

SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT.

A FRIEND THAT LOVETH AT ALL TIMES.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 12TH, 1859, BY

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AT THE SURREY TABERNACLE, BOROUGH ROAD.

“ My head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.”
Solomon's Song v. 2.

THE tendency of the flesh, and of sin, and of the world, and everything with which we are surrounded, is to soothe us into a carnal ease, and to make us careless concerning eternal things; and this the Lord knows, and this he makes his people feel; and which made one pray, “Lighten thou mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death;” and which made the Psalmist in another place pray thus, “Be not silent unto me; lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.” And so here the church was brought into a sleepy and careless state; but at the same time the Saviour well knew what would revive that church; he knew what would awaken her from all that carelessness and all that indifference, and bring her into an affectionate concern for fellowship with the blessed God; and therefore when the Saviour came and spoke with power, she said, “I sleep, but my heart waketh.” And what is it that thus awakes the heart? “It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled; for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.” Wherever the Lord is pleased thus to speak a word of kindness, he generally, indeed always, chooses the seasons of these kindnesses when we least deserve them, and where our unworthiness shall appear the most conspicuous; and we can hardly think of anything that makes us more unworthy than indifference concerning that love wherewith he has loved us, and concerning all that which he has constituted us. And this appears in the language by which he here appeals to the church; and which language we may perhaps have time to make a few remarks upon, if we should get so far on with the subject this morning.

We may notice the text under three main ideas. Here is, in the first place, *a night*; here is secondly, *a circumstance*, “the head filled with dew, and the locks with the drops of the night;” and then, thirdly, I will notice that these words are *a commendation of the love of Christ*, and an argument for his reception by the church.

I. First, then, here is a NIGHT spoken of; and you will not of course be at a loss for a moment to know the path we shall travel in the first part of our discourse this morning. Here is a night; the Lord Jesus Christ is the Substitute and Mediator of the Church; and therefore, he appears here in the night. Now when the Lord is pleased to convince a sinner of sin, that sinner looks around, and sees that he is by the fall of Adam, and by what he is in his heart, and by what he has done in his life, and what he is in his state altogether, that he is under everlasting darkness, that he is brought into a night; that it is gross darkness, that it is thick darkness, that it is destructive darkness. And there is nothing that Satan so labours at as he does to keep the soul in this darkness. “If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe

not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine in unto them." Let us therefore look at the three typical circumstances in the Old Testament age of Christ appearing in the night; for when the Lord thus enlightens a sinner to see the darkness, and to know the state in which he is; the great question is, in what way am I to escape utter and everlasting darkness, and to have an inheritance among them that are sanctified, even an inheritance with the saints in light? In what way can I be brought into such a state as to bear the scrutiny of infinite justice, of infinite purity, of the eye of omniscience? and appear before a heart-searching God without spot, or wrinkle, or blemish, or any such thing? Now there are three circumstances in the Old Testament age that appear to me to be a kind of type of Christ appearing to the soul in this darkness. The first circumstance is that of the paschal Lamb. Here was a night of death; here was the angel of death abroad; and the Israelite had no reason whatever in himself to assign why the angel should not cut him down. I say the Israelite had no reason whatever in himself, or of himself, or by anything he could plead, why the angel of death should not cut him down. What then is to be done while the angel of death is thus ranging over Egypt? Take Egypt as a type of this world; what is to be the Israelite's exemption? What is to be his shelter? Oh, that which there is not the slightest difficulty, through mercy, for us to understand: there was to be the lamb without blemish and without spot; this lamb was to be slain, the blood was to be sprinkled on the lintel and on the side posts, and they were to partake of the lamb, and to remain in the house. Take there, the remaining in the house, as a figure of remaining in the truth and remaining in the faith. Therefore this lamb in the night was to be their light in darkness. Just so it has been with us. We cannot here forbear bringing up a little of our past experiences; and that will be perfectly scriptural, for "Thou shalt remember all the way thy God hath led thee these many years." And I may be speaking to some who as yet are not brought to know much concerning the way in which they are to escape the darkness of sin, and to escape that second death which awaiteth all that live and die without the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, here then, they took the paschal lamb, and this paschal lamb they were to receive in order. There is a great deal of latitudinarianism in the day in which we live; that it does not matter about this, and does not matter about that. I know very well, friends, that the Lord's people may differ upon points that are not essential to their salvation; but then there is everything in matters of salvation in order; that is plain. You see, in the first place, it must be a spotless lamb; in the next place it must be roasted with fire; in the next place they must sprinkle the blood on the lintel and side posts; in the next place none of it must be left till the morning; and in the next place, they must keep in the house. Just so it is now; the poor sinner is brought to receive Christ as the spotless Lamb, he is brought to receive Jesus Christ as the suffering Lamb, as the Lamb of God. He suffered our sins away; he suffered until there was nothing more for him to suffer. And then the sprinkling of the blood upon the lintel and side posts was a practical acknowledgement that their confidence in God was entire, that he would not suffer the angel of death to touch them; and in this confidence they did the Lord great honour; I know very well it was his great power by which they did it; but they did the Lord great honour in so doing; they shewed their confidence that the angel of death would not touch them; that neither sins past, nor sins present, nor sins future, could draw the sword of death upon them. And as they thus honoured the Lord, so the Lord honoured them. And this is God's order. The Holy Spirit when he convinces of sin gives unbounded confidence in the sacrifice of Christ, in the atonement of Christ, in the redemption of Christ; then the next thing you want of course

