

SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT.

THE SAVIOUR RIGHTLY RECEIVED.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 27TH, 1859, BY

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AT THE SURREY TABERNACLE, BOROUGH ROAD.

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Revelation iii. 20.

As our text is in part evidently a quotation from the Song of Solomon, I shall go to that book for an explanation of the first part of our subject; and I shall there shew how the church received the Lord Jesus Christ *willingly*; and yet the tidings were so good that there was a difficulty about it; and then, secondly, how she received the Lord Jesus Christ *longingly*; and then, thirdly, how she received the Lord Jesus Christ *carelessly*; and then, how the matter was made up; and I think this will find out those of you who have life in your souls.

I. Now first you have the Lord Jesus Christ there received **WILLINGLY**. But what were the circumstances that made the church willing? The church heard the voice, "The voice of my beloved;" and she saw the Saviour overcoming everything that stood between her and God. "The voice of my Beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills." Now among the many things that this indicates, I will remark upon only one aspect of that beautiful circumstance, let us take these mountains and hills as expressive of that which lay between us and God, namely, our sins, and the curses due thereto; together with other mountains, dark mountains and hills of error and delusion; all these lying between us and God; but Christ comes, treads down, overcomes, or swallows up all the curse, all error; and thus lowers the mountains, exalts the valleys, makes crooked things straight, rough places plain, and the glory of the Lord is revealed. This then was when the church heard his voice; and it is thus with all who are taught of God; they are made conscious that there is that between them, as sinners considered, and God, which none but the Lord Jesus Christ could conquer. And when we see what he really has done, that sin, past, present, and to come, all sins, are by him swallowed up, that they are trodden down, that there is an impediment between us and God no more for ever; it is true

that evils of our nature are hindrances to us, but then there is nothing penal attached to these hindrances; they are hindrances, that is, they bring our souls into bondage, and hinder us from doing as we would in believing, in praying, in walking in the Lord's way, and having fellowship with God; but then there is nothing penal connected with this, because the Lord Jesus Christ hath trodden sin down, swallowed sin up, it is gone; and taken all the curse away; whatever there was between us and God wrong, the Lord Jesus Christ hath taken away, and made everything right, crooked things straight, and rough places plain. Now how willingly the man that is taught of God receives this testimony; he sees that Jesus Christ has done this, he receives this; and he sees not only that the Lord Jesus Christ has done this, but that he has done it willingly and triumphantly; he did it in one sense without difficulty. "The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills;" expressive of the mightiness of his power, the intensity of his love, and also of the truth of that Scripture, "I delight, O God, to do thy will." What say you my hearer? Look at your sin apart from Jesus Christ; look at the blasphemies, the infidelities, the murders, and the tens of thousand evils of your heart, look at the infirmities of your life, apart from Jesus Christ; and the scene, if you are brought into the light of God's holiness and God's justice, will make your heart and soul tremble at the thought of meeting your Maker and your Judge; your heart will sink within you, and you will say, there is an eternity, and upon the precipice of that eternity I am standing, and know not from one moment to another when I may be summoned to that dread eternity; if I am to be as miserable there as I am sinful here, my destiny must be awful. That will be your view and that your feeling. And then when it becomes manifest that Jesus Christ has taken all this away, has done it in the love of his heart, done it effectually, done it eternally, that all is gone, and that so far from this God being your Judge by a law that would condemn you, he is your Judge by a law that saves you, even by the law of sacrifice, the law of justifying righteousness, the law of yea and amen promise; for if you look at a promise, if the promise be positive, and there be no conditionality in it, then you need not be fearful, it lies entirely with him who makes the promise; and God made the promise, gave it to Abraham by promise, gives us eternal life, mercy, and everything we need, by promise; the whole lies with him. Ah, you will say, welcome to my heart, my soul, my conscience, my best affections, welcome to all I am and all I have, such a glorious gospel as this; yes, I can hear this voice, I can open the door of my heart to this glorious gospel; I love such a Saviour as this. This then is one essential; for if you receive the Lord Jesus Christ as a mere customary matter, a mere doctrinal matter, a mere moral concern; you may depend upon it you receive him in that weak way, you will one day meet with powers stronger

