

# SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT.

TREASURES HID IN THE SAND.

## A Sermon

PREACHED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 10TH, 1859, BY

MR. JAMES WELLS,

AT THE SURREY TABERNACLE, BOROUGH ROAD.

"Treasures hid in the sand." Deut. xxxiii. 19.

HAVING noticed last Sunday morning the preceeding words, "They shall suck of the abundance of the seas;" I, this morning proceed to notice the last clause of the verse, "And of treasures hid in the sand." I shall take the treasures here spoken of, to mean the people of God; and taking that view, the text will present itself to us under four heads. First, *here are the people of God as the Lord's peculiar treasures*; secondly, *they are hidden*; thirdly, *they are here represented as hidden in the sand*; and fourthly, *they shall not always be hidden in the sand, but shall come forth to those regions which the Lord hath designed for them.*

I. There is one circumstance would make them HIS TREASURES; and that is his love to them; he loved them with an everlasting love; for that is the way, I think, we must begin our ideas upon this subject; having loved them with an immutable love, and made them dear to his heart, they are thus constituted his peculiar treasures. And in order that we should have right ideas upon this, it is even said in the word of God, that "They are loved with the same love wherewith Christ himself is loved;" so that his manhood and their persons appear to be constituted one; that whatever the one is to the Lord, that also is the other. If there be no oneness with Christ, then there can be no life, no sanctification, no justification, no salvation, no glorification. Let me notice the circumstances in the Lord's word wherein the Lord's people are spoken of as his treasures; and so thereby trace out their characteristics as distinguished from all other people. They are spoken of as his treasures, first, in their consecration to him, and in their obedience to him, and in their holding fast his truth. In Exodus xix., the Lord says, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagle's wings, and brought you unto myself." "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians;" ye have seen that I let them go on in their hardness of heart; ye have seen that I let them go on in their blindness; ye have

seen that I let them go on to their own destruction ; ye have seen how my righteous judgment has overtaken them, overturned them, and swallowed them up. And there is something in that, very solemn to the real Christian ; he says, Yes, Lord, I have seen that ; and thou mightest have dealt with me in the same way ; why were my blind eyes opened ? and why was I made to differ ? and why were my wandering feet turned to tread the heavenly road ? and why was I not left where I once was, in order that I might have been responsible for my own sins, and been subjected to that terrible, at the same time righteous judgment, by which I must have been banished from thy presence and from the glory of thy power ? There is therefore in those words I think a very solemn truth to be recognized, and a lesson of instruction to be obtained, " Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians ; and how I bare you on eagle's wings, and brought you unto myself ;" I could not have brought you to a better place ; I could not have brought you to so good a place—I brought you to *myself*. Let us take this in the new covenant sense, without detaining you, by explaining what is meant by it in the old covenant sense, " I bare you on eagles wings." It would be a *miracle* for a man to fly ; and therefore I think there is the idea of a miracle there intended ; that as the Lord brought the Israelites out of Egypt by miracles, so what is our regeneration but a miracle of grace ? and for us to be raised up to see and to know that there is for us beyond the wilderness an eternal inheritance that fadeth not away, what is this but a miracle of grace ? " I brought you unto myself." The Lord brings us to himself ; and if you ask where it is that he brings us to himself, my answer is, it is by his dear Son ; " Brought nigh by the blood of Jesus Christ ;" brings us to himself where he has loved us ; brings us to himself where he has chosen us ; brings us to himself where he will abide with us ; brings us to himself where he rests in his love ; brings us to himself where he has eternal life for us and eternal glory for us ; he brings us to where he himself is. It is in and by Christ Jesus then, that we are brought near unto God. Let these two then, first, the difference made between the people of God and others, and secondly, being brought unto the Lord by Jesus Christ—let these two remain as evidences that we are a part of that peculiar treasure ; that treasure which was hid in the sand ; but the Lord found us out, brought us to himself, and will part with us again no more for ever. " Now, therefore, the Lord says, " If ye will obey my voice ;" so in the old covenant order of things there was an *if*, but when we come to the new covenant, then that *if* is lost, is lost in what the dear Saviour has done. Bless his precious name, he has taken the *if* away, and has put it into this form. " My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me ;" What is that but the obedience of faith ? " And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish." " If ye will obey my voice." Oh, how gladly does the soul taught of God to obey the voice of the Great Shepherd ; or if you take the Eternal Three ; take God the Father in what he has done, how willingly the soul believes it, our very life lies in this obedience to our God ; for, saith the Saviour, " He that heareth my word, and believeth in him