would be an assurance of interest in it: We must distinguish, friends, between the faith of adherence, as the old divines called it, and the faith of assurance. Here is the Spotless Lamb, constituting us by what he has done spotless before God; and roasted with fire is expressive of his sufferings; and this partaking of the lamb is expressive of our being sustained by Jesus Christ and this sprinkling of the blood is expressive of our acknowledging that it is by the blood of Christ, and by that alone, that the angel of death passeth by us. And they must remain in the house, must not go out of the house. Let this be a figure of continuing in the truth, and you will see how clearly it applies to the Christian. There is no calamity under heaven,—many calamities may overtake you, my hearer,—but there is no calamity can overtake you by any possibility whatever to equal that of departing from God's truth. You might have ranged all over Egypt, you might have gone into the strongest fortress, you might have gone down into the deepest well, you might have gone up to the highest mountain, you might, as the Lord says in another place, have gone down to the bottom of the sea; but go wherever you might, there was no shelter but in the house where the blood was sprinkled on the lintel and the side posts. Just so it is now; there is no safety but in the Lord Jesus Christ. So then the night under which we are by nature is the night of death.

Again, another night that had a spiritual meaning was what I may call a night of *destruction*. The Egyptians pursued the Israelites by night; and the Israelites were sunk in despair. We have escaped death; and now here is another destruction; what is to become of us now? It is still dark; what is to be done? And how did light come to them; in what way was the darkness lightened? Was it by any thing they did? No; they rebelled; there they were. But the Lord interposed between them and the Egyptians; and I have no new idea that I know of here; and therefore will not enlarge upon this part; taking these Egyptians as a figure of our sins; Pharaoh at their head as a figure of Satan, marshalling all our sins after us; and we look at them, and acknowledge that they are our sins, and that if we are left to encounter them, our destruction is as certain as our existence. But the Lord interposed; so that one came not near the other all night; not an Egyptian, not a dog, could move his tongue against any of the children of Israel; and they were baptized thus in the light of the cloud, brought into the light. Ah, they say, where is Pharaoh now? Where are our enemies now? Where are his horsemen and his chariots now? Where are these mighty powers now? They are gone, gone, and gone for ever. Mark, thus then, that the Paschal lamb, and the interposing cloud, are beautiful types of the Lord Jesus Christ; the angel of death did not touch one where the lamb was; and we see that not one Israelite was smitten by an Egyptian; they all escaped; there was not one feeble one among them but was strengthened for the occasion; and they came from darkness into the light of God's presence. Thus then we escape the night of death, and come into a day of life; escape the night of destruction, and come into a day of eternal salvation.

