

SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT.

THE REMEDY.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 7TH, 1860, BY

MR. JAMES WELLS.

AT THE SURREY TABERNACLE, BOROUGH ROAD.

"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Rom. vii. 24.

WE last Lord's-day morning shewed that the wretchedness which the apostle felt consisted chiefly of four things: first, of his apostasy in common with all the human race from God; secondly, from the concupiscence of his heart; third, from the slavery he was under, as sold under sin; and fourth, from those hindrances which he experienced in everything holy, just, and good; those evils keeping him away from that fellowship with God which he sought to enjoy; and which every Christian prizes above mortal life; for the Lord's loving-kindness is better than mortal life; and those who have given up their mortal life rather than give up the truth and testimony of his loving-kindness, have never repented of what they have done, and they never will; they know that they have done perfectly right, that they have indeed rejected the lesser, and been favoured, through grace, to hold fast the greater.

Now the first thing that we observed was apostasy from God. Let us see how this is met; let us see how we get over this; let us see how we are delivered from this apostasy; and let us see what in that deliverance our standing before God is. Now that which I am going to advance is a self-evident truth; and I desire to dwell more and more upon those truths that are to the Christian self-evident; it is a self-evident truth that the Lord Jesus Christ shewed no sign whatever of apostasy. He "was made under the law;" did he ever apostatise in whole or in part? or was there in him the least sign of apostasy while under that law? If that law required all his heart, it had all his heart; and if God required all his heart, he had all his heart. And if that law required that Christ should love his neighbour as himself, he certainly did so; he did love his people as himself. And whatever that law demanded, Christ did not shrink from; and whatever tribulation he was subjected to in consequence of his decision for God's holy law, and for God's eternal truth, yet he never once shrank from any of it; he abode by it. And although he was thereby daily a man of grief, and a man of sorrow, yet there was not the least sign, not the least shadow, of his going back from God. Here, my hearer, remember that Christ's firmness to God's truth, that his walking up to the entire perfection of that truth, that his abiding by it, was not for himself; I say, it was not for himself. The

only way you can escape apostasy from God is by a reception of him that never did apostatize; and his righteousness must become your's; you must become a believer in him; you must become acquainted with what your state as an apostate in the first Adam is; and then to receive him that never did apostatise. Let us come a little farther, to his dying hour. Did the Saviour there shrink? Although the pressure of all our sins upon him caused him to sweat, as it were great, drops of blood, falling down to the ground, yet this could not make him draw back. The intense sorrow that he felt caused him to say, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, thy will, not mine, be done." And did he ever complain? Did he ever wish to go back, because the sins of the people for whom he died were so numerous, and because they were of such a deep dye, and because they were so mountainous, and because they were so fearful, and because they were so tremendous? Did he ever complain because God the Father determined that there and then all the penalty due to the sin imputed to Christ should come upon him, even to make him a curse for us? He did not complain of that; no. He spoke often during the time he was on the cross; but did he once say, I must suffer no more,—I must now stop,—I can go no farther? Oh, no! everlasting glory to his blessed, blessed name, he continued to meet sorrow after sorrow, and grief after grief, and pang after pang, and layer of guilt after layer of guilt, and wave of wrath after wave, until all the waves and all the billows of God's wrath had rolled over him; and when sin was terminated, when transgression was terminated, when full reparation was made for iniquity, and when wrath was terminated, when everything was ended, when death had lost its sting, and was swallowed up entirely in victory; then, and not till then, did he give up the ghost. I have said a great many times, and I say it again, that Christ did not die from natural exhaustion; he died sovereignly; no man took his life from him; his life was the price he, as the Surety, owed to divine justice in our behalf; and he came and paid the price; the price was not extorted from him, he came and paid it; for it was essential he should pay it freely and willingly; for if Christ had not paid it freely and willingly, then his heart would not have been in it; but as you have been singing this morning, rather than lose his people he shed his heart's blood. So that he came forward willingly, and laid down his life. And when the time approached, was the Saviour four, five, six, eight, fifty, a hundred, or two hundred miles off? Had he to be sent for? Had he to be persuaded? Had he to be reasoned with? No, my hearer: six days before the solemn moment, before the solemn hour, there is the Lamb on sacrificial ground; he goes up to Jerusalem from day to day; and he knew the spot where he should be betrayed; and therefore to prepare, if I may so speak, for that solemn and awful event, he oft resorted thither in prayer with his disciples. Oh, Father, this is the spot where I shall have to sweat great drops of blood; this is the spot where my soul will commence her indescribable agonies; this is where I shall be in agonies that even devils could never undergo, for