that sent me, hath everlasting life." Therefore, to obey his voice, will mean, in the first place, to believe in God the Father, in the greatness of his love, and in the infinite gift of his dear Son: to obey his voice, will mean, to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ in what he is in his Person—in what he is in his work; having, as far as the east is from the west, put away our sins—eternally put away all our sins. Here is obeying his voice; it is the obedience of faith. And the apostle applies this *if* to professors in a delienative way, to distinguish the real possessor from the mere professor, "To day, if ye will hear his voice." Well, the poor sinner says, what is his voice? We may give many examples of it: take for instance this; "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, that Christ is a priest for ever, after the order of Melchezidek." Oh, how nicely the soul falls into that; there is the obedience of faith. "Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice, and keep my covenant," keep in conformity to my covenant. I have instituted an order of things that excludes all false gods: I have instituted an order of things that is to regulate you in all you do; and therefore, if you keep my covenant, you shall then be a peculiar treasure to me above all people. So then, the things that were uncertain in that covenant, are made certain in the new covenant, "If ye keep my covenant." When the soul is once brought into the bond of that new covenant sealed by Jesus Christ, that soul finds stability there, finds peace there, for it is a covenant of peace; and finds certainty there, for it is a covenant of certainty, even the sure mercies of David; finds strength there, for it is a strong covenant; there the Lord himself interposes by immutable oath; when the soul is brought thus far, how gladly it keeps God's covenant, "If ye keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people, for all the earth is mine; I can make what use of it I please; and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation." Priests had to offer sacrifices. Prayer is a kind of sacrifice, a sacrifice of request; gratitude is a kind of sacrifice; a broken spirit, a heart full of griefs and troubles, and anxieties, and shall I say wretchedness, when we are enabled to confess all that to the Lord, all this is a kind of sacrifice; but, by and bye there will be one sacrifice, our priesthood will be narrowed by and bye into one sacrifice; and yet, when I say narrowed, I ought to say expanded; but when I say narrowed into one, I mean to say that the time will come, when there will be no sacrifice of prayer to offer, when there will be no sacrifice of a broken heart—a broken spirit to offer; when there will be no sacrifice of mourning to offer, there will be nothing left but the sacrifice of praise! the very soul itself, as a poet expresses it, shall be

"Lost in wonder, love and praise,

and that for ever. "Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation: washed in the Saviour's precious blood, clothed in his

righteousness:—Oh! what cannot such persons face? They are the peculiar treasure of God the Father: he takes care of them: there is nothing in the whole range of existence, that stands anything like a rival to them: there is nothing in the estimation of the Saviour, that stands anything like a rival to the bride—the church: there is nothing in the range of existence, that stands anything like a rival to those, of whom the Holy Ghost is the teacher. His peculiar treasures. Oh! if this be the case, friends, such poor creatures as we are, and yet the peculiar treasure of the Most High, what will be the other side of the question? What a treasure will the Father in his love be to us! What a treasure will the Saviour be to us! What a treasure will the exceeding great and precious promises of the Lord's holy word be to us! Thus then, those who are the peculiar treasure of the Lord, he himself becomes their peculiar treasure: "Unto you that believe he is precious."

