

SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT.

THE WORLD JUDGED.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 30TH, 1859, BY

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AT THE SURREY TABERNACLE, BOROUGH ROAD.

“For God sent not his Son into the world, to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.” John iii. 17.

IN this, and in the following two verses, I shall have this morning to substitute the words *judge* and *judgment*, for the words *condemn* and *condemnation*; and I believe these words more accurately express what is here intended, than the words *condemn* and *condemnation*. Therefore, after last Lord's-day morning, noticing the object of the Saviour's mission, that it was to save the world; we have this morning to notice the present judgment of the world; for although the Saviour did not come to judge the world *executively*, yet he did judge the world *testimonially*; he judged of the world, that while light was come into it, men loved darkness rather than light; so that he did judge the world *testimonially*; and he will by and bye judge the world *executively*.

Now I have two main points to bring before you this morning; the first is “*the love of the truth*.” I include in that sentence the love of the brethren, and good will towards men generally; for I am sure, if we get out of that spirit, we shall not advocate the truth acceptably in the sight of the Lord; for we are not to “speak wickedly for God;” and “the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.” The reason I have taken this definite expression, is because there can be no acceptable love to God, which will not bear the test of God's truth; and there can be no right brotherly love that will not bear the test of his truth. “To the law and to the testimony;” that is the rule by which we are to test our love to God, and our love to man. And therefore, I say, we desire to go on in a spirit of love to God, love to the brethren, and good will towards men; although because of the weightiness and importance of the subject before us, I shall have to speak rather sternly, and apparently in some parts, very severely; yet, at the same time, while I do so, I desire to do so in love to God, and in love to the brethren, and in good will towards men generally; for I am sure if we are partakers of the mercy and the grace of God, we do exceedingly dishonour our profession if we indulge in a spirit contrary to that spirit which the Lord hath manifested unto us.

THE LOVE OF THE TRUTH then is the first thing that we have to attend to; and that will divide itself under two heads: first, I will *prove the fact that it must be the love of the truth*; and then I will shew you, secondly, *what I mean by the word truth*; try and answer that question, What is truth? For there may be in a man a very sincere love to a great many very excellent things, and yet at the same time, he may not have the love of the truth; and therefore with all his excellencies he is not a Christian.

Where the love of the truth is, it is very pleasing, where it diffuses itself over the whole character of the man. Think not that I am advocating this

morning creature or fleshly perfection; but I thought that by these few remarks I would introduce my subject. Therefore, I first notice, that there may be a great deal of love to many excellent objects, without your having the love of the truth. Let us take, as our guide in this matter, that beautiful chapter, 1 Corinthians xiii. The apostle there, speaks of the excellency of love, called in our translation, *charity*: why our translators should have used that word instead of the word *love*, I know not; perhaps the word *charity* in their day had a significance beyond that which it now has; but as the word is now used, the original word certainly had been better translated *love*. The apostle does not say exactly what that love is; he does not say whether it is the love of God, or the love of Christ, or the love of the brethren; we must go to some other Scripture for an explanation; and you will find that every clause, descriptive of the excellency of that love, will bear adding to it that of "the truth;" it is the love of the truth which he there intends. Let us look at it, and you will see that a man may have a wonderful amount of admirable love, charity, and excellency, and yet not have the love of the truth; and yet, my hearer, however many excellencies we have, if we have not the love of the truth, we shall be lost; and if we have the love of the truth, though on the other hand we may have, as all of us have, and perhaps no one more than your humble servant, a great many deficiencies and faults; yet, if we have the love of the truth it will cover all our faults, it will be a mantle, as it were, to throw over the whole; it will bring us off, in spite of all our faults, more than conquerors hereafter through him that loved us. There may be a great love to learning, and yet that man may not have the love of the truth: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, (or love,) I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." For a man to acquire fifty or sixty languages; and then when he has done that, to acquire or suppose that he has acquired, a knowledge of the languages in which angels speak, that man must have a great love to learning,—a very great love. No man can pursue with much ardour that which he does not love; and hence, we have men who have a great love to learning, and they pursue it with a vast amount of sincerity, and avidity, and I was going to say voraciousness; and these men, generally speaking, are very great blessings to human society. We could not have had the Holy Scriptures in our plain and ponderous language had we not had learned men so to favour us, and to translate the Bible into our language. But yet, though a man may thus acquire languages, and become thus learned, and speak as it were with the eloquence of angels, understand all the languages of the earth—yet, if he has not the love of the truth, even that learned man, that admirable man, that wonderful man, that man (it is a solemn truth) that man, if he be not convinced of his state as a sinner, and brought as a trembling sinner before God, and led to receive the truth in the love of it—with all his eloquence, and with all his learning, he is but as the sounding brass and the tinkling cymbal. He has love—you cannot deny that—he has indeed love; he never could have acquired this learning without it; but then it is not the love of the truth.