want of ability to undergo these things ; this is the spot where Judas will betray me, where this son of perdition will betray me ; he oft resorted thither. When the time came, Jesus was there. Ah, and how easily, as Jesus himself said, how easily might I, even as man, pray to my Father, and he would send me twelve legions of angels ; and if an angel blasted the army of Sennacherib, how easily could I sweep the whole of my adversaries into hell at once. But how then would the scriptures be fulfilled, that to this end I was born ? I stand as the Surety for the souls of a number that no man can number. And there he was ; when justice came to accept the price, there was the Surety to pay the price ; when holiness came to accept its honours, there was a holy Person to render those honours ; when the law came to accept its perfection, there was the Perfection there to yield itself up to that perfect law, and thus to become the end of the law for righteousness. No sign or shadow of apostasy all through. So, my hearer, if you and I escape apostasy, it must be by being brought into possession of what Christ has done ; and then let precious, precious faith, hold fast Jesus, and as faith holds fast the truth, you are kept from apostasy ; can apostatise as you did in the first Adam no more. Here there is the remedy ; I say, here is the remedy, " Thy Maker is thine Husband ; so that thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth." The shame of thy youth is that thou wast conceived in sin, shapen in iniquity, and went astray from the womb, speaking lies ; yea, and were as the wild ass's colt ; there is the shame of thy youth. But in receiving this wondrous Person, he who never apostatised, he was entirely straight with all the dealings of God with him, and all the counsels of God concerning him. Here it is that thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth. " And not remember the reproach of thy widowhood." The reproach of thy widowhood lies here : that in your first Adam you rejected your heavenly Husband, God ; and took for your husband the devil ; that is, the shame ; and the law, therefore, for this offence, capital offence of apostasy, divorced you, cursed you. But by Jesus Christ, this reproach of our legal widowhood by the law is forgotten ; he becomes our Husband ; and by him we stand righteous before God, by him we have a firm standing before God ; by him the love of God takes such hold of us that there is no separation therefrom. Hence the apostle gives us to understand this in the very next chapter to where our text is ; that the love of God here, in Christ Jesus, takes such a hold of us that there is no separation from that love. Once loved, loved for ever ; once saved, saved for ever ; once born of God, born of God for ever. Here then it is that the Lord speaketh thus, " I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, and will not remember thy sins." " Thy Maker is thine Husband ; thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel ; the God of the whole earth shall he be called." Here we get an answer to the apostle's prayer, " Who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?" Who shall deliver me from that death into which I fell by apostasy ? Here we see the deliverance by him that never apostatized, by him that never shrunk back, by him that never drew

back; not one drawback in any word that he ever uttered, nor in any work that he ever did, in his life or his death, his resurrection or his ascension. And after his resurrection, see how he shows his sameness—that his mind was the same. There was no upbraiding of his disciples, beyond a little reproof of their present unbelief; there was no indication given that he was holding back from them, or getting at all weary of them; no, he still held them as those that were dear to God the Father; and gave them the great commission which he had predicted should be given to them; and was faithful to what he said; and the great ends were answered and carried out. Here then, my hearer, by Jesus Christ we get rid of apostasy; no more apostasy; no more separation; no more going back to Egypt; no more coming under the curse; no more coming under sin; no more coming under death. And it is on this ground that such scriptures as the following stand—“They shall not sorrow any more at all; and they shall not see evil any more; and the enemies whom ye have seen to-day ye shall see no more for ever.” Therefore such persons may well be commanded to keep their solemn feasts unto the Lord, seeing that he has taken away those judgments, slain the enemy, and they shall not see evil any more. Here, then, my hearer, is the deliverance. And I will not stop, because it would keep me too long on this part; I cannot stop now to describe how dear the Saviour is in this character to every law-condemned sinner, that is sensibly condemned in his own conscience by the law; every poor sinner that feels in what an utterly apostate condition, what an utterly severed condition, he is from God. Search the world round; and can you find anything that can bring you to God, that can unite you to God? Thousands and thousands of things are set forth by men as supposed ties uniting you to God; but it is all delusion. Hear ye the word of the Lord; look at the greatness of this matter; of being so united to God as to destroy all that apostasy, never to apostatize again. Look at the greatness of that testimony; look at the preciousness of it; it is like Aaron’s rod; the Lord give us a right view of it; it will swallow up everything else. You say, where is it? What do you mean? I mean this, that he died. Who? Emmanuel; God with us; God and man in one person; that he brought by his own Omnipotent arm eternal salvation; he died. What was he? The just; there it is; the just; if he had not been just, then justice could not have approved; holiness could not have smiled; the law could not have ceased its thunders; but it was the just for the unjust; that is all you are; substitute another word if that does not seem clear enough; he died, the righteous for the unrighteous; and by nature there is none righteous, no, not one; to bring us to God. And now, closing this part of my subject, I will give you one, shall I call it challenge? If you can find all through the Bible anything that can unite the soul savingly to God but that infinite price paid for our redemption, the precious blood of the Lamb, then I will give up my ground. There was not in the institutions of the Old Testament one truth more constantly, I had almost said more elaborately, more extensively brought before the people than this. Was not sacrifice above all the circumstances of that Jewish dispensation the most prominent? The temple was built in a very conspicuous place, and occupied a very conspicuous position; and the sacrifices occupied also a very prominent position, they were the most prominent of all the features; it was every day morning and evening; and if there were any feast, anything extra, then it was always marked by an increase of sacrifices; all bearing upon this one truth, that so direful has our apostasy from God been, and so terrible was the hell that we had lighted up, and so fearful was the wrath that was against us, that none but this wondrous, wondrous Person could fill up, shall I say, the mighty gap, for our breach was great like the sea; and unite us to God in his love, and counsel, and truth, to be separated from