Again, election also makes them special treasures—peculiar treasures. Turn to the 135th Psalm, that Psalm is introduced with remarkable emphasis. The Lord enable us, to treat the truths of the gospel in the same way that the Bible treats them, the Lord enable us to fall more into the spirit of the holy prophets and apostles, and to lose sight more and more of the theories and systems of men, and simply judge for ourselves. Take then, I say, the great fact that election is a truth that has made the people a peculiar treasure. The 135th Psalm, upon this very subject, is introduced in a very emphatic way; you would almost wonder what was coming. The Psalm commences thus: "Praise ye the Lord, praise ye the name of the Lord, praise him, O ye servants of the Lord, ye that stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God. Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good; sing praises unto his name for it is pleasant." Here is a great deal of delight here, a great deal of pleasure here, a great deal of exultation here; and something that must bring very great good to the people and very great glory to God, or else surely the word "praise" would not have been so many times repeated in that short introduction to the subject that the Psalmist had in his mind. And he immediately assigns the reason; "For the Lord hath *chosen* Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure;" that is the reason. Oh, my hearer, if we have reason to believe that our names are written in the book of life, we may well praise the Lord. No soul ever sunk into the bottomless pit whose name was in the book of life; no one at the last great day shall be cast away whose name is there; no one was left out of the Saviour's death whose name is there, no one shall be neglected whose name is there. All depends upon that, whether the name be in the book of life or not. Election then, as there appears, is one transaction by which they appear as God's peculiar treasure; first, as shewn in Exodus xix, in being brought to himself; and secondly, in Psalm cxxxv. in his having chosen them, and in that he blessed them with all spiritual blessings.

Let us take another view of these people as God's peculiar treasure. They are his peculiar treasure as a tried people. In Malachi iii. they are spoken of as his jewels; the margin renders it "especial treasures." In the same chap-

ter they are spoken of as a tried people; tried in their seeking after what the adversary does not want them to find. The introduction to that chapter is very remarkable,—“Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare my way before me; and the Lord, whom ye seek;” then the peculiar treasures are seeking the Lord; “the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in; behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.” Now we know who that Messenger is; we know that Messenger to be the dear, the blessed Redeemer; he came by his obedient life, by his atoning death and resurrection, as well as by his ministry and by the Holy Spirit. “But who may abide the day of his coming?” for he will try these seekers; “And who shall stand when he appeareth?” Why, Anna shall; she spake of him to those that looked for redemption in Jerusalem; good old Simeon shall, who said, “Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.” Who shall stand when he appeareth? The shepherds of Bethlehem shall. Who shall stand when he appeareth? The wise men from the East shall. Who shall stand when he appeareth? Every poor sensible sinner, whether a Magdalene or a thief on the cross—every poor sinner that is brought down to his feet, they shall stand by what he is to them, and what he has done for them. And then, again, these peculiar treasures are called the sons of Levi; that is a term belonging to the people of God, to denote their nearness to God. “And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver.” You cannot purify silver with cold water; no; it must be very hot fire, to melt it down. And when it is melted, the silver is apparently lost in the dross; the dross comes to the top, there is nothing but dross to be seen; but there is the silver nevertheless. “He will try them as gold is tried;” you cannot try gold with water, or anything easy, it must be something very fiery, very trying. And what is it for? “That they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness;” and that offering there, I should think, will mean the Lord Jesus Christ himself. In the Old Testament they could not serve God acceptably without priests, and without an offering by those priests; and we cannot serve God acceptably without Christ, nor without the atonement that he has made. There was the priest, and there was the atonement he made. So here with Jesus Christ; he is the Priest, and then there is the atonement he has made. “Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old.” Mark that now; just compare that with the words of the New Testament; “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” This is the offering that is pleasant to the Lord; namely, Christ; and if you come pleading his name, come pleading atonement, come pleading righteousness, the Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake. These are his peculiar treasures; these are his silver and his gold, with which he will never part. But there were some people in that day that did not like this messenger of the covenant; that did not like this order of things; and so they said, “It is