Secondly, a man may have also great pulpit gifts; he may understand all the mysteries of the Bible in the letter; he may have such unbounded confidence as to remove every mountain that stands in his way; he may overcome everything. I must not mention any modern name, because I should give great offence, and I wish to avoid that as far as is consistent with speaking the truth. But you have all heard of Peter the Hermit, who, in the 11th century I think it was, stirred up millions by his preaching. He had a gift of preaching that John Wesley never knew; that Whitfield never knew; such a powerful orator he was, that he stirred up all Europe; he had the gift of prophecy to understand all mysteries; and yet, if I have not charity, that is, if I have not love, that is, if I have not the love of the truth, I am nothing. So

you see how far a man may go; a man may have great preaching gifts, and yet no grace in his heart; a man may understand theoretically the great scheme of salvation, and yet if he does not know it experimentally, he is pretty sure to mingle up something bad with it; so that those that do know it experimentally will recognize great defects, and recognize the presence of something that ought to be absent. Thus then, though a man may have these gifts, may have this intellectual understanding, and all this confidence, so as to overturn even mountains, yet he may not have the love of the truth. And if that amiable creature—for there were some in Paul's days amiable as angels, and he warns us that if an angel were to come from heaven with any other gospel, we are to reject him,—if that amiable creature does not come in the love of the truth, then he does not come in the true love of God; and if he does not come in the love of the truth, he does not come in the true love of Christ, and in the true love of the brethren; his preaching is delusive both towards himself and to others; yet, that man has love; he has a love to gifts, he has a love to intellectuality, and he has a love to conquer by his own perseverance; yet he is nothing without the love of the truth.

Thirdly, a man may have a great amount of benevolence. We have had men, and women too, that have made it their business to go into the haunts and dens of misery; and the names of Howard, Fry, and many others, stand upon record for their great benevolence; and there is a great deal of this now, and very pleasing it is to see it. Still the person, with all his benevolence, may not possess the love of the truth, and consequently cannot be saved. I am just shewing, friends, how far persons may go in a love of all that is excellent, so as to stand before the world the brightest Christians that can be—that is, in the world's eyes,—and if the worldly clever were to judge who were Christians, they would be sure to receive such persons, and reject those that have the love of the truth, but cannot make the display that the others do. Again, they may have such a love for their own systems that they may give their bodies to be burned for them. None of us forget Lyeurgus, the great Spartan legislator. Why, he had such a love to his gods, and such a love to his system, that after giving his laws, and establishing them as far as he could, and giving the people to understand that he did so by the authority of the gods, Lyeurgus retired and voluntarily starved himself to death out of love to the people, out of love to the gods, and out of love to the laws which he had given; and yet, of course, he was utterly ignorant of anything scriptural and divine. Now I mention this to shew, that a man may go as far in sincerity in error, as another can go in sincerity in truth; that is going a long way. A man may give his body to be burned for the love of an error; zeal is not the slightest proof of a man's being right: he can be zealous without being right. We wish to see the Christian possess these excellencies; but we see that these excellencies may be possessed, and that where the love of the truth is not. Don't let us be deceived; don't let us deceive ourselves; don't let us think that mere moral, social, personal, intellectual acquirements and excellencies are evidences of being born again.