him no more for ever. My hearer, if thou art not thus brought to Christ, if thou art not thus brought to receive him, thou art still in thine apostate condition; this is the only way of returning, "The redeemed of the Lord shall return;" how shall they return? By that redemption. Many people think to go otherwise than by that eternal redemption; but they will never find God; they will never be received. Here is the Wesleyan actually saying that some are in hell for whom Christ died. Why, my good man, whatever can be your opinion of Jesus Christ; whatever can be your opinion of his atonement? What! he who had eternity in himself; he who had in his atonement an infinity both of extent, and duration; and Omnipotence; and yet this omnipotence has met with something that is more than omnipotent, and has conquered the omnipotency of his eternal redemption; and some are in hell for whom he died! Now just hear me; for I dare say there are a few Wesleyans here this morning. I like to see them brought out, for I do think that some of them are right in heart to some extent. Now when we receive a notion, it's astonishing how we go dreaming that that notion is in the Scriptures. You can't find a Scripture anywhere that says that there are some in hell for whom Christ died. Now I say, if the redeemed of the Lord return, they return by that redemption. "As for thee, by the blood of thy covenant." Ah, but then, say you, they won't accept it. What nonsense you do talk, look at the Bible, what does the Bible say? "As for thee, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners." And now if I can be plain I will. God comes in and turns them out of hell, won't let them stop there; the hell they are in by nature; turns them out of the pit, and out of the prison house of the law, and won't let them stop there. "I have sent them forth." Won't accept it, indeed! Why, the Lord bundles them out; I'm speaking plain, by way of making it plain; and when the sinner is bundled out, turned out, sent out, driven out of all his false hopes, what does he do? Wanders in the wilderness in a solitary way; finds no city to dwell in, until he finds that city which hath foundations, until he finds Jesus Christ in the eternal perfection of his achievements; then the poor sinner says, Ah, I suppose I must come at the last. Ah, that you must, that you must. The Lord will never allow his people to die with a lie in their right hand, that the Saviour's blood has failed to answer the great end for which it was designed; never. So then, I say, to be cleared from apostasy is to receive the truth, and to stand upon the immoveable rock of mediatorial testimony, where we cannot be moved. That is the remedy for apostasy.

Now the second part was that of the wickedness of the heart; that is the second thing we observed last Lord's-day morning that made the apostle wretched. I will not run over that ground again; but you that are Christians, you are conscious before the Lord; yea, I will go farther than that; if only one hundredth part of your thoughts could be written on your forehead, and you were obliged to walk the street with that writing there, and everybody could read it, I think you would seek for some bye way; I think you would try and hide that from your fellow creatures. And yet that would be but a little handful out of a granary; that would be but a few drops that bubbled up from an unfathomable depth of wickedness below. But all the depths of thy depravity lie open to the immediate, and clear survey of thy Maker; no thought can be withholden from him. But I will not go on here, to enumerate the various ways in which the wickedness of the heart brings the Christian into bondage. All this lies open before the Lord; it is a great mercy to be able to keep it from man. But let us look at the remedy. What think you is the remedy? I need not stop to enlarge upon false remedies; but I will go to the true one. The true one stands thus recorded in the Bible; that "ye are born again not of corruptible