The third I name is that in Leviticus vi.; which we may call a night of *wrath*. Now the command was that the fire was to burn all night upon the altar. Let us mark this for a moment or two without Christ; and then remember that the night of sin and death, under which we are by nature, is an everlasting night; and if the fire be to burn as long as that night lasteth, then it certainly must burn for ever; it is a fire that cannot be quenched; it is a fire that is expressive of God's wrath. We must, my hearer, have these convictions at the root of our religion; or else, if we have not these convictions of God's wrath burning against us, we shall not prize the Saviour as the way in which that wrath is stayed. By and bye the day begins to dawn; and

what is there made manifest? Here comes a sacrifice; here comes a burnt offering. What is to be done with this fire? Is it to devour the people? No; no; not to touch the people; they will go free. The offering comes; the offering is consumed; the fire does not touch the people; they escape. Just so it is; here is the wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. God loveth his people as his people; by the sacrifice of Christ; the wrath of God is gone; there is no more wrath; it is gone; and we are held in an infinitely better condition than that of pure creatureship. Our condition by creation was good; everything God made was good; but election made us very much better, gave us a higher relationship to God; and then redemption made us better still; and then justification makes us better still; and then regeneration, bringing us up personally into the possession of these things, makes us better still; and then the resurrection of the body at the last great day in the likeness of Christ will make us better still, for we are to be like him, and to see him as he is. Thus then, we get rid of the night of death, of the night of destruction, of the night of wrath; so that there is no more death, but there is eternal life; there is no more destruction, but there is eternal salvation; there is no more wrath, but there is everlasting love; so that all the Lord has to say in substance to his people is embodied in these words, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore, in loving-kindness have I drawn thee."

II. I come secondly to the CIRCUMSTANCE: "My head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." I need use no arguments here to prove that the speaker is the Lord Jesus Christ; and that the night will mean his humiliation, his sufferings, his travelling unto where the church was, through all the darkness under which she was, and through all the thick darkness which was between her and God, so that the dew in our text does not mean what it usually does, something pleasing, but it will mean something distressing; it will mean his sufferings, it will mean those sorrows and griefs with which he was perpetually, shall I say, encompassed. Now looking closely at the language it seems like this, that this Person who came after the church was exposed to certain dangers, and that appears to be the way in which he commends his love to us, by exposing himself to all those dangers to which we stood exposed as sinners. I will take up the language of the text, and look at it in what it naturally implies. Now, first, then he was in danger of being injured by the copious dew; secondly, he would be in danger of missing his way, being in darkness; not that Christ really was so, I am speaking after the manner of men, in order to get at its spiritual meaning; thirdly, he would be in danger of pit falls, and then he would be in danger of wild beasts, and then he would be in danger of robbers, and then he would be in danger of being so weary as not to be able to reach to the end of the journey. Now I think all these things are fairly implied expressive of the commendation of the love of Christ. Now we know very well, that it is not at all an uncommon thing for a person in the East to take such a dreadful cold and fever through the dews of the night to which he is exposed as to lose his life; and therefore it conveys to us the first idea here implied. But not so with the Lord Jesus Christ, all the sorrows, all the griefs of which he was the subject, could not expose him in reality to any danger; no, we never read, and really that is a remarkable thing, of his being sick, never read of his being ill, never read of anything ailing him, never read of his having any disease. We have not an instance through all his life, of his being the subject of any sickness or ill health; no, my hearers, all the sicknesses which he had were not personal, but relative; they were our sins, he took our sins, and his infallible health shall I say, swallowed up our sicknesses. Hence, "Thou art the health of my countenance." So that nothing could ever ail him; bless his holy name, he could come through all the troubles, conquer

