and certainly I am not acceptable to myself, I am not worth a piece of chaff—a mere worthless wretch. There is but one I am acceptable to, and that is the devil; he likes me very much. Indeed, apart from the grace of God. "That acceptable and perfect will." Perfect? I am perfect in nothing but in sin and unbelief, —a perfect infidel, a perfect atheist, a perfect evil, a perfect everything that is bad. Well, say some, you are a wretch, then! I am, and I have from time to time said, "O wretched man that I am!" Why, whatever will become of you? Become of me? I know very well; Jesus Christ's goodness takes away all my badness; and Jesus Christ's being acceptable to God makes me acceptable to God; so that there I cease to be acceptable to devil, and become acceptable to myself, and acceptable to you, and acceptable to angels, to heaven, to God, and shall be sure to be accepted. "And there perfect." Why, you have told us you are perfect in sin. So I am, apart from God's grace and God's Christ; but I am perfect in Christ, as I stand there; as free from sin as I stand in him as I am free from holiness as I stand in myself. Here, then, I can rejoice in the sacredness and blessedness of the sacrifice of Christ. I like those words of Mr. Hart's hymn: -

"Of that mighty multitude,  
Who of life were sinners,  
This we safely may conclude,  
That 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."

I can stand here this morning, and say with all solemnity and earnestness that these great truths are dearer to me than language can describe. And wonder, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth, in order to defy sin, and hell, and death, and everything, the church herself actually is to appear in the name of the great Creator; "This is the name wherewith she shall be called, Jehovah our Righteousness;" so that whatever is brought against her is brought against him; what is laid to her charge is laid to his charge; for "This is the name wherewith she shall be called, Jehovah our Righteousness." Now these priests offered the sick, the lame, and the blind. I do not believe there is a sin from which the Christian stands practically more free than that of treading underfoot the Son of God, or counting the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, or doing despite to the Spirit of his grace. If you wish to get to heaven, you must climb the steeps of Zion by faith. Man's plan is this: there is one good work, there is another good work; so pile them up, and climb up a ladder of your own making. That will never take you to heaven. The people of old thought they could build a tower to reach to heaven. No; Jesus is the only ladder that can reach to heaven; he is the only way in which we can go up, step by step, until we come to heaven's level, and our souls be ushered in in all the triumphs of his cross. That is real religion, —despising and casting away self, receiving the truth, and thereby receiving Christ, thereby receiving the great God, thereby receiving eternal life, and all we can need for time and for eternity. Then there is another point I will just name, and that is all; these priests had nothing in view in their religion but the things of this life, — "Who is there even among you," saith the Lord, "that would shut the doors for naught? neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for naught." Such was their religion. Not so with the Savior; he had in view what was infinite in value, glorious in its sure results. So the Christian now, —his object is not merely the loaves and the fishes, —no, the Christian secretly says, Lord, do teach me how to labor by faith, and pray for that meat that endures to everlasting life; teach me to feel that when the provision that belongs to the body shall cease to be of any use, I have before me an eternal provision which the Son of man shall give unto them that are brought to know their need of the same; and thus does his name become great among the Gentiles. We must hasten now to the second part—the service of the Lord. "In every place incense shall be offered unto my name." Our text refers, as you will see, to the gospel, to the New Testament