seed," as your were in your first birth, wherein you have a heart that is every way wicked and bad; "but ye are born of an incorruptible seed, by the word of God, that liveth and abideth for ever." Oh, man, with all thy moral decorum there is nothing in thee by nature but a heart full of all manner of concupiscence; that is all thou hast within thee, until born of God. Well might the Saviour say, "Ye *must* be born again;" ye *must*. "Marvel not that I said unto you, ye must be born again." There must be a new heart; the old one can never get to heaven; flesh and blood cannot enter the kingdom of heaven; it must go into the dust. "Born again of an incorruptible seed, that liveth and abideth for ever." Then up spring pure desires; up springs a love to holiness, a love to righteousness, a love to Jesus Christ, a love to God, a love to the Holy Spirit, a love to the Holy Gospel, a love to the people of God, a love to the ways of the Lord, a love to what he loves; an apprehending of that for which you are apprehended of Christ Jesus. These are the pure in heart, "Blessed are the pure in heart," for they have just what they want. What is that? They want to see God, they want to see him as their God. Ah, I want to know that he is my God; that he hath loved me; that he hath chosen me, and saved me; that he is my God for ever and for ever, and will be my guide even unto death. You will earnestly seek this. I hope I am speaking this morning to some who are actually come with the desire to seek that very thing. As a man said to me a little time ago in the country, "Well," he says, "bless the Lord that I have come. I have walked eleven miles this morning to hear you, just to ascertain whether or not I had a spark of grace in me; and really," he said, "you have been led in that way that has made me so happy that I do think I have; I have my doubts sometimes; but I do think the Lord has begun the good work; and I do not at all regret having walked the eleven miles." Well, I liked that; I thought that looked like sincerity. I thought that was a good hearer, that was not come merely from curiosity because it was a man from London; I like good solid feeling; I like to see those weighty feelings, that earnestness, wherein the sinner is led to feel that it is a most solemn matter; brought to feel that his existence apart from the grace of God is a curse; mortal existence apart from the grace of God is but a few days on earth, and then an eternity of misery in hell; and this the Lord brings the poor sinner to know. And I say the great remedy for this wickedness of the heart is regeneration; that is the remedy. "Born again of incorruptible seed; by the word of the Lord, that *liveth*;" mark that; "by the word of the Lord, that *liveth*." What, say you, live in a sinner like me? Yes, bless the Lord for ever that while sin has put us to death in the first Adam, and even puts us to death now as to our feelings, it cannot put the truth to death within us, it cannot put the Spirit of God to death within us, it cannot put the grace of God to death within us; it cannot put the love of God to death within us. It may so lead our souls into captivity that there seems nothing sacred in exercise; but it does not follow because they are not in exercise that they are not there. And that is one end of the public ministry of the word; to stir up the pure mind. There is plenty in the world to stir up the impure mind; but we want something to stir up the pure mind. The Christian has within him a pure mind, a living principle; and when the truths of the gospel are preached, the incorruptible seed of which he is born, he feels a oneness between the feelings of his soul and the testimony of God's truth; and that oneness indicates that you are born of God. That is the remedy. And he that hath begun this good work will carry it on to the day of Jesus Christ. People will receive the same sort of gospel outwardly that they have inwardly; that they have within them. If your conversion be mere reformation, and you have a free-will gospel in you, then a free-will gospel will do for you; it is all a creature concern alto-

gether. If your conversion be a mental one, then you have a duty-faith gospel within you, and a duty-faith gospel without you will do. And if your conversion be to Popery, then you have Popery within you, and consequently you will have it without you; no question about that. And therefore men shew what there is in them by following outward things. The man that has the gospel in him will seek to drink in more of gospel; and I will never believe that that man is seeking to drink in more of the gospel that goes away from where the gospel is, instead of going where it is. I am sure the thirsty man goes to the fountain; and he that knows something of the pure fountain of water of life proceeding not from the throne of God without the Lamb, or the Lamb without God; but the two together; denoting that God is the source and Christ is the medium; those that know something of this pure free-grace gospel will seek to drink more and more of the same, that they may grow thereby. See then how sweet the words of John are; see how the Saviour is altogether lovely; "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." What is the universal sin of the world? Why, their apostasy in the first Adam; and that sin Christ has taken away in behalf of his own people; not in relation to those that were not given to him, but as relates to those that are given to him.