After thus attending to the negative, let us come to the positive. What is the love of the truth? The apostle describes it largely, and I must not attempt to dwell upon every clause. He commences with long suffering, and terminates his description with infallibility: "charity; (or love,) suffereth long." Try then, that man that knows the truth; he may be persecuted for the truth's sake day after day, or week after week, or month after month, or year after year; but he still holds it fast; he is willing to suffer all his life time for the truth's sake; he will not turn, or twist, or shape his course in a way that will stop the hatred of men; "ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake; but he that shall endure this hatred to the end, shall be saved." We see men sometimes when they get somewhat straight with the truth, and it brings great

odium upon them, lessens their popularity, and lowers them in the estimate of those around; they begin to change their notes, to turn round, and to soften matters; shewing that they never had the real love of the truth in them, or they would not do so. And therefore where this love of the truth is, they will suffer on, and never, as the poet says, give it up. And then, "love is kind," for the truth's sake; and so he concludes, "Charity (or love) never faileth." Therefore, this love of the truth is something that will never fail us, and we shall never fail therein. Then how is it that this love of the truth never fails? Why, in the first place, the word of our God standeth for ever: "He is not man, that he should lie; nor the son of man, that he should repent." He is the same, and therefore his word stands. Then, secondly, the dear Saviour says, "Heaven and earth may pass away, but my word shall not pass away." Therefore, if the truth does not fail, the love of the truth cannot fail—because the love comes to us by the truth. Then again of the blessed Spirit: the testimonies of the Holy Spirit remain the same—"He shall be with you for ever." Therefore, this love of the truth never can fail. All the other loves, the apostle goes on to shew, must fail. Let us look back on this part for a moment. Look at the learned man; his learning presently fails him; it is all lost in Jordan, carried away to the Dead sea. But you that have the love of the truth, abide with the truth, you go safely through Jordan, to be perfected in that land where error can never enter. Then take the man with his great gifts; when nature fails, all these gifts are gone; but the love of the truth still goes with us. Take the man with his charity; giving his goods to feed the poor; that cannot remove one of his sins; that cannot form one thread towards the robe of righteousness; that cannot, if I may so speak, furnish one stepping stone to help him over Jordan; it is utterly useless. But if I have the love of the truth, then when I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. Take the man that gives his body to be burned; that man's body cannot atone for sin; his sufferings cannot atone for sin; his death cannot atone for sin. But let me have the love of the truth; that will not fail me. Yet such is our blindness, and such is our aversion naturally to the truth, that we would rather submit almost to any privation or torture, rather than receive God's truth, till the Lord make us do so.

1. *What is the Truth?* I would set the truth now before you. The truth is the light that cometh into the world; man loveth darkness rather than light. The truth may be stated from two ideas: first *the essence of it*, and secondly, *the order of it*. But in the essence of it, there is order, and in the order, there is essence; but it is more for convenience of expression, that I have adopted these two ideas. First, there is *the essence of truth*. What is it? It is this; that "this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners;" that he "came to seek, and to save that which was lost." Therein lies the very essence of truth; and I need not remind you, that there are a great many Scriptures, which speak of love to God's Salvation, and that the Blessed God is everywhere spoken of as a God of salvation. What is the first feeling of a poor sinner, more or less—it may not be so deep as it shall be afterwards—but is it not something like this?—I feel that I am a lost sinner; I feel that by sin I am lost; I feel that by the sentence of God's eternal law I am lost; lost! Ah, what is it to be lost? He begins to ruminare in his mind, and to think, What is it to be lost? Ah, to be lost! There is something in it infinitely more awful than language can ever describe. To be lost, is to be under the curse of God's eternal law; to be lost, is to be under the wrath of God; to be lost, is to be banished from the presence of God; to be lost, is to be cast into the bottomless pit; to be lost, is to have my portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. Then the Scripture sentence comes in, "He that believeth shall be saved;"