vain to serve Jehovah; now if you will serve Dagon, or Baal, or some other god, you will do very well; but it is a vain thing to serve Jehovah, and to walk mournfully before Jehovah; it is quite a vain thing, the worst thing you can do; the more you serve him the more trouble you have, the further you are off; it is the worst thing you can do. So they thought; but they knew not the messenger of the covenant. But what did the true seekers do then? what did they resort to then? Why, "they that feared the Lord spake often one to another." You can almost imagine one saying to another, well, brother, do you think it is a vain thing to serve Jehovah? No, no. Do you think it is a vain thing to endure tribulation for the kingdom of God's sake, for the Lord's sake? Oh, no. And though Gad may be overcome at first, yet he shall overcome at the last; and though he try us now, yet we shall by and by come forth from the trial; it shall not be always darkness, not be always furnace work. No, it is not a vain thing; I know it is not a vain thing. And so they agreed among themselves that it was not a vain thing; but one of the most profitable. "And the Lord hearkened and heard it." The Lord stood by, and said, as it were, now some of these people have come together; and what will they say about me? They agree that there is no God like me, and no order of things like mine; and so "the Lord hearkened and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord." And it appears that among these people there were some that could not say much, but rather listened to what the others said. Ah, that's what I should have liked to have said, but I have not the gift of speech; that is just my experience. "A book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name;" mark that; "that *thought* upon his name;" thought upon this new covenant relationship, thought of this messenger of the covenant; and thought there was no name like it; his name is Jehovah Jireh; "the Lord will provide; Jehovah Nissi, "the Lord is my banner;" Jehovah Shalom; "the Lord will send peace;" they thought upon his name; and that there was no name like it.

"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds,  
In a believer's ear."

And so a book of remembrance was written of all their little doings, but though they were very little, they were still expressive of their decision for God, and love to his blessed name. "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." And as when Moses came out of Egypt, not a hoof was left behind, so when these precious treasures are gathered up, not one shall be left behind; not a hair of your head shall perish; many other gods may try to get them, but they shall not have them; sin and Satan may try to get them, but they shall not have them, the world may try to get them, but it shall not have them; "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." You know, in the Old Testament there are several scriptures expressive of the Lord's delight in his people as his jewels. For instance, the promise made to the Saviour, "Thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth." In the East, even to this day, the jewels of the bride are to her most precious; and so believers are precious to Christ; he will take care of them.

II. But, secondly, these treasures are HIDDEN. First, they are hidden from themselves. Why, when you and I were in a state of nature, we were hidden from ourselves, our sinnership was hidden from us, when we were walking about in this world trying to satisfy ourselves with husks. But the sense in which I speak of it here is that of our saintsship—we were then hidden from

ourselves : we dreamt not that there was an estate existing for us in heaven ; we were dreaming of earthly estates, not supposing there was a heavenly estate waiting for us ; but we are now brought into the light, and what wonderful things do we see in this amazing light. Well might the Psalmist say, " In thy light shall we see light." If he had said, In the light of the sun shall we see light, then you could not see light in that light long, because you will soon die, and if you do not soon die, the sun itself by and bye must be turned into darkness ; even that must come to an end ; and therefore, if your hope is to see light only in the light of the sun, even supposing you had to live thousands of years, the time must come when darkness shall spread over the earth. But if you desire to see light in the Lord's light, then thou hast everlasting light, a sun that will never go down, a moon that will never withdraw its brightness, stars that will sparkle on to all eternity ! Secondly, we were equally hidden from the world, and we are hidden from the world now—" The world knoweth us not ;" " The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." And then also they are hidden from themselves, and from all except the Lord himself, as to their ultimate destiny, and blessedness, and glory—it is too great for them to comprehend,—“ We know not what we shall be ; but we know that we shall be like him.” Like him ! When John saw him, as recorded in Revelation i., “ he fell at his feet as dead.” And the Saviour is represented there by a variety of earthly imagery, such as this world could afford. His countenance is compared to the sun ; his eyes to flames of fire ; his feet to fine brass, as if they burned in the furnace ; and he is represented as being clothed with a garment down to the feet, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle : all expressive of majesty, purity, dignity, and greatness, and glory. To be like him ! to have all the firmness of standing ! all the immortality of countenance ! all the brilliancy of expression ! and all the powers of eloquence ! To be like him !! We are hidden from ourselves : we know not what we shall be—it is something too great for us to imagine.

III. They are hidden also in THE SAND. This must be understood in several respects. First, sand is noted in scripture for weight and number, and becomes a figure of our sins. We are hidden in the weight and number of our sins ; our sins are innumerable. Now the sand of the sea shore, though it cannot be reckoned numerically, yet it can be mathematically weighed ; but our sins cannot be either numerically or mathematically calculated. As Mr. Hart says of Christ's sufferings,

“ It was to God, and God alone,  
That their weight was fully known.”