than those powers by which you have received him, and there will be a separation between you and him; you will be damned to all eternity if that is all the reception you have of Christ. Whereas, if it be under the apprehension I have stated, if you receive Jesus Christ by the power of the Eternal Spirit, if you receive Jesus Christ by his own power of taking possession of your soul, if you receive Jesus Christ by the attractions of the Father's eternal love and sovereign grace in recording your name in the Lamb's Book of Life before the world was; then what is to separate you? You cannot meet with greater powers than those by which you have received him; and consequently there will be no separation from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. This then, is one step towards rightly receiving Jesus Christ; you must receive him as that Person who alone could remove that which stood between you and God as a sinner. Now the church gives a very beautiful view of the Saviour a little further on. "Behold, he standeth behind our wall." There are various opinions as to the meaning of this; some think behind the wall, means he was inside the garden; some think it means he was outside; some one thing and some another; and I am just as likely to be wrong in my opinion as they are; and yet I have an opinion, and you must take it as an opinion. Some have thought the wall means the ceremonial law, some one thing and some another. Well, say you, what do you think? why, I think it is this, that the Lord threw a wall of protection around his people, a wall of security around his people, a wall of preservation around his people; and that Christ was outside of that wall by himself, where their sins were, and where God's law was, and where the curse was; and he must not come in until he has put away their sin; he must not come in until he has put away that curse. So that the wall of security and preservation was thrown around them, while the dear Saviour, the Husband of the Church, the bride thus secured, the Husband went and faced all the danger, faced all her foes, paid the mighty debt she owed with his own infinitely precious blood. That is how I understand that Scripture. So that this King of Glory is to come in only when he is known; the King of glory as in the 24th Psalm; then by and bye the eternal truths of the gospel, which are in that Psalm called gates, or everlasting doors, shall be thrown open, and the King of glory, having wrought the victory, having established all that for which he was responsible, shall come in to the Church, and the Church to him, and dwell together for ever. "He standeth behind our wall; he looketh forth at the windows;" which I take to be the truths of the Gospel; "Shewing himself through the lattice," which I take to be the ordinances of God's house.

We have seen him level these mountains, we have seen a wall of security thrown around us; while he himself was exposed to all the danger, we were exposed to no danger, we were walled round with eternal life, walled

round with an immutable covenant, walled round with immutability. But then who is to pay the debt we owe? Christ Jesus. "My beloved spake, and said unto me, rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For lo, the winter is past;" that is what I wanted to know; I know the winter means God's law, and its curse: and who can stand before his cold? I know the winter means my sin, and I know the winter means death, in the most gloomy and dreadful sense of the word; the winter means everything that is distressing, paralysing, desolating, freezing, and deadly. But, says the Saviour, it is gone; "The winter is past; the rain," that tempest due to you, "is past and gone;" and now the kind of land I have to bring you to is very different from the land I bring you out of; the land I found you in was a land of briers, and thorns, and drought, and scorpions, and pits, and famine, and destruction, and everything awful; that is the land I found you in: but the land into which I bring you, "the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a goodly smell;" everything indicative of that which is Paradisaical; not a thorn left, not an adversary left, not an evil occurrent. "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away." These tidings I am now stating to you were so good and so great they could hardly receive them. It never can be true; is it true that Jesus Christ has removed my sins in this way? that those mountains and hills that stood between me and God, are they really gone for ever? And if I see my need of it, and receive Jesus Christ as having done this, is it actually so? Has the Lord thrown around me a wall of eternal security, while Christ stood in all the danger, all the responsibility falling upon him, not one mite demanded of me? And is the winter gone? Hath the Lord sworn, is it a truth, that he will not be wrath with those who receive this Gospel under a sense of their need of it, and in love to it? Why, the tidings seem too good to be true, seem too great! So it was in that day. And I solemnly declare to you this morning that one of the great difficulties I have at times is to believe really and truly in tidings so good. I am sure this morning in prayer, before it was hardly daylight, in thinking of this, there was very great difficulty, somehow or another; I could hardly believe in the greatness of what Christ had done; I felt a difficulty about it; the tidings seemed too good to be true. I said to myself, is it possible that God loved me eternally; and that my sins, so far from hindering, only made way for the manifestation of that love? Is it really true, that so far from my sins hindering Jesus Christ, he took occasion by my sins to manifest the greatness of his grace? yea, that while we were yet sinners, God commended his love towards us? Is it really so, that the almighty and eternal Spirit of God has begun a work of grace in my heart, and that he will reveal to me the iniquities of my heart in order to humble me, and so far from these things hindering him, he takes occasion by them to manifest more conspicuously the riches of God's grace; that God never thought for one moment of ceasing to love me with the same love wherewith he loved me from before the foundation of the world? Hardly can I believe it. And so with the church in Solomon's Song. Hence after the Saviour has told them these good tidings, he says, "O my dove, my undefiled, that art in the clefts of the rock;" why, you have run away from me. Well, Lord, I cannot believe it, it seems too good to be true; I am afraid it is going too far; people tell us we must not go too far; I am afraid to shew my face, Lord,

