

SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT.

RIGHT ATTRACTION.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, APRIL 29TH, 1860, BY

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AT THE SURREY TABERNACLE, BOROUGH ROAD.

"Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." John vi. 43, 44.

It is as a general rule dangerous to take a scripture by itself, and interpret or pretend to interpret it by notions of our own, without regarding what other scriptures say upon the same subject. So in our day, men pretend that they have nothing to do but cast themselves into the arms of Christ, to believe in Christ; they are not to look after any sense of need or any conviction of sin; but come direct to Christ at once, throw themselves direct upon Christ at once; and that all men are to be exhorted so to do. And I am sure if this were scriptural I would be second to no man under heaven in exhorting men so to do; for I cannot think of any greater blessing that can overtake any man than for him to be brought savingly unto the Lord Jesus Christ. But if such a way be scriptural, I must confess my blindness, that I have never yet seen it, and I cannot see it. I have tried to see it; I have searched the Scriptures, and tried to find it in the Scriptures, but I cannot; and so far from my holding with the notion that all men are to be and are exhorted to believe in Christ and come to Christ, so far from my seeing it in the Scriptures, and so far from my feeling convinced that it is scriptural to do so, such a doctrine is in my estimation one of the strongest and most powerful delusions which we have in Christendom; and I believe that vast numbers of souls are deceived thereby, and set down for Christians that are not Christians. I shall therefore, this morning try to look at my subject as treated and dealt with by the Holy Scriptures; for I am sure, if we are deceiving ourselves nothing worse can befall us; and although evidences of belonging to the Lord are not saviours, yet you cannot beat the real child of God off from looking after his evidences. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life;" "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith." These, and many other scriptures shew that there is a divine reality in being brought unto the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have, as you are aware, had these words before as our text; and we have this morning simply to notice the third proposition we made last Lord's-day morning; that of *the essential attraction*. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." I will then first, notice, *the essential of this attraction*; second, *the way of this attraction*; third, *the immediate and ultimate objects of this attraction*.

I. First, THE ESSENTIAL OF THIS ATTRACTION. Let us take a Scripture or two upon the subject; and then we shall set out clearly. "It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God." Here you observe, that what is spoken of in our text as attraction, the Father drawing, is in the

next verse spoken of as divine teaching. "It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." So it appears here that the words apply with equal truth that no man can come unto me, except my Father so teach him as to bring him unto me; and what in our text is spoken of as attraction, is in the next verse spoken of as divine teaching, is in the 65th verse of this chapter spoken of as a divine gift; for the Saviour there repeats in part the words of our text, with a little variation; "Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father." Here observe, our text speaks of attraction; the next verse speaks of divine teaching; the 65th verse speaks of divine gift; "except it were given unto him of my Father." Then again in the 13th of Matthew, when the Saviour had given the parable of the sower, the disciples asked him why he spake unto them in parables; and his answer, as you are aware, was, "because it is given unto you," mark, it is a divine gift, "to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." Then how does the Saviour settle this matter of some being brought and some being left? I will shew how he settles that before I enter into a description of the nature of this attraction. We know how men settle the question; they settle it thus; they say, it is true there are only some that come, but the others might have come if they liked; they had the same chance, the same opportunity, and the same offers; though I read of no such things in the Bible as offers; and they were exhorted to come; and therefore it is their own fault that they are not saved as well as the others. But how does the Saviour settle the matter? He settles it with God's sovereignty; he uses nothing else; he brings in the sovereignty of God, and by the sovereignty of God he settles the great matter of that present and everlasting difference that shall be found between the lost and the saved. "In that hour Jesus rejoiced;" he rejoiced in the lofty and glorious attribute of divine sovereignty; "In that hour Jesus rejoiced, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes, even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Now, my hearers, I appeal to you, and I might appeal, I was going to say, to the whole of the Christian church; and I ask, is it right to be satisfied with men's decisions, which decisions have not the word of God on their side; or is it right that we should reject those decisions, and come to the word of God; and if we there find the matter settled, ought we not as professed Christians; ought we not as those who profess to be saved from first to last by grace, ought we not to fall in with the Lord's decision, ought we not to stand by the Lord's decision; ought we not to advocate the Lord's decision; ought we in a matter so solemn and important to let any human consideration whatever enter into our thoughts upon the subject; ought not the word of our God to be final; is there any higher authority anywhere; is there any higher court anywhere; is there any other way in which the matter can be settled? So may the Lord, then, lead us into that mind the Psalmist was in when he said, "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven." I think, then, these two points are pretty clear; first, that to be brought to Jesus Christ we must be divinely taught, or else we are not brought savingly; second, that the reason some are left is because he in the depths of his sovereignty leaves them; and thus that ye may know that the Lord doth put a difference between Israel and the Egyptians. Now, "no man can come to me," therefore, except the Father which hath sent me draw him;" and this drawing is by divine teaching. And I am sure, no sinner can be attracted in that way which we have in our second part to shew, until the sinner be so constituted that Christ becomes the object of his