that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners;" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Oh, when the sinner is led to see what Jesus Christ has done, that he has wrought salvation, that his salvation is free, certain and eternal; then he gives rise to the solemn prayer of the heart, "Lord, save me; Lord, have mercy upon me; Lord, pardon me; Lord, manifest thyself unto me; Lord, bless me with the joy of thy salvation; Oh, visit me with thy salvation." Now that is what I would call the very essence of the truth. And when once a sinner is brought to know the testimony, to receive the testimony of what Christ has done, he loves that. Does he now hate the light? Oh no: he says, give me as much light as you can upon this great subject of what Christ has done; accepted in him, complete in him, saved in him. Oh, yes, his relation as a Saviour will never be forgotten; a Saviour, a great one; a Saviour, a kind one; a Saviour, a certain one; there is no uncertainty about the matter. There then is *the essence of truth*.

Then there is *the order of truth*. What do I mean by that? Now in 2nd Thessalonians, to which we have already referred, the apostle sets before us, the man of sin; and he describes him thus: that "his coming is after the working of satan." I am referring to this, because after just noticing this, we shall then get at the apostle's definition of the order of God's truth, in contrast to the order of the man of sin, "Whose coming is after the working of satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders." And what power? how are we to know the power? how are we to know whether the power be satanic or not? I will give you a sign; I will give you a law, a rule, friends, by which you are to know whether the power be satanic, or not. It is this: "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 which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." Therefore Satan's power consisteth in blinding the minds of men against the gospel. This is Satan's power. But then, there is another power, greater than Satan's power, which in spite of Satan's power, commandeth the light to shine into the hearts of his own; giving them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the person of Christ. But he is also said to come "with signs." What are the signs he comes with? Well, I scarcely need tell you that the popish miracles and pretensions are signs, and lying wonders. But then he comes with more refined signs than these; he says, if you do your duty, keep the way pretty clear; if you give a little something to the poor; if you do so and so, then that is all that is needed; and then you set down your own doings, as signs that you belong to God. Now that is of the devil; that is what he does; he puts the doings of the creature into the place of the testimonies of the blessed God; and then gets the poor creature to set up these things as signs; and they so stick to them, that at the last day they will say, Well, we have got our signs with us, Lord; we are sure to be received. Where are they? Why, "we have eaten and drank in thy presence;" we have always attended the sacrament; and "cast out devils," and we don't know what we have not done—a great deal. "But," says the Saviour, "I never knew you." Therefore, Satan comes with all power to hide the Gospel, with signs, and lying wonders. Why, Peter the Hermit converted many of the people to his religion; one main sentiment of which was to take the Holy Land from the infidels, and so do God service, and restore the church to its millennarian glory. He was a complete Millennarian. Well, it was such a wonder that even our own kings went in person; they were converted too. But then they were all lying wonders. Oh, my hearers, in what a variety of ways will Satan deceive us; all keeping us away from God's truth. But what is God's truth in the order of it? It is this, "We are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation."

"Bound to give thanks," that is, we have no hand in it at all. Perhaps some one says, I don't like that at all, that we have no hand in it. Then the Lord open your eyes, and give you to see the necessity of a salvation that you had no hand in. "We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you;" given you to Christ. Do you hear that? If you are brought to know your lost condition truly, the great truth of eternal election will entwine about your soul; you will receive it, hold it fast, abide by it, profit by it, bless God for it; and glory in that amazing grace that took you up in his eternal counsels, from whence you lay, and constituted you an heir of God, gave you to his dear Son, with whom you are one, and dwell for ever. Chosen to that salvation of which I have spoken, "through sanctification," of the flesh? No; through sanctification of the Spirit: the Holy Ghost. And with what does the Holy Ghost consecrate a soul to God? With the blood of Christ, and with the truth of Christ; he is the Spirit of truth; and he brings us to receive the truth. Fourth, "Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ;" he begins with election; then goes on to salvation; then to the Holy Spirit's work of consecration; then reminds us that our calling was of God; and then unites this divine calling with eternal glory; "to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." So that the order of truth stands thus; election begins it, and glorification terminates it; and you cannot separate it. Here then lies the essence and order of truth. Do I love the truth of God's salvation, and what from? First from my need of it, and secondly, from the endearing power of it. And I love this order of truth with all my heart and soul. My body is a toy, my mortal life a mere shadow, in comparison of any of these blessed truths that set forth God's eternal love in the eternal salvation of our souls.