and afraid thou shouldest hear my voice, Lord. "Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." You look upon me with approbation, do you not? Yes, Lord, I can do that; I do that; and thy voice is sweet. You cannot help speaking well of me. No, Lord, I am always speaking well of thee; but I seem as though I could hardly believe these great tidings. That appears to me to be the meaning there. You may depend upon it it is one of the devices of the enemy to keep us from believing in what Christ has really done, and keep us away as much as possible from the immutability of the counsel of the blessed God and to throw us back upon some supposed excellency in ourselves, that we may go partners with Christ in the great matter of eternal salvation, instead of our being nothing, and Christ being all in all. "If any man hear my voice." Why, if I could preach now, and had the whole professing world before me this morning, and had a voice strong enough to reach the ears of all, thousands among them would rise in indignation against what I have said; and yet as the Lord liveth, nothing short can save the soul; for if there were an impediment that he had not removed, if a wall of security had not been thrown around us, if he had not taken all the responsibility; if he had not passed the winter entirely away, if he had not endured the whole storm, if he had not been pleased himself to come unto where no rain can ever be, where no adversary nor evil can ever be occurrent, then not a soul could be saved. What shall we do, my hearers? Shall we listen to the fashions of the day, or shall we listen to the glorious testimonies of the blessed God? The Laodicean church dwelt very little upon these things; would not have been lukewarm else. Come to the Christian when he is as cold as ice in feeling, and rebelling against some circumstance, not against God's truth, but against some of God's mysterious dealings with him; come to the Christian when he is as cold as ice in his feelings, or under some trouble; try to rob him of God's truth, and he will gird up his loins, clap on his armour, reach out for his sword, and stand on his own defence in two minutes; depend upon it he will. If there is anything worth contending for, it is the faith once delivered to the saints; if there is anything worth buying at any price, it is God's eternal truth. "If any man hear my voice." Thus, then, the church received him willingly, but at the same time the tidings seemed too good to be true. I believe with all my heart, that some of you have been weak-headed enough, and weak-hearted enough, and weak-minded enough, by half to listen to the devil, when he has said, Well, I don't know, I think your minister goes rather too far, you hardly find any go so far as he does; I would go and hear another or two, and just try; and so on. And some of you have done so; and how did you get on? Well, they didn't go far enough. No; and pray have I ever gone farther in dealing with the Lord's mercy than you need? Have I preached a Gospel this morning which you do not need? No, say some; but then it's not exactly fashionable. I know that; I'm quite aware of that. But the fashion of this world passeth away; every age has had its peculiar tone and fashion; and it is a great thing for the people of God, let the fashion be what it may, to be delivered from it. But the people of God in all ages have more or less partaken of the fashion of the day. Where did the great John Calvin learn to burn a man, to get a man burnt to death, because he did not see as he did; just as though burning a man's eyes out would illuminate his soul? John Calvin learnt that of

Rome, because it was fashionable to burn people then! And where did Luther learn to abuse Zwingli in the way he did; that great man substituted abuse for argument; where did Luther learn that? At Rome. Where did our old Puritans get their duty-faith? Why, at Rome; it came from Rome, and Rome came from hell, and belongs to the devil; that's where they copied it from, sir. But there has been here and there a man that has unlearned these things. When God raises up a man by first sinking that man down into great depths of personal soul trouble, it makes such an one turn away from the sentiments of the day, and turn to God's word; and just where he finds mercy, there he will proclaim the same to others.