them all, nothing could ever ail him, he still remained the same. This shews me then this blessed truth, that my religion is always well, if I am very sadly, that is always well; if I am very sadly, that is always well; I am always healthy in Christ, always right there, not the slightest symptom of illness there; I have no ailing there, no want of appetite there, no want of sight there, no want of hearing there, no infirmity there. Why, say you, if that be true, that's the place to live. Of course it is; and therefore men in all ages that have lived most in Christ have been the most spiritually healthy, they have been the stronger, their hearts have been the better. And hence one of old, enabled so to dwell in Christ, contrasting the failing of the whole creation with what he had in Christ; and when the whole creation was gone, he says, "Yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places." But secondly, there was a danger of missing his way. We miss our way by daylight sometimes; he never missed his way in the dark. He knew his way to Zaccheus, and to Peter, and to the woman of Samaria, and to everyone to whom he was sent; knew his way to Calvary's cross; knew the time; never had to retrace a step; there is another remarkable thing, he never had to retrace his step; never stepped wrong; never had to retract a word, never; never had to alter a single thing that he had done; never had to say to a blind man; oh, I say, you come here; I have made a mistake; I have opened your eyes, it was that man's eyes I had to open; no, he never recalled a single thing; never; never missed his way, walked just the way the Lord had appointed him to walk. Now "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." What is the remedy? Why, there it is; that Jesus Christ never missed his way, never went astray, never stepped aside. And you may depend upon it, we may try to pique ourselves upon our own doings, but if ever we appear straight before God it must be by the straight walk of the Saviour; it must be by the great truth that he never stepped awry, never stepped wrong. Therefore, it may be well said of him, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings." He never missed his way; and he will also take care that we shall not miss our way. There is the way; I cleave to that. It is the way of holiness; sin is ended in no other way, I can be sanctified in no other way, can have access to God in no other way, can have the presence of God in no other way, can obtain the promises in no other way, grace to help in time of need in no other way, freedom and rest in no other way; happiness in no other way. Oh then, let me look at Jesus as bearing all my sorrows without being corrupted thereby; let me look at Jesus as walking with that accuracy that there is not a fault in his walk anywhere; and that that walk was not for himself, it was for us. Depend upon it, friends, the more we are enabled thus to look to the Lord Jesus Christ in the various relations he bears, the more confidence we shall have in him, and the more joyfully we shall walk in his way.

Again, a man thus travelling would be in danger of pitfalls; and where there so many snares ever laid in the way of any one as were laid in the Saviour's path? Did not the devil offer him all the kingdoms of this world? Did he not try to get him into a spirit of insult to God, and cast himself down from the temple? Did not the devil try to make the Saviour worship him? Did not men lay all sorts of snares for him? And, oh! how did they labour to catch something out of his mouth? They sent their Pharisees, and Saducees, and Herodians, and lawyers, and all the rest, and they all tried to ensnare him—but they all fell into the pit themselves! Hence, the lawyer thought he had gained his point, "Who is my neighbour," and so on; and when the Saviour had given the parable, "Now which thinkest thou was the neighbour?" Well, can't be at a loss, Master, who this neighbour was. Well

then, "Go and do likewise." He hung down his head and walked off: I'm done, says he. Well then, if the lawyer is done, it's no use for us to try. If you have beaten a lawyer, you have beaten every thing almost. And so whatever snare they laid for him, it was utterly useless. But it is not so with us. There is not a day in which our souls are not more or less ensnared. You come to the house of God, and suddenly some thought will come into your mind, and form a kind of pitfall for your soul: your soul will drop down into the pit, and there you are all the time the minister is preaching; you get nothing, and are ready to blame the minister because you get no good; while the fact is that he could not help it, and you could not help it; and the Lord was not pleased to put Satan under your feet, or to teach you by comforting you; but to teach you by letting you feel your weakness in falling constantly into some snare or another,—and you cannot extricate yourself from it. What is the remedy? Why, that Christ was never ensnared; and, therefore, as he was never ensnared and never could be, then you may sing the words that you often do sing,

"Though thousand snares enclose our feet,
Not one shall hold us fast;
Whatever dangers we may meet,
We shall get safe at last."