Now let us come back again to our text. "For God sent not his Son into the world." I am going to take away the words *condemn* and *condemnation*, substituting the words *judge* and *judgment*,—"For God sent not his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not judged; but he that believeth not is judged already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the judgment, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." Now let us try this for a moment; is there any exception to this? Take this salvation of which I have spoken; and take this order of things of which I have spoken, and let the whole human race be tested by that order of things; and what would be proved? Why, it would be proved that there is not one right; that there is not a son nor daughter of Adam, that can be exempted from that description, that "Men loved darkness rather than light." The natural man love that salvation? Impossible! The natural man love that order of truth? Impossible! Why so? Why, when this order of truth is brought to bear upon them, they say, According to your account all our deeds are evil; and they feel that they cannot bear the light of truth; it cuts their religion up root and branch; it proves even their best deeds to be evil; and consequently they hate the light, neither come they to the light. So I understand that scripture. Well, but, say you, it does say that some come to the light. Oh yes, those that God brings; let him draw a poor sinner with the salvation I am speaking of; and he will come to the light. Oh, but his deeds are evil. He knows that; he knows his deeds are evil; he sees nothing but sin. There was a time when this light was offensive to me; but now I am brought to see and feel that all my doings are evil; that all my righteousness is as filthy rags; and yet I love the light, because in that light there is salvation from them all; in that light there is grace to bury them all; in that light there is glory to cover them all. It is redemption light, salvation light, eternal light; a sun that will never go down.

But again, all who can bear this text are saved. They are not judged; they are not under judgment; they are passed the judgment; their judgment was taken away at Calvary's cross. How do I know that the judgment was taken away at Calvary's cross? Because they believe in the Son of God. Why are the others to be condemned? Because they believed not in the Son of God; that is, because they have not saving faith in the Son of God. What! are they condemned for that? No; that is the point of conclusion I have to try. Now, there is a doctrine that tells us that men are damned for not savingly believing in Jesus Christ; and I believe that doctrine of duty-faith that speaketh thus, I believe it is a doctrine, (I know it is, indeed,) that is of the devil; and that it maketh empty the soul of the hungry, and that it maketh the drink of the thirsty to fail, and that it seeks to establish communion between light and darkness, and that it seeks to make the temple of God and the temple of idols one. It is a piece of Popish spawn; it is the very spawn of Popery; it is one of the wrong doctrines which the Puritan fathers, with all their excellencies, held; but because they held it, it does not follow that I am to hold it; I am not going to follow the Puritan fathers any further than they followed the Bible. Now let us make the matter as clear as possible, as clear as A B C. Here is a world to be drowned. I come to you, and say, You are to be drowned, sir. Why shall I be drowned? Because you are not in the ark; the ark is the only way of escape. What! am I to be drowned for not going into the ark? No, sir, the ark was never meant for you; the ark was never provided for you, sir; you are to be drowned for your violence against the people of God: for the earth was full of violence and blood, they had slain nearly all the people of God. Therefore, you are to be drowned for your ungodly and murderous enmity to the people of God: you are to be drowned because you are not in the ark, that is, you not being in the ark is a proof that you are among those that are to be drowned. What! am I to be drowned for not going in the ark? Oh no, it was never meant for you. Second, here is the destroying angel. I say to the Egyptian, You are to be slain. I am to be slain! How do you know that? Because you are not under the shelter of the Paschal Lamb. What! am I to be slain for that? No, the Paschal Lamb was never intended for you; it was intended only for Israel, and that you may know that the Lord doth put a difference, not because one is better than the other; but because God is pleased to do so; the Lord hath put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel. Will you tell me, then, that the Egyptian was destroyed for not being under the shelter of the Paschal Lamb? It was never meant for him. Again, I come to Jericho; I say to that man, you are to be slain. How do you know I am to be slain? Why, your not being in Rahab's house, is the proof to me; for that is the only house that is to be spared. Why? Because the love of the truth is there. Rahab received the love of the truth, acknowledged the dignity of the Most High; and therefore, her house was spared. What, am I to be slain for not going into that house? No; you are to be slain for your ungodliness, and that you have persecuted the truth from Melchisedek's day, until now; therefore the land stinketh in the nostrils of the Most High, and you are to be destroyed. Now don't you understand; "This is the condemnation; that light is come into the world, and that men loved darkness rather than light." Now I don't know whether the Greek word there translated "condemnation," would not have been better untranslated. What is the Greek word there translated "condemnation?" Why, a word that came a great many years ago to England, put on an English dress, and looks very well in an English dress; it is in our dictionaries, the same word precisely pronounced alike; so you all talk Greek now-a-days, all of you; I believe it is a word you all use sometimes; and it has in the Greek language a very similar meaning. I am aware that in the transportation of a word from one country to another, that