Again, after the Church had thus received these great tidings, the Lord somewhat hid his face; but she could not forget him. Oh, what a God is our God; what a Beloved is our Beloved; what a Friend is this Friend; one that loveth at all times. Oh, that my soul were like a watered garden, wherein every kind of spice and myrrh might grow that should be expressive of my love to him; that was the church's feeling after this great manifestation. "Awake, O north wind;" that is very cold; ah, that is what I want, something cutting, to convince me of my sin, give me a sight and sense of what I am. And then, "Come, thou south wind, blow upon my garden; the garden there is the soul; the soul shall be as a watered garden. "Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." It is very pleasing in the sight of God for the soul to cry out for the Holy Ghost. Hence the Saviour dwells upon this with much pleasure. "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit unto them that ask him?" No sooner did the church thus long for the quickening and comforting power of the Blessed Spirit in order to bring the soul into fellowship with the Saviour, than the Saviour answered. "I am come into my garden;" I am here; I am not far off; he is never far off; "I have gathered my myrrh with my spice;" the two united; the myrrh will mean the bitterness of his sufferings; the spice will mean the intermingled consolations he had during his life; "I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; what is the honeycomb and the honey? your prayers, your praises, and your expressions of decision for him; for so he says; "Thy lips, oh my love, drop as the honey comb." "I have drunk my wine with my milk;" all expressive of the affections of the soul to him. Then comes the mutuality, as in the close of our text; "Eat O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." So that the man that is longing after the Holy Spirit to come and bring the fragrance of the Rose of Sharon into his soul, that he may have fellowship with God by Christ Jesus; that man is recognized as a friend.

Now we will suppose these great manifestations to be made, these great tidings to have been received, and that we know something of the quickening power of the Blessed Spirit; and something of this sweet and fragrant sense of heavenly fellowship with the Lord our God by Christ Jesus; after this get careless. You would think that after this the soul would always receive the Saviour with great willingness, great readiness, and great delight; but no. Does the minister preach with much liberty? There is a certain person taps him on the shoulder after he has done his sermon, well done, splendid sermon, that's beautiful that; clever fellow, you are a masterly man, and he does that to lull him off to sleep; in order to make the man think well of himself; and as soon as ever a man begins to think well of

himself, if he be a child of God, the Lord will find means to make him alter his opinion pretty soon, depend upon it. And just so the Christian; if you are favoured with much fellowship with the Lord; oh, you are something like a Christian, says the enemy; I am sure the Lord will love you; I should think there is not another Christian like you; and so you will get exalted, and get dreaming that you are really better than some; a very sleepy sort of state; and you must have a little rough dealing in order to wake you up. So it was with the church here. The Saviour came and knocked, "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;" he comes to her by his sufferings. Well, "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them!" Poor thing! what, not willing to step into a little mud for my sake? Oh, I could not very well do it. You sleepy thing, you lazy thing. Well, at last I rose to open to my beloved; but he was gone. I should think so. Well now, what are you going to do; go to sleep again? No, I cannot go to sleep now; I will get up now. Ah, you should have got up before. Oh, what a task it is sometimes to us to go to the house of God; what a task to undergo a little inconvenience for the Lord. That is when we are in a sleepy, lazy state. I will get up now, and go into the city, and seek my beloved. Ah, says the watchman, what do you do here? And they took my veil away in order to see who I was. I said I was the king's bride; but they would not believe me; took my veil away; they smote me. So you are awake now; not asleep now. Oh, no, not asleep now. Well, presently, she meets some little ones; have you seen my Beloved? If you find him, tell him that I am sick of love. Oh, well, who in the world is thy beloved, that thou dost so charge us? And then she goes on, and gives a most glorious testimony of him; and it so delighted the little ones that they said, Whither is he gone? we will seek him with thee; if he be what you say, "the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely," why we can never be so well employed as seeking him with thee; and of course she told them where the beloved could be found. Is not this exactly our own souls' experience? Are there not times when the truth comes with but little sweetness, and we care not much about it? do not feel that love and fervour we could wish? But the Lord will find a way to keep you from falling asleep. But, nevertheless, this matter was all settled comfortably at the last. The church bears this testimony of him at the last: "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it; if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned:" so the matter is settled at last.

