

SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT.

THE TRUE LIGHT.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 17TH, 1860, BY

MR. JAMES WELLS,

AT THE SURREY TABERNACLE, BOROUGH ROAD.

"But unto all them also that love his appearing." 2 Timothy iv. 8.

WE see with what pleasure the apostle anticipated the transition, when he wrote these words, was about to undergo; he was about to leave mortality for immortality; this world of care, sin, and sorrow, for a world of perfection, peace, and rest, and glory; and his rejoicing in this matter was that since the Lord had called him into the spiritual warfare he had fought a good fight, that that gospel which the Lord committed unto him at the first, as shewn in the Acts of the Apostles, that he abode by that gospel; lived in the experience of it, in the doctrine of it, in the practice of it, in the advantages of it, in the ministration of it. And thus contending for the whole truth, and abiding fast by it, although he has given us in his 7th chapter to the Romans an account of himself as subjected to those bondages and trials which all the Lord's people are more or less the subjects of; and in another place reminding us of a special messenger of Satan sent to buffet him, and to humiliate him, and to keep him down, and to teach him more and more his need of the all-sufficient grace of God; yet, amidst all these he could look back and see that while he was thus about to depart from the world, he was still in possession of the same gospel by which he was first delivered, by which he first realised pardon, and justification, and liberty, and peace, and salvation, and fellowship with the blessed God. Here then, in the contemplation of this, this holding fast the gospel and contending for it, is what he calls fighting the good fight; and he had now finished his course; and he explains the whole by saying, "I have kept the faith." The word *faith*, as you are aware, sometimes has a very broad meaning; meaning not only the grace of the Spirit in the mere act of believing, but meaning also that which is believed; meaning the object of faith, and meaning the gospel by which we believe in the Lord our God. In all these senses he kept the faith; he could therefore look forward to the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, should give unto him at that day. But the apostle Paul knew that he was favoured as very few of the people of God are favoured; he went down into very great depths of sufferings; and under those sufferings he learnt the ability of the Lord Jesus Christ to sustain him, and to make him even joyful in all his tribulations. On the other hand, he had also been favoured as very few of the Lord's people are favoured, with abundant revelations concerning eternal glory; he had been caught up into the Paradise of God, and had heard unspeakable words. He therefore well knew that if the crown of righteousness were laid up for none but those that had been favoured as he had, that he would by retiring from the world with such a testimony as that leave us as it were almost in despair; and therefore, while describing the glorious transition that awaited him, and the pleasure with which he anticipated that transi-

tion, that he was now ready to be offered, although he had to undergo martyrdom, yet this was no trouble to him, he had already learnt the all-sufficiency of the grace of God; and therefore in his closing testimony he would not leave the least in the household of faith behind; but while there was a crown laid up for him, our text assures us that there is the same crown, the same glory, reward, and exaltation laid up "for all them also that love his appearing."

I notice the text then in the three-fold form in which it presents itself. The first is that of *the revelation*; "his appearing;" and the second is, *approbation*, the approving of that revelation; and the third is, *the reward that awaiteth such*; the crown of righteousness that shall be given unto such.

I. First then, I notice THE SAVIOUR'S APPEARING. And I take the words *appear* and *appearing* as a kind of guide for me to say a few things this morning in the opening up of our subject, concerning the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. And you may be sure that I shall begin where I usually do, namely, at that place where we can love him, where we do love him; and there is not an attribute in the Most High that would be anything but a terror to us except in that way that I shall name. I shall therefore take a four-fold view of his appearing. First *his sacrificial appearing*. "Once in the end of the world hath he appeared;" that is once in the end of the age; the original word there signifies the end of the age, the Jewish age; "hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Here is the place to which the poor sinner is brought; and here we can love his appearing. And let us remember, that while many professors are boasting, and saying, ah, you high doctrine people like him very well in this sacrificial work of putting away sin for you, but you do not love him, say they, in his holiness; our answer to that is that we cannot love him in his holiness anywhere but by that sacrifice which he has made for sin; for if we meet a holy God anywhere else, then our sins light up that holiness into an unquenchable fire; so that for myself I must confess I cannot love his holiness, or love God in his holiness, in any other way; because in every other way he stands against me; but there we do love him, in his holiness, because here is our sanctification, his blood cleanseth from all sin. Here then it is, by his having put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, here it is that we are to rejoice at the remembrance of his holiness, and to give thanks unto his blessed name for ever. In a word, we might trace out righteousness, integrity, and all the attributes of the blessed God, and see how they all appear here in forms of mercy, in forms of grace and of love; and I am sure love produces love, mercy produces a corresponding feeling; it unites our souls to him; there we love him, there a sinner may love him; because his very mission was that he came into this world to save sinners. I have often thought that the 9th chapter of the Book of Leviticus very beautifully illustrates that scripture that I have just now mentioned; that "once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Here is a special revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ, such as exactly suits a poor sinner. So in the 9th chapter of Leviticus, where Moses said on the 8th day; something significant in that, the 8th day; on the 8th day, Moses said to the people, "To-day the Lord will appear unto you." You will at once perceive what this eighth day is. The Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead on the eighth day; he rose from the dead on the Jewish Monday, on our Sunday; and therefore it was the eighth day. He was crucified on the sixth day; as the world was completed on the sixth day, so salvation was completed on the sixth day; Jesus laid in the grave three days and three nights current, not three days and three nights complete; but it partook of three days and three nights, therefore