attraction; for naturally the true Christ of God, in other words, Christ in the true dignity of his person, in the real nature of his work, in the real order of his priesthood, in the real order of the new covenant, in the real certainty of his suretyship, responsibility is repulsive to men. Men by nature are so sunken in sin, that so far from being attracted to Christ, he is repulsive to them; they see not that beauty in him which is essential to their being savingly drawn to him. Well, therefore, may the Saviour say, "Every one that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me;" here is divine teaching. Let us see what that is; let us come home to close quarters upon the matter. We may go even to the book of that man that modern divines tell us knew but very little about eternal things; I mean the book of Job; and perhaps we cannot do better than just notice there what is said of this divine teaching. "Happy is the man whom God correcteth; therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty." "He maketh sore, and he bindeth up." How does he make sore? He convinces a sinner of sin; and that man's conscience is sore from a sense of guilt, from an apprehension of being lost, from an apprehension of the greatness of the wrath of God, from an apprehension of the certainty of the wrath of God. The man's conscience is sore, his heart is sore, his mind is feverish; rottenness, as it were, enters into his bones, he feels himself a poor, miserable sinner; and the world, and mortal life, and the things thereof, wonderfully lose their charms. Now this soreness of conscience prepares him for what the Lord has for him; for while the Lord thus makes sore, he also binds up. Now let the Saviour appear unto such an one; let it be seen by such an one that Jesus Christ was made sin for just such a sinner as he is; let it be seen by such an one that all the blessedness, real blessedness, of any man lies in the imputation of his sins to Christ, and the imputation of Christ's work to him; this man is attracted. Ah, he says, that is what I want; if I had that in my soul, in my conscience, if the Eternal Spirit would bring home a word with power, and bring me into the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin, then I should be both blessed and happy, and I should then bless the name of the Lord. When a sinner is made sensible of what he is, then and not till then the Saviour becomes the object of attraction, according to his own words; "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." Thus then, he maketh sore. Now I must leave you to judge what you know of this conscience work, of this heart work, what you know of the misery of your sinnership; what you know experimentally of the wretchedness of your sinnership; what you know of this poverty of spirit; what you know of this mourning; and what you know of hungering and thirsting. As I shewed last Lord's-day morning the invitations are to character; and so we must have these evidences about us in order to be brought rightly unto the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord will take good care that that provision which he has made shall be in full request by his own people. But according to the way in which men now declare peace where there is no peace; the way in which ministers set men down for Christians, not one half of the provision which the Lord has made is in request; they can do with a very little of election, some of them without it altogether; and many other truths which I must not now stop to enumerate they can do without. There must be the misery of sinnership, and this will make the Saviour attractive; and hereby the Father draws us, by bringing us under this discipline; and if ye are without this chastisement, then are ye bastards, and not sons; such is the solemn declaration of the word of God. Now after the Lord has drawn a sinner so far, what does he do after that? He wounds him again. Here is a sinner made miserable; Jesus Christ is revealed to him, and he is made somewhat comfortable; after this the Lord wounds him again; for so the description