And thus, by his keeping clear of any snare whatever, every snare is broken, and we escape as a bird out of the snare. I like that idea—as a bird out of a snare. A bird feels amazingly out of its element in a snare: there is no creature you can think of that feels the loss of liberty so much as a bird. It is a creature that has wings, and desires to use them. And so the soul born of God knows something of the wings of faith and love; it has wings and wants to use them; it desires to rise and to expatiate in the open firmament of heaven.

Then again, such an one would be in danger of wild beasts and robbers, or forces that might stop him, so that he could go no farther. But nothing could stop the Saviour. All our sins were like roaring lions; but he rent them as he would a kid. The curses of the law were like roaring lions, but they could not stop him. Death was like a roaring lion, but death could not stop him. The powers of hell were against him like roaring lions, but they could not stop him. Nothing could stop him!—he bruised Satan's head; and as far as his church is concerned, swallowed up death in victory; and did not stop, and would not stop, until he had reached the end of the last sin of those he came to save.

Again, a mere creature would be in danger of becoming so weary as not to be able to reach the end. Now the Lord Jesus Christ was taken over night, and we see how he was treated. He was taken into the hall of the high priest; then the next morning early, very early, he was taken to Pilate; and then taken to Herod; and then taken back to the high priest again; and then taken to Pilate again, and treated in that way that it must have exhausted any mere creature; and yet after all that he endured, hiding not his face from shame and spitting, and giving his cheeks to them that pulled off the hair—enduring all the indignities he did; yet when he came to Calvary's cross, he still retained mysterious and almighty power; he still had a work to do when he came there that nothing but omnipotence could achieve; he still had a work to do when he arrived there which he could not have accomplished if he had not been God as well as man. Therefore, the Old Testament church, being well versed in this great matter,—personating, as the prophet did, the Saviour,—he says, "I looked, and there was none to help, and I wondered there was none to uphold; therefore, mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me." He had the same power when he was in the grave, when

his body was dead, as he has now, or that he always had. Why, Christ never died as a Priest: never. He died as a Sacrifice, but not as a Priest: as a Priest he lives continually. If he had died as a Priest, the Church would have been three days and three nights without a Priest; he never did die as a Priest—he was a covenantly constituted Priest from eternity; he abideth a Priest continually.

Again, the drops of the night will mean nothing but the same thing—the accumulation of his sorrows. We are tempted almost to look at that Scripture upon this subject, where it is said, that “Being in agony he sweated as it were great drops of blood.” And I may just, before I go to the next idea, say that the locks here is a term which we must explain by Nazariteship. Samson’s hair was divided into seven locks, and these were the symbol of his Nazariteship: and all the time he kept these seven locks he was able, because God was his strength, to do anything. He could rend the lion like a kid; he could drive the Philistines before him with the jawbone of an ass, and slay a thousand therewith; he could carry the gates of Gaza—post, bar, and all,—and laugh at the attempt of any of his foes to stop him. But he parts with his seven locks, and all is gone! There are many drawbacks in Samson’s character,—and had not the Holy Ghost, in Hebrews xi., sent Samson to heaven, men would have told us that he did not get there at all. I recollect that an old divine, a twaddling, drivelling, dry old divine, says, we can hardly think that Samson is in heaven, can hardly think he was saved. But still the 11th of Hebrews does put Samson, it is true, among the worthies; but I should rather have thought there is some mistake, and that instead of Samson, it ought to have been Samuel. But it so happens that Samuel’s name also is mentioned in Hebrews xi. So that if Samuel’s name had not been there, they would all have said that Samson’s name must have been put in by mistake instead of Samuel’s. But all the time Samson retained his locks he could do anything, and all the time you retain the truth, my hearer, you may depend upon it, not the lions, not the the gates of Gaza, not the Philistines, will be able to stop or to hinder you. But give up the truth, and they take you and put you in some duty-faith mill, and there you may grind on in perpetual captivity. But when once you get your locks again, then where are the Philistines? “O Lord, strengthen me, that I may be avenged this once for my two eyes. And he bowed himself with all his might on the pillars, and the house fell;” and his victory was more glorious in his death than, as though there had been no drawbacks in his life. And so it has been with many a man of God when he has come to a dying hour; he looks back to the various circumstances by which he has been impeded, and he feels a hatred to his own life, but he feels a love to the Saviour’s life, and to the Saviour’s name; and he dies triumphant, glorying in God’s eternal mercy, and leaps victoriously into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Let us look, in the next place, at the fact that Christ has put an end to the night. Oh, but he should have stopped till day light before he came. Then he would never have come at all; he would have stopped for ever; for he is the light, and there is no light without him. He should have stopped till the way was more smooth. Then he would never have come at all. He should have stopped till the church was not so far off. Then he would never have come at all. He should have stopped until she had evangelised the world. Then he would never have come at all. No, bless his dear name, he came and faced the storm just as it was; he came to save sinners; this he has done, and shall wear the crown for ever. Now I had intended to shew the kind of day he has brought in; that there is a day of release brought in by the Saviour, a day of preservation, a day of supply, a day of heavenly service to God, and a day of God’s presence for ever; but I must waive all that; and notice in conclusion:

III. That our text is a COMMENDATION OF THE LOVE OF GOD, and an argument for Christ's reception. It is a commendation of the love of God. How beautifully is this illustrated in Romans v.; there you have plain language, that will explain to you the language of our text. Now how does God commend his love to us? Let me tell you.—“Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ;” that is one step, by faith, by believing in this wonderful Person; “By whom also we have access by faith into this grace; that is justification by faith; “Wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulation also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” That's what I want; Christ again. Why, say you, it's all Christ this morning. Why, you can't have anything better; I have nothing else for you all day; therefore if you don't like it, don't come this afternoon or this evening. I have nothing else; and I don't want anything else; for “God forbid I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” “But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” That is how he commends his love; as though he should say, now have you any confidence in the way in which I have revealed my love to you? Look at the circumstances under which my dear Son died for you. It was when you were without strength, ungodly. And see how I have commended my love to you; while you were yet sinners; and see that you are justified; see also that you are justified by his blood. “And,” saith the Apostle, “We joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement?” What is this but a commendation of the love of God; and an argument for Christ's reception. Now look at the language in Solomon's Song. For myself, I publicly confess that I am exceedingly attached to the book of Solomon's Song. I am glad to retire to it; often can I find peace there when I seem to find it nowhere else. Let us look at this commendation. I look at him first in his relationship, “My sister.” I rather think we may illustrate those terms by which the church is there designated by Adam and Eve before the fall. Eve was Adam's sister; so the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is spoken of as his sister; he is the brother; she is his sister, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh; of the same Father and of the same mother. Yes, the same mother. The same Father, that is God; the same mother, that is the covenant of grace: that is the mystic mother spoken of as the mother in the eighth of Proverbs. And then the second term which he designates the church is “Love.” Love, nothing else; I like the term very much indeed. Then the next term is “Dove,” expressive of her harmlessness, her likeness to him; meek and lowly in heart; while she has been thorns and briars to him in her fallen state. She shall be as a dove; harmless, the sweet companion of his joys to a never-ending eternity. Then, the last term is “Undeiled.” Why, is it possible, that the Lord's people occupy a position wherein they cannot be defiled? Yes! you must defile the Lord Jesus Christ before you defile the church. There is the Christ undeiled, the church undeiled, the inheritance undeiled; not a fault at last can be seen.

Now then, the Saviour says, “Open to me, my sister;” I will come and live with you, and you with me; “my love” I will come and live with you and you with me; “my undeiled;” I will come and live with you and you with me; I will come and live with you till I have lived all your sins and sorrows away; and then you shall come and live with me in that kingdom where there is a sun that shall never go down, where there is a moon that shall never, no never, withdraw its brightness.