called so; and he rose from the dead on the eighth day. So that this eighth day evidently referred to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. And now what was the kind of appearance which the Lord made to the people on that day? Supposing there had been a poor sinner there that had heard the declaration, "To-day the Lord will appear unto you; to-day the glory of the Lord shall appear unto you;" we can imagine that poor sinner trembling at the tidings; he would say, ah, what an awful appearance it will be. Here am I, with sins innumerable; here am I, with a heart deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; I do not see how the Lord can appear to me except to cut me down, except to make a hell in my conscience, and to banish me at once to those regions which my sins have demerited; I know not in what way the Lord can appear to me except in this way. Suppose the sensible sinner thus reasoning; and then he goes up to the high priest, and asks him a question or two, I mean in a proper way; for the priest's lips were to keep knowledge, and the people to require or seek the law at his mouth; he would go up and address him in language suited to the circumstance, and say, I am dreading and trembling at the thought that the great God is to appear to-day; what will be the consequence? in what way will he appear? Thou art his minister, his priest; thou canst tell me what way he will appear. I will tell you then, poor trembling sinner, in what way he will appear. Seest thou that spotless lamb that is for a sin offering? He will appear to thee by that sin offering. There is a sin offering for thee; so that let not thy sins make thee despair; he will appear for thee by that sin offering. Seest thou that other spotless sacrifice? Yes. Well, that is for a burnt offering; and thy sins will be upon it, and the fire shall fall upon it, and not upon thee. And seest thou that third offering waiting there? Yes; what is the meaning of that? That is a peace offering; to denote that he will take all thy troubles away, that he has blotted out all thy transgressions, that he is a God of peace, that he has not a word against thee. All that which thou art writing against thyself, the blood of the sacrifice shall blot out; and that fire which thou art fearing shall fall not upon thee, but upon this burnt offering; and that everlasting tribulation which you fear, shall fall upon this peace offering; and thus you will get rid of sin, and get rid of wrath, and get rid of trouble. And then dost thou see that fourth offering? Yes, what is the meaning of that? That fourth offering is a meat offering; so that when your sins and your troubles are gone, then in comes the meat offering, the everlasting plenty to denote there is an end put to famine and to want; and that there shall be no more dearth nor barren land. And you know what the Saviour's comment upon this is; that "he that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." Here then I am sure every sensible sinner loves the Saviour's appearing. And hereby God the Father appears; because Jesus is nothing else but the gift of God the Father; Jesus is nothing else but the expression of the love of God the Father. "He," saith Christ, "that hath seen me," that is, rightly seen me, hath seen the Father;" by seeing me as the Father's gift, as the Father's image, as the brightness of his glory; by seeing me as embodying in myself all the counsels, and gracious designs, and multitudinous mercies of the Father; for he is a God of abundant mercy. Then again in that same chapter it is said, "Aaron lifted up his hand toward the people, and blessed them, and came down from offering of the sin offering, and the burnt offering, and peace offerings;" to denote it was done, as far as that ceremony was concerned. There is something very significant, in Aaron's coming down; I do not know whether the meaning ever struck you or not, or that which appears to me to be the meaning; that "Aaron lifted up his hand toward the people, and blessed