dispensation; and we must explain this figurative language in accordance with the Savior's words. He says, "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." It is no more in this place, or in Jerusalem; it is no more ceremonial, it is no more local, for God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, —that is, serve him. are his servants, —it must be in spirit and in truth, "for the Father seeketh such" —look at that—he "seeketh such to worship him;" he seeks such to love, to exalt, and glorify him. He knows where and when to find them; he allows the blind man or the seeing man now, to be cast out, and after the man is cast out, he finds the man and the man finds him, and becomes a true worshipper. Let us look at the incense then, what does it mean? It is to be offered "in every place." I do desire to be thankful that the holy Scriptures are clear upon the meaning of it. You know, if we misunderstand the Scriptures we shall be lost, —wresting the Scriptures to our own destruction. If we understand them rightly, and have the love of them, we shall be saved. So, you see the matter is not so trivial as some would fain persuade us. What is this incense? Suppose we were left to the delusion of substituting literal incense for the spiritual, that would indeed be taking the shadow for the substance; that would indeed be taking the mere material, that is vanished away and gone, for that which has taken its place. Revelation v., when the Lamb of God—bless his precious name! —had taken the Old Testament, the book that was sealed and undertook to loose the seals, which he has done and is doing then the four living creatures,—the whole church of the blessed God, east west, north, and south, —and the four-and-twenty elders, —the ministerial representatives of the church, — "fell down before the Lamb having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours" —the margin reads it, " full of incense" — "which are the prayers of the saints." Thanks to God for this: bless his holy name that he is pleased thus to give an explanation of what the incense means—that these are the prayers of the saints. Why are they called incense? First because they arise from faith, and because they arise from a knowledge of that fragrant name, the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. These, then, are the prayers of the saints, "In every place." Now the apostle says, "Pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands," in contrast to hostile hands to God's truth; for that of all hands is the most unholy that lifts itself up against god's truth. "Thou art worthy to take the book;" "for thou wast slain;" you have died an atoning death; therefore, you have a sacrifice by which you can carry out Old Testament prediction in the eternal life and welfare of the saints; you have a righteousness by which you can carry out the Old Testament prediction. Now look at this sealed book as being the Old Testament, sealed to the natural man; and that the predictions of the ingathering of the Gentiles could be carried out only by him that could bring in a righteousness, a sacrifice, and a victory that should carry out those predictions. "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by the blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on earth," —meaning, we shall reign over the earth; for with all the havoc that the earth makes upon the heavenly traveler, it can never sever him from the of God, it can never sever him from the truth, it can never separate him from the Savior. That is the Incense then. And then the Savior brings in a great deal of the fragrance of his name. He is the angel that stands at the altar, and offers much incense with the prayers of the saints. Ah, say you, but then I am not a saint; I am a sinner. Well, if you are sensible of your state as a sinner, that is the way to be a saint. You are always a sinner in yourself; but a saint in God the Fathers purpose concerning you, and a saint by what the Savior had done, sanctifying the people by his own blood; a saint by receiving that truth, the purifies you from unbelief. Some men tell us in their fullness of zeal—I admire their zeal—that if we would but fast all day, our prayers at night by hunger would acquire a great deal of efficiency; and that if we would do this, and that, and the other, our prayers would have a great amount of prevalence with God. Well, they say, "blind unbelief is sure to err;" and I have not the slightest faith in such doctrines as those. I have always been so weak minded ever since I have known the Lord, that I never could believe that anything but the name of Jesus Christ could give prevalency to prayer. I read of "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man." He must be a righteous man; that is, a man justified by faith in Christ Jesus the Lord; and being justified by faith in Christ, that man as a prince—that is, as Christ, who is the prince—hath power with God and with men, and must prevail.

So, if I knew of any way in which you could get on better in prayer than by the name of Jesus Christ, I certainly ought to point it out to you; but I do not happen to know any other name myself; I do not happen to know any other righteousness, any other atonement, or any other way; and, to tell you the truth, if I knew of any other way, I should not know what to do with it; there is no room for it. Jesus Christ hath prevailed to open the book, and he hath prevailed to open our eyes, to open heaven, and from time to time in heaven to prevail on our behalf; therefore, it is that we are to plead his name. "I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only." Ours is indeed a blessed religion. "A pure offering," that is, first of the Savior, and then the people. You remember our Trinitarian sermon last Wednesday night on Romans xv. 16: "That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost." There is the doctrine of the Trinity in that one verse; there is Jesus Christ to the Gentiles; there is the gospel of God, not of man, and there is the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost. So that they are a pure offering, sanctified by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The Savior gave himself as a pure offering, and the people by him are a pure offering. Up go they, down go their sins; not one of their sins can go with them. All the good they ever did shall go with them, just to speak in their favor; but not a dog of a sin shall move its tongue against one of the children of Israel.

But, lastly, the encouraging conclusion— "for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts." I must let one of our brethren that came before the church a few church meetings ago just finish my sermon for me this morning. His words took hold of my mind at the time. He told us of the distress of mind he was in, what a vile outcast, foreign, heathen sort of a wretch he saw himself to be; he could not believe that ever Jesus Christ would receive such a sinner as he was; he felt he was too far gone; that it was presumptuous to hope. Then our brother said these words came: "I will give thee the heathen." He had been looking at himself as a heathen—that he was a poor outcast heathen. "I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance." Ah, then, he said, I can look up. And the words came with sweetness and power to our good brother; they laid hold of him; and that is the only way we can lay hold of them. "My name shall be great among the heathen." There is a sinner just awakened for the first time to see he is a heathen—that is, a heath one; that is, a wilderness one; that is, a vile one. He cannot believe the Lord will receive a poor heathen like him. Then the words come, "I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." But, say you, see how he treats them when he gets them. "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." That is just how it was with our brother—broke down his pride, dashed his false confidence all to atoms. That is just how it was with Saul of Tarsus. The Lord broke the neck of Saul's pride, dashed his Jewish religion all to atoms. Here have I been hard at work for twenty years, and it is all dashed to pieces in one moment. This is pretty rough work Lord, what will thou have me to do? I have been doing all my days; and now what wilt thou have me to do?