is. How does he wound him? By leaving him to the infidelities of his heart; by leaving him to make a fresh discovery of the depths of the deceitfulness of his heart; by leaving him to anything and everything contrary to that state of soul in which he has been. Just now he was a believer; now he seems more like an infidel than anything else; just now his heart was softened down, and he could love the Lord, and know that the Lord loved him; but now there is deadness, and carnality, and something even approaching to enmity, not against the truth, but against some of the Lord's dealings with him; just now he could pray with sweetness, and liberty and assurance; now the mouth of prayer is stopped; just now there was hardly a chapter in the Bible which he could not feel encouraged by, hardly a promise that did not seem to bring some sweetness to him; but now he is as barren, and as dead, and as stripped, and such a poor creature; this wounds him; and he is like the persons you read of in the 35th, of Isaiah; there he is now with feeble knees, with weak hands, with a fearful heart; there he is tongue-tied; his ears are filled with everything but the joyful sound of the gospel; there he is lame; there he is a poor creature, and cannot help himself. This is divine teaching, divine humbling, divine conviction, and it is this that brings the soul to the Lord Jesus Christ. Now let such an one go and hear a duty-faith gospel; what use would it be to that man? He would feel that by such a gospel he was mocked. Let such an one go and hear a mere moral lecture from some dead church parson, that he has given sixpence for in Paternoster Row or somewhere else; that man would feel he was mocked, there is nothing there for him; his conclusion would be that all these men are forgers of lies; my experience gives the lie to what they say; all these men are miserable comforters, they are physicians of no value. But let the apostle Paul come in with his 7th to the Romans, with his 8th to the Romans, with his 9th to the Romans, and open up to that poor sinner where his healing is, where his freedom is, where his standing is, where his security is; ah, he would say, I can accord with this, I can go with this; I feel all that law in my members of which the apostle speaks; I feel that that which is good I do not; I feel that I am the subject of all that; and I can join, saith such an one, in the apostle's confession that with my flesh I serve the law of sin, with my mind the law of God, that is, the law of liberty. This then is the way in which Christ becomes the object of attraction; this is the way in which the sinner becomes so constituted that nothing else can really attract him but the wonderful person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. And when the Lord has so dealt with the sinner as thus to make him miserable, indicated by his being made sore; and to comfort him, indicated by his binding up; and after that to wound him again and again, that he might heal him again and again; oh, what glorious promises belong to such an one; which perhaps I may presently notice, after just observing that we need wounding again and again all our days; we do, depend upon it. We are so constituted that unless there be something to grieve us, and stir us up, to spoil our nest, as it were; unless there be thorns in the way; unless there be something or other to blast our gourds, we should settle down, and be quite content with the letter without the spirit, with the form without the power, with the name without the thing itself; with the casket without the jewel; with the scabbard without the sword; and with the semblance without the substance. But God will take care that his people shall meet with wound after wound; and hereby they shall be kept more or less all the way to heaven crying to him for mercy; his elect cry unto him day and night. So that all the way to heaven the Lord's word stands thus; and it is a remarkable thing too, that he puts it in the present tense; in the 15th of Exodus; "I am the Lord that healeth thee." Now those that are thus humbled, and stripped, and

brought down, see what promises belong to them. Am I then acquainted with my miserable state as a sinner, and can I from experience say that?

"None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good."

Have I thus been wounded again and again; and do I now see and feel more and more my need of Christ and his great salvation? Then if I am thus reconciled to him, and led to receive him, and all other refuges and strongholds swept away, and I am left with Jesus only, then what promises belong to such. "He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee. In famine he shall redeem thee from death; and in war from the power of the sword. Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue;" and that is not the least of the promises in that beautiful train of promises there given; "neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh. Thou shalt not be afraid of the beasts of the earth;" meaning enemies; "thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field;" so that those things that would have stood as impediments the Lord will turn into helps; yea, "thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season." But take away this divine teaching, take away this sense of misery; take away this divine wounding, take away this humbling; then where is the evidence that your faith is a living faith? I say this and fear no contradiction, unless my faith in Jesus Christ be a faith actually rooted in my soul by the Eternal Spirit of God; except my faith be a faith actually planted in my soul by the hand of God the Father; unless the Lord Jesus Christ be actually and directly, in oneness with the Father and the Holy Spirit, the author and the finisher of my faith; then my faith is vain; if God be not the author of it, my faith is vain, my hope is vain, my religion is vain; I shall be damned, die when I may. Oh how many thousands when the body dies, and their souls rush into eternity, what an awful scene of desolation will then open upon them; they will find that their faith was their own, that their religion was their own, that their coming to Christ was their own; and that their receiving Christ was an act of their own, and that they concluded they belonged to God as an act of their own; it was not the work of God the Father, not the work of the Spirit of God, not the work of the Christ of God; "and thou O Lord," saith the Psalmist, shalt despise their image. There is no image, no likeness, that can enter that celestial world but that likeness which is formed by the hand of God "Created in Christ Jesus;" "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up." Thus then, my hearers, I would not have you look to yourselves for salvation, but I would have you look to yourselves for evidences. Am I convinced of my lost condition? Is my sinnership my misery? Do I know what it is to be wounded from time to time? Am I in earnest? Am I made to feel that it must be all grace from first to last? Such then is the nature of that experience which results from divine teaching; such is the nature of that experience, and that conviction and that state, that is associated with a right reception of the truth. Think you that while in the parable there were four classes, and only one class good ground hearers, think you that we are to understand in the mystic sense, in the spiritual sense, that ground to have been naturally good? No. If there be in the spiritual sense any good ground, wherein the seed of truth effectually germinates, who has made that good ground? There is no good ground except that which the Lord has made good; as it is written, "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord."