them, and came down from offering of the sin offering, and the burnt offering, and peace offerings." And of all the gracious expressions of the dear Saviour while on the cross, what a testimony was that which he bore before he came down, "It is finished;" an everlasting blessing; I am sure every soul will exclaim, what a blessing! what a mercy! But the point that I think to be chiefly noticed there is that he came down from offering the sin offering, and the burnt offering, and the peace offerings, to denote that he had finished that which God appointed him to do as a priest. Thus he is a beautiful type of the dear Saviour achieving the great end for which he was crucified. Ah, how short was the time he was on the cross—only six hours; he might have continued unto this time, he might have continued there for two thousand years, and have agonized all that time; and the church, generation after generation, might have been wondering and wondering when he would get to the end of sin, to the end of wrath, to the end of trouble, and when peace would be established. Therefore how joyful it must have been to the people when they saw Aaron come down, and it was done. Now the Lord Jesus Christ was God as well as man, and therefore in six hours he compassed all the sins of his people, overturned those mountains by their roots, threw them into the great Pacific of his precious blood, and they are gone for ever. In that six hours he compassed our hell of never abating despair, and quenched every spark of that wrath which sin had lighted up; in that six hours he took the life out of every one of our troubles; there is not one of our troubles can live; all of them are dying troubles; and even mortality itself, death itself must die; there is not a trouble belonging to the people of God which Christ did not destroy when he was upon the cross. And when he had thus finished the sin offering, and the burnt offering, and the peace offering, he came down. And Moses and Aaron then went into the tabernacle, and came out, and blessed the people. Here is a sweet union of law and gospel. Moses came out with his face shining; I am so pleased, I am so satisfied, the priest has done his work so well, that I will unite with him in blessing the people. And so the law of God, as it were, blessed the people; for the blessing is a just blessing as well as a merciful one. God's law is holy; and the blessing is a blessing that accords with it, that illustrates and amplifies the justice and the law of God; so that the law and the gospel unite in blessing the people. There is a kind of, shall I say, oneness between them both, that love is fulfilling of both; that Christ fulfilled both. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself;" and his people are predestinated to a state of conformity to Christ that shall be in accordance with that great principle of the law—perfect love to God, and perfect love to man. But it is added, "The glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people. And there came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering of the fat; which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces." It is not there recorded what the shout was; but we know what the usual shout was; we have it recorded in other places; and it is a shout that accords very nicely with this wonderful work, this wonderful appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ; we read what their shout was in the time of Solomon; "The Lord is good; for his mercy endureth for ever." "The Lord is good;" I thought he would not be good to me; I thought he would be wrath to me, destruction to me; I thought he would be an angry Judge to me; I thought he would appear as an adversary to me; as a consuming fire, without one particle of goodness; but I find he is all goodness towards me; I find that the thoughts he thinks towards me are thoughts of peace, and not of evil. "The Lord is good, and his mercy endureth for ever." "To all them also that love his appearing." My

hearer what sayest thou? Wouldest thou like, in the contemplation of such a Saviour as this, to come into the sweet experience of the woman; I know I should; when she apprehended the dear Saviour thus as the great sin bearing Surety of the covenant; and pardoning mercy, from this apprehension of the Saviour, flowing into her soul, melted down her heart so that she washed his feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. And she loved much: she could not love a little; she knew that her sins were great sins, she knew there were no such things as little sins; she knew that her sins were great sins, that God's mercy was great mercy, that the love of Christ was great love; and she loved much. The cold hearted Simon tried somewhat to shake the woman's confidence; but the Saviour built her up as fast as Simon tried as it were to throw cold water upon her; "She loveth much because much is forgiven her." Simon was looking down upon the woman, or Satan working in Simon was looking down upon the woman with a kind of withering frown, as though her very presence was a nuisance to him; he not understanding the mysterious and wondrous change that the woman had experienced; but just as he by his freezing look was throwing a little cold water as it were upon her, the Saviour counteracted that by perhaps a sweet smile more than human, and said unto her, "Go in peace; thy sins are forgiven thee." What say we this morning, friends; have we any love to the Lord that at all accords with this great subject? for it is a great subject. I am sure if we have that love which the apostle in our text means, it will be a sincere love, an incorruptible love, a decided love, that shall make us embrace the truth, and abide thereby.