Time scarcely permits me to enlarge upon the other part of the subject, which contains a vast amount of consolation. "I will sup with him, and he shall sup with me." Now, the supper is the final meal; and, therefore it means he will be entertained with you finally, and that you shall be entertained with him finally. Now, if I were asked, what I thought was meant by this, I should go of course to some part of the Lord's blessed word, to try and find out the meaning; and I should go to the 13th of John to begin with; and there I find the Saviour supping with the disciples. "With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you," this supper before I suffer. And there I find, having loved his own, he loved them to the end; and there I find his wonderful condescension, "I will sup with you;" he himself becomes a servant, serving as he did in his humiliation with all he

was; and as he did in his humiliation, so will he do now in his exaltation; he will never be above feeding his people, never be above leading them to fountains of living water, never be above supping with them. Look at the supper; what is it? The final meal. "Take, eat, this is my body." The final meal. "This is my body, broken for you." He sups with us. "This is my blood of the New Testament;" the final sacrifice. I therefore take the Lord's Supper as an explanation of this first clause, "I will sup with Him." And so He does; in and by His sacrificial flesh we have eternal life; his precious blood is that wine of the kingdom that shall cheer our hearts for ever. Sup with us; this is the final meal; we shall want no other sacrifice after that sacrifice; want no other testament after the New Testament, the new covenant. Hence, as we have often said, these matters are called "the last days;" because they are the final days; gospel days are the final days. So it is the final meal. I am aware that the Greek word here translated, "sup," or "supper," is sometimes rendered "feast;" and we should do no violence to the original were we so to read it; "I will come in unto him, and feast with him, and he shall feast with me." But where shall we go then, for the other clause, "And he with me." I know in substance they mean the same thing; but did time and my eight pages allow, I would go to Isaiah xxv. for the explanation of this other clause; where these persons who are brought to receive Jesus Christ are brought to Zion; they are citizens of Zion; they are spoken of as dwelling in the mountain of Zion; where "the Lord will make unto all people," that is, all people dwelling in this mountain, "a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees well refined, of fat things full of marrow." All these must be understood as gospel terms, expressive of the infinite superiority of the joy, blessedness and glory that shall be realized in the presence of God. And then there is the state of things in which they are to sup with him; namely, that "he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering;" a lovely scripture, that is. You know what the face is? Alas, alas, the face of the covering is sin, that is the covering that covereth all people—sin. Every man by nature is clothed with sin, it is the poison garment that every man wears; and that garment is one with him, the leprous garment that every man wears. But he destroys this covering, and puts another garment in its place, a precious garment, pure, incorruptible; his own holiness, his own righteousness, his own perfection. And the veil that is spread over all nations, the veil of ignorance, that veil he will rend from top to bottom. And "he will swallow up death in victory;" Christ again, you see; the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth; for the Lord hath spoken it."

Thus, then, to sup with us is to come to us by his sacrificial body; to sup with us is to come to us by the New Testament, the new covenant, the blood of the everlasting covenant, for us to sup with him or feast with him will mean our being with him to all eternity which is thus set forth so beautifully in the 25th of Isaiah, as well as in many other scriptures. It may therefore well, in the 19th of Revelation, be said, "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper," the final meal, the marriage feast, of the Lamb." May the Lord help us then still, to stand by this blessed truth, and to profit thereby; and may the Lord give us higher apprehensions of his love and his mercy, and then we shall serve him more cheerfully.