Let us now look at *the way of this attraction*. There are none that are taught of God, convinced of what they are, that will not in what I am

about to say fall in with me as to the truth of it. The way of attraction is Jesus Christ. "Every one that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me." Now first, reason thus; here am I a sinner, exposed to everlasting griefs; nothing but griefs; but "he hath borne our griefs;" he has taken them away. Here am I as a sinner, for ought I can do, must lie down in everlasting sorrow; but "he hath carried our sorrows," carried them away. Here am I, a sinner; and I shall be bruised by the power of God's wrath for my sins; no; "he was bruised for our iniquities, he was wounded for our transgressions; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and by his stripes we are healed." Oh, did Jesus take all my griefs, and all my sorrows, and all my wounds, and all my bruises, and all my chastisements, and all the stripes that must have fallen upon me? Has he thus taken all my sins? And could he endure it without rebelling against God? Could he endure all this for a worthless worm like me, and yet not murmur? Yes; for while "all we like sheep have gone astray, and turned every one to his own way; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." Ah then, he who bare all sin did no sin; he who bare all the curse entailed no curse; he who carried all our griefs and sorrows merited not one grief, nor one sorrow; they were all entirely our own. Oh, let a poor sinner, sensible of what he is, be thrown, as it were, into this mediatorial, substitutional work of the dear Saviour; here you have an everlasting home; here you have everlasting rest. Jesus is the way that the poor thief when he was dying was attracted to; Jesus was thus revealed to him; the Holy Ghost convinced that poor thief of what he was, a guilty sinner; and then Jesus was revealed to him as dying for sinners, as going to heaven interceding for sinners; "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Again, let us trace the matter on farther. Not only is Jesus in his humiliation the way of attraction, but also in his exaltation. I cannot deny myself in this part the pleasure of tracing out a few more items in that wondrous chapter, the 53rd of Isaiah. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin;" now, mark, in his exaltation also he is the way of attraction; "he shall see his seed." And so when he said, "It is finished," he saw his seed eternally perfect; he saw them complete in every sense; saw not an adversary nor an evil could eventually be occurrent; he had given the death-blow to everything that stood in the way of their eternal welfare. "He shall see his seed. And he shall prolong his days." Death is by sin; but he not only did no sin, but put away the sin of those that did sin. "He shall prolong his days." That form of words or expression seems to leave room for conjecture as to how long the life is to which he is entitled on the ground of what he has done. Now we have already said in our discourse it is not safe to take a scripture by itself; let us have another; and hear the apostle's words; hear his explanation of Christ prolonging his days. "He dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him." Therefore the days which he hath prolonged are eternal days. Let us hear what this is to us. "Because I live, ye shall live also." Now you may go home if you like this morning, and sit down, and take a whole quire of paper, foolscap paper if you like, and your pen and a bottle full of ink, and you may write down against yourself all your faults and all your sins, make a list as long as you like, and say, Now with all these I cannot live; but all that you could write against yourself could not blot out the Saviour's testimony, nor alter its order. "Because I live, ye *shall* live;" let your sins be what they may, or your troubles what they may, or your enemies be what they may, you shall live, simply because I live; when the adversary can destroy him,