Second, I notice *the revelation of Christ as the pattern to which we are to be conformed*. "We know not what we shall be; this we know, that when he appears we shall be like him; and shall see him as he is." The process of this conformity to Christ is described in a great many passages of the word of God. Take for instance that favourite scripture of ours, for there is not a Christian under heaven that is not much instructed by that scripture; 2 Corinthians iii; it is a most instructive chapter. The apostle commences there with a description of the vitality of godliness; that the truth of God is "written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; it is written in the soul in living characters; so that the Spirit of God in that soul is a Spirit of life, of supplication, of prayer, of faith, of love, and of hope; "not upon tables of stone;" not a law matter; "but in fleshly tables of the heart" And the apostle then disclaims all creature sufficiency; "our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament;" for as the word is sometimes rendered, "servants." So then this writing, this vitality of godliness, is a new testament matter; I do not mean the book we call the New Testament; I mean the new covenant, God's testamentary will; and that is the apostle's meaning there. And see how the apostle, when speaking on gospel matters, keeps in gospel order; he knew in Old Testament times God had said that he would put his laws in the minds of his people, and write them in their hearts; and here the apostle recognises the fulfilment of that New Testament, that new covenant order. Then he goes on into this instructive contrast; and instructs us in this process, shall I say, of conformity to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is the ministration of death on the one hand, just to shew that we are carnal, sold under sin; then comes in the ministration of the spirit; the word spirit there conveying in the first place the idea of life, and that is perhaps one of the chief ideas it does convey; so that when the soul is born of God, that is one step towards conformity to Christ; for Christ saw no corruption; and the soul that is born of God, of an incorruptible seed, liveth and abideth for ever, has in it immortality; and this is one step towards conformity to Christ. Do we not love him in this appearing? Do we not rejoice

that we have in us a taste for, a hunger for, a thirst for the pure, incorruptible word of God? There was a time with us when any religion would do for us, and perhaps with some of us no religion at all; but now it must be the pure free grace gospel; now it must be the pure, unadulterated grace of God. The apostle then goes on to show that the law is the ministration of condemnation; that is all it has to minister to a poor sinner; but on the other hand the gospel ministers righteousness; and "much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth." That is the third step he gives in this process; that of the superiority of the gospel. The gospel excels the law in glory; because the law has nothing in it but majesty, whereas the gospel has in it all the majesty of the law, and all the mercy that the sinner needs. The gospel is majestic, sovereign, commanding; there is all the stability of the law in the gospel; for if not one jot nor tittle of the law can fail, so not one word of the gospel can pass away; so that in the gospel we have all the majesty that is in the law; but in the law the majesty is against us; in the gospel the majesty is for us; there we have mercy united with majesty; and consequently the law has no glory, by reason of this glory that excelleth. Then the apostle reminds us also of the continuation of the gospel; that the law continuing in the original state of man was a matter of very great uncertainty; if there were any certainty at all, it was that man would lose his standing. But here in the gospel there is no uncertainty; the certainty lies not in man sinning, but in man being saved; because everything is put into the hands of the God-man; and he will lose nothing that the Father has given him. I think this is the drift of the apostle here; namely, Christ being the pattern to which we are to be conformed; because he winds up the whole of it thus, "Beholding as in a glass;" and what is this glass? The Gospel, that is the glass reflecting that image to which we are to be conformed; "Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Do we not then here also love his appearing?

Third, we love Christ's appearing also in *the order of salvation*; in the order of the Gospel. This same Epistle contains this very subject; and it is very delightful; to have a religion of your own, a salvation of your own, a God of your own, a testimony of your own, an experience of your own, a Christ of your own, a heaven of your own; what a sweet thing it is to reflect upon in private before God. I am sure Mr. Hart describes many experiences of the people of God in many of their states when he says,

"Though my cup seems fill'd with gall,
There's something secret sweetens all."

But let us look at the order of salvation. Remember that the apostle Paul lived but a very little time after he wrote this Epistle; he was about to depart by martyrdom; and he therefore wrote as a dying man, though he always did so, because he was always in earnest; he knew the weightiness and solemnity of the charge laid upon him. But he seems anxious in this Epistle that Timothy should not lose sight of Christ's appearing in the order of salvation; and very emphatic is the way in which the apostle counsels Timothy on this matter. The Lord turn us all into Timothys this morning, and make us feel that we are the persons addressed, that we are the persons interested: "Be not thou therefore ashamed," says the apostle, "of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner; but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel according to the power of God." "Be not thou ashamed of the testimony of our Lord." Now what is that testimony? Here is his testimony, "Who hath saved us;" that is the first thing God