word sometimes acquires a degree of new meaning ; but this word can hardly be said by having changed its place to have changed its meaning. It is that little significant word *crisis*. Now this is the crisis ; this is the crisis ; you all know what that means. Oh, say you, when we come to a certain point, that will be the crisis. Just so ; this is the *crisis* ; "that light is come into the world ;" and when men are tested by that light of eternal truth, the decision is that they love darkness rather than light. But if I am brought out of darkness, and brought to love the truth, then I am brought to the crisis ; it is the turning point, bringing me to the truth. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" I must bring you to the crisis, to the turning point. "Lovest thou me?" "Lord thou knowest all things ; thou knowest that I love thee." That was the turning point, you see. Thus, then, he that cannot stand the truth, hates the truth, and will not come to it ; but he that loves the truth, comes fully into the light of truth, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God.

Was Noah saved *for* being in the ark ? Why, say you, that is not common sense ; because his being in the ark was the effect of the grace of God to him. Very well, then, if he were not saved *for* being in the ark, the others were not lost *for not* being in the ark. Were the Israelites exempted from the angel of death for being under the shelter of the Paschal Lamb ? Why, they were by the means of it ; but they were there as the result of God's goodness to them. Oh, then, you mean to say they did not put themselves there first, and then the Lord for that, exempted them. Just so. And so the others were condemned for their sins, and not for their not being where the Israelites were. Where Rahab and those with her saved for being in the house ? Oh no, say you ; her being exempted resulted from God's grace to her. Very well ; as she and her family were not saved for being there, the Jerichoites were not destroyed for not being there. This doctrine of duty-faith is a doctrine that degrades the people of God, feeds Pharisees, perverts the truth, deceives souls, and that by thousands ; and if we have any confidence in our own principles, we shall reject error in every shape and form.

Thus then, when it can be proved that it was the *duty* of the world to go into the Ark, that it was the duty of the Egyptians to keep the passover, the duty of the Jerichoites to go into Rahab's house, that it is the duty of the common subjects of a kingdom to be of the Royal family, then may it be proved, that it is the duty of all men *saveingly* to believe in Christ.

So you see I have fulfilled what I said., I told you at the outset I should have to speak rather sternly ; but sternly as I have spoken, I have spoken in love to the truth, in love to God, in love to Christ, and in love to the brethren, and in goodwill to all men.

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