then he can destroy you, but not before. Again, how will he succeed in this life of exaltation? He did in his humiliation at all times those things that pleased God; how will he do in his exaltation? Eternity is very long; we know not how long Adam and Eve stood; angels have stood thousands of years, but then it is because they are elect angels; how long will this Person continue? Why, "the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." And if you ask what that pleasure is, we get the explanation again in the New Testament; that "he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever;" that is God's pleasure; "and of his kingdom there shall be no end;" that is God's good pleasure; and it shall prosper in his hand. Thus Christ becomes the way of attraction. First here is the essential of attraction; that it must be from a sense of need. This idea has been lately ridiculed in public. I don't mind that; I still abide by my point, that without the work of the Holy Spirit there is no right coming to Christ; that there is an essential difference between coming to Christ to set one-half of his characters aside, and coming to Christ under a sense of your need. Thousands come to Christ in our day, and one sets his sovereignty aside, another the certainty of his atonement, another his responsibility; but he that is rightly brought sets nothing aside, he receives him in all his relationships and characters. To sum up all I have said in a few words, a right coming to Christ consisteth in having by divine teaching a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ; that is coming to Christ. Nothing short of a heartfelt acquaintance with his truth, his name, with what he is; a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, which God the Father alone can give, which the blessed Spirit alone can lead us into; nothing short of this is coming rightly to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I now notice *the fourfold object or end of this attraction*. The first object is that we may serve God. "Let my people go, Israel my first-born, that he may serve me." That is the immediate object of this attraction. We are drawn to him that we may serve the Lord in newness of spirit; that we may serve God in a gospel spirit, the spirit of faith in his dear Son; that we may serve God in the spirit of liberty, that we may serve him in the order of his grace. Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God, abiding by the truth, seeking the advantages of that truth to our own souls; also seeking, by prayer and supplication, and by that truth, to do all the good we can to others. People charge us with shutting ourselves up; they say, You few, you care for no one else. Yes, we do; we care for every one, but we dare not seek the welfare of men pertaining to eternal things in any other way than by the truth of God. When the apostles were sent, they were sent not to preach a gospel, but *the* gospel; and they therefore sought the good of men by the gospel of God. So, then, the first object of our being drawn is that we may serve our God. And we have some of us now been kept many years in his service, and our language after all these years is, that we love our Master, that it is well with us; that he is not a hard Master; that he is meek and lowly in heart; that he is kind unto his servants; that his yoke is easy; that his burden is light; that his kindness to us surpasseth all that language can describe. Then the second object is that we should not be destroyed with the world. The creatures were drawn into the ark of Noah that they should not be destroyed with the rest. Just so now; poor sinners are drawn to Christ that when the destruction shall come, we may be in the ark safe. Now suppose a man were to set out with this proposition, that all the creatures—I speak now of the irrational creatures—in Noah's day might have come into the ark if they had liked, what would you say to such a proposition? Do you think it possible for any one creature by any natural instinct it possessed to have found its way into the ark? The thing was impossible. I do not know how many

thousands of miles some of these creatures came. And how were they brought? They were brought by a divine impress, by a divine impulse, that brought out those that were to be saved, and left the others. So the destruction will come by and by; but if we are one with Jesus, it will not touch us. It may come very near; as in the case of Rahab, the wall fell all round, except just where her house was; it came very near, but not near enough to hurt her. And the Egyptians were not very far from the Israelites when they were destroyed; but their destruction did not come near enough to hurt the Israelites. The third object is that we should possess what he has for us; we cannot possess it if we are not there. He draws us toward the promised land, the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. And that we may possess it, he himself has undertaken to keep us by his power; "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." And the last object that I name is that of glorifying God. He hath chosen this way of being glorified, by drawing sinners to himself. There are thousands of other ways, and millions of other worlds; and for aught I know millions and millions of intelligent creatures inhabiting those worlds; I am rather inclined to think so than not; but still as far as we are concerned, he hath chosen to glorify himself by his people, by the exceeding riches of his grace. What a suited way; that he might show forth in eternal ages to come the exceeding riches of his grace. And where is there a Christian that will not to all eternity feel happy in thus glorifying God? Loved with an everlasting love; that love being with us, and we perfect in that love; saved with a salvation that will beautify us in a way that shall accord with those pure climes and those wondrous regions into which, when the body falls asleep, the soul shall rapturously enter; and filled with that Eternal Spirit that searcheth the deep things of God, dwelling in us as a well of water springing up into everlasting life; and all our springs in God; we cannot do otherwise than crown him Lord of all; we cannot do otherwise than join with the blood-bought host in their undying anthems; we cannot do otherwise when thus arrayed in perfection; and having that victory in hand which we now have only in promise and by faith; we cannot do otherwise, then, than join in the everlasting anthem of "Salvation unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever." The Lord has wisely drawn a veil, though the veil is not very thick; it is very thin, it is only the veil of mortality, and by and by it will be rent, and rent very easily; he has at present hidden from us the real attractions of it, for if the Lord were somewhat to reveal those attractions in a way he could reveal them, mortal life would be neutralised; as in the case of the apostle Paul, when he had a sweet apprehension of the ultimate object for which he was saved, as though he should say, My redeemed, blood-washed, justified, sanctified spirit so enraptured and so enchanted with the scenes, the pure scenes of eternity, and the words there employed, surpassing all human imagination, that whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell. And yet we poor mortals look forward to a dying hour as though it was a calamity awaiting us, surpassing all the calamities we have ever had; whereas it is better than the day of our birth; the end of the Christian's life is better than the beginning, because in the one case he has all his troubles before him, in the other case he has all his troubles behind him. "To die is gain."

May, then, this Bright and Morning Star, risen in those pure climes of eternity, draw us more and more; while we rejoice that until we reach those happy climes our God will continue to guide us, to sustain us, to direct us; and when heart and flesh shall fail here, he will be the strength of our heart, and our portion for ever.