And yet these sins, many and weighty as they were, could not destroy us ;—Christ came and rolled them together—took them all away ; and we are brought out of the sand of sin ; and where are we now brought to stand ? Our standing before was upon sin ; and I say to you now that are not born of God, you have nothing but sin to stand upon while you live, and when you die you have nothing to die in but your sins ; and when you appear at the judgment-day, you will have nothing to appear in but your sins. There is something very solemn in this idea, therefore, of being hidden in the sand. But how great the change now !—“ Thou hast brought me up out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and hast set my feet upon a rock.” Now as long as we live we have a Rock upon which to stand ; and when we come to the swelling of Jordan, we have a Rock upon which to stand ; and when worlds, rolling worlds, depart in fire, there is the Rock of Ages upon which to stand !—“ Let the inhabitants of the rock sing ; let them shout from the tops of the mountain !”

“ How can we sink with such a prop  
That bears the earth and her huge columns up ?”

Secondly, hidden in the sands of oppression. The Israelites were hidden in the sands of Egypt, in the brick-fields of Egypt—they were slaves. Just so with a poor sinner when first brought out of the sands of his sins, and seeking after the rock; there he is under the law; there he is under task-masters; his sins oppress him; conscience oppresses; the devil oppresses him, till he will cry in his anguish to God, "Awake, awake, O arm of the Lord; awake as in ancient times, in generations of old; art thou not it that cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon?" The Lord says, "I have heard their cry, I have seen their affliction, I know their sorrows." But does he stop there? No! "And I am come down to deliver them." And he certainly will not go back again without delivering them. The Divinely appointed Deliverer comes, bursts the bonds asunder; thou art no longer hidden in the sands of bondage, oppression and misery; but thou art brought into the light of God's truth and the light of his presence. Third, they are hidden in the sands of tribulation by the way. Perhaps you will forgive me if I give way for a moment to a kind of personification to illustrate this. Suppose the Israelites in the wilderness, amidst the water sheds, and the defiles, and the sand hills of the wilderness,—we will suppose the mountains, and hills, and trees of Canaan to enter into a kind of consultation. The mountains and the hills say to each other, Where are the people that are to inhabit us? As soon as they come, we shall begin to leap, we shall begin to skip, we shall begin to rejoice, for there is a promise that we shall. Well, says one mountain a little taller than the rest, I can see some clouds. Who is this that cometh up out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke? What does that cloud mean? God's truth, and God's host, and God's presence. What does that other cloud mean? The sacrificial altar. What does that other cloud mean? The clouds of incense and intercession. But what does the general cloud mean? The cloud of sand in which the people are buried. Ah, they are on their way then; yes, they are on their way. So the land was waiting for them; the mountains and the trees were waiting for them. Ah, say the mountains and the trees, "instead of the thorn they shall find with us only the fir tree; instead of the brier, they shall find with us only the myrtle tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." We are looking for the people, and the people are looking for us; they are at present hidden in the sands; but they shall surely come at the appointed time. Then there is a fourth sense in which they are hidden in the sands. How many are there hid in the sand in London in the different cemeteries; and you and I must be hidden there by and bye. How will the Lord ever find them out? Are they his treasures now? Yes. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints; he hath given commandment concerning their bones." And as Joseph's bones were brought out of Egypt, so the Lord will find out these treasures hid in the sand. I want no philosophy about it; I cannot comprehend it philosophically, any more than I can comprehend how my own soul and body constitute one person, or what the soul abstractedly is; but I know I have a soul, though it is a very little one, still I have one. The dead are hidden in the sand, the great man and the little man, the prince and the peasant, the young and the old, all are mingled together; but the Lord knoweth them that are his. Treasures hid in the sand.

Well then, we shall not be always hid in the sand, there is a way out; and the last part of this chapter, which I cannot now touch upon, will shew you the blessedness into which the treasures now hid in the sand shall ultimately come.