Then the third thing that made the apostle wretched, that he needed deliverance from, was that of his being carnal; sold under sin. Where is the remedy for this? In the 15th of 1st Corinthians it is said of the Lord Jesus Christ that he is the second Adam, the Lord from heaven; "a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which was natural; and afterward that which is spiritual;" namely Christ Jesus the Lord. Now then, the Saviour was not carnal; he was spiritual, and a quickening spirit. Now, saith Paul, I am carnal, sold under sin. Christ then, as the quickening spirit, freeing us from that slavery, is the only way of escape. Hence saith the Saviour, "If the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed." So that we cannot be quickened under the law. Well, say you, the apostle does not say, I am sold under the law. Well, but, friends, he could not be sold under sin without being under the law; because where there is no law there is no sin. Therefore the very fact of his being under sin shews that he is under the law. He was sold under sin, and yet in that state was a debtor to do the whole law, and cursed if he did not continue in all things written in the book of the law to do them. And I say that the Lord Jesus Christ came under the law; redeemed us from that slavery; and now we owe nothing; he has paid the debt, and we are eternally free; and Jesus Christ has paid the debt in such a way that no fresh debt can be contracted; past, present, and to come, he has swept the whole away. So that Satan himself, the accuser of the brethren, could he range over the lives of the people of God, and even over the hearts, before called by grace and after, Satan would not be able to point out one sin for which Christ did not atone; for if he could, how could the Saviour carry out his mission? One part of his mission is to present the church to himself first without spot or blemish. That is the first object. I will look at my bride first; I will not take her to my Father before I have got her right. Then he shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father, after he has presented her to himself. We are speaking now somewhat after the manner of men, but still that suits our capacities. And then shall the Son also be subject to the will and counsels of the Father, that God may be all and in all. There then we are free, eternally free.

But we must come to the last point that made the apostle wretched; and that was his being kept from God. And so we shall be more or less while in the body. "Being confident while we are at home in the body, we are

absent from the Lord." But if we are kept from God, Christ is not kept from God; he is never out of God's presence; he is always there. You have an intercessor there, a representative there, a counsellor there, an accepted mediator there. Then, saith the apostle, on these grounds of what we have there, "let us hold fast our profession, for he is faithful that promiseth." Christ then being in the presence of God is the remedy for our being kept from God. There was never anything in him that could keep him from God; though he had to undergo for us privation of God's presence there was nothing in him to keep him from God. He is with God. And I am with God now by Christ Jesus. I was with God before the world was; and by Christ Jesus I have been with him ever since; never been away from him, not in my standing in Christ. I was with God at Calvary's cross; I was with him in Christ's resurrection and ascension; and I am with him now; and when I die I shall be with him, and when my body is in the grave, I shall be virtually with him; and what we are now relatively we shall be actually; for there are no mere theories with God; his sayings and his doings are indissoluble; they are tied together; hath he said, and shall he not do? hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good. Jesus Christ being with God, then, is the remedy for that which we have so much to mourn; our sins may keep us from him, but they cannot keep him from us. That is an important distinction. A person was present some years ago when I made that remark, and he took what I said down in short hand—*short* hand indeed; and he sent to a magazine where he knew the editors were much attached to me, in a certain way; Oh, what do you think that Wells has said; he has said that sin never hinders the believer; that the believer can come to Christ, and go to God, when he pleases; and sin is no hindrance to him. And that was publicly printed; and I was sent to a very naughty place; but I haven't been there yet. Now I made no such remark. The remark I made then was that which I make now; that sin does hinder us; but if God had not formed a covenant by which he without hindrance could come to us, what hope could we have? But in and by Christ Jesus, in this new covenant, in this gospel order of things, where Christ has lowered every mountain, and exalted every valley, and made crooked things straight, and rough places plain, God is not hindered from coming to us. The great remedy then, if I may just give a more extensive view of it in conclusion, the great remedy for it is this: that Jesus Christ was always with God in his humiliation, in his death; he is with God now and with him for ever. And with this state of things the apostle was contented; he came to the conclusion that the flesh was the flesh still, the new man was the new man still; and arrived at the happy conclusion, "Thanks be to God, that giveth us the victory by our Lord Jesus Christ."