did; he hath saved us; he saw us lost, saw us ruined in the fall, saw us sinners, saw us brought down by the sides of the pit; he saw us there, and therefore he in counsel saved us. "And called us with an holy calling." Now Satan in the first Adam called us with an unholy calling; he called us away from God, away from the tree of life, away from God's order of things, into his own condemnation; that was Satan's unholy call, which we all originally, in the first Adam, have obeyed. In contrast to this, therefore, "He hath called us with an holy calling;" called us out of the state we were in by nature into vital union with the Lord Jesus Christ. Now mark the five rules by which he has done this. There are five positive rules the apostle lays down by which the Lord has done this: "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose;" that is one; so that if he called you, it is simply because he purposed to do so; that is all; that eternal purpose which he purposed in himself. Do you love the Saviour's appearing here? Ah, you say, this looks a little like predestination. Well, my hearer, look at it, it is God's word; and shouldest thou be angry, if thou art called by grace, because God had a good purpose towards thee, and has performed that good purpose, carried it out? Shouldest thou not rather bow to his word, and bless him, and stand amazed that while so many are left out of that good purpose, thou shouldest have some reason to believe thou art included? What, think you are going to heaven, and yet not love Jesus Christ here, in appearing according to his own purpose? But not only purpose, but also "grace," to supply every need that the sinner can have; "Which was given us," not offered, but "given us in Christ Jesus." All that was given to us in the first Adam we lost; but not one thing,—how complete is the contrast,—not one thing given to us in Christ was ever lost, or ever can be. And when was this done? "Before the world began." Here then is Christ's order of appearing. He appears after the order of salvation; after the order of effectual calling; after the order of the exclusion of all human merits; after the order of God's purpose, God's grace, God's liberality; "Given us in Christ Jesus before the world began; but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. For the which cause," the apostle says, "I also suffer these things;" they put me in prison, and now they are going to tear me limb from limb, put me to the most excruciating death they can devise; "nevertheless I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." It is true Phygellus and Hermogenes have turned away from me; they are ashamed of this testimony of our Lord, they do not love his appearing after this order; but some have not turned away from me; and there is one, namely, Onesiphorus, that sought me out diligently, and found me, and shewed all the friendship he could to me. Phygellus, I think, signifies a fugitive, a run-away, a very suited name it is; and Hermogenes signifies a son of Mercury; both names expressive of character; shewing that wherever the Gospel came in that day where mere professors were put to the test of God's truth, they were sure to turn away from it. Now the apostle admonishes Timothy that he should not be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, nor of me his prisoner; remember that my degradation in the estimate of men is not for any fault of mine, but for the grace that God hath given me, for the truth which I have advocated, the cause which I uphold, namely, the appearing of Jesus Christ.

I did intend to go all through the subject this morning, but time will not allow me; I must therefore close with the fourth idea, namely, CHRIST'S ULTIMATE APPEARING. Do we love him in his ultimate appearing?

There will be nothing but love then in exercise. Well, but it will be a dreadful day. It will, friends, to the lost; for he shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. They appear there in ignorance of him: their ignorance is an evidence against them. And I am sure when we compare the language of many professors now with the language that they will use then, there appears to me to be a fearful correspondence, such as I should tremble at. What is their plea? "Many will say at that day, have we not prophesied in thy name?" There it is, you see, creature doing. "Have we not cast out devils in thy name?" *We, all we.* "Have not we done many wonderful works?" *All we, all we.* Why, these were erroneous men, belonging to the mystery of iniquity. "I know you not; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity." Ah, my hearers, it is a great thing to be stripped, and humbled, and brought away from all such language as that, and conformed entirely to God's own order of things: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God." They know not God; they know him not by divine teaching, and consequently obey not, that is believe not, receive not, love not, the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: they may receive gospels, but not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; they may be very benevolent, they may give all their goods to feed the poor, they may give their bodies to be burned, and yet be as nothing at the last, because there is not in them the knowledge of God, nor the obedience of the Gospel; they shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. But how shall it be with the saints? "He shall be admired in all them that believe." "You who are troubled," says the apostle, rest with us; rest quietly, rest in assurance that that time will come when you shall unite with the church of old, and acknowledge that that God who hath destroyed the veil spread over all nations is your God; that that God who hath swallowed up death in victory is your God; that that God who can wipe away, and does wipe away all tears from off all faces, is your God; in that day shall it be said, This is our God that has done all these things; not we the wonderful people that have done wonderful things, but it is our God that has done the wonders; while he has done wondrously, we have stood and looked on, "This is our God, we have waited for him; he will save us; this is our Lord, we will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation."

Thus then there is a love to Christ in his sacrificial adaptation; a love to Christ as the pattern to which we are to be conformed; a love to Christ in that order of salvation in which he is revealed; and a love to Christ in that ultimate glory in which he shall yet appear.

Now ready.

SELECTIONS FROM THE SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT, FOR 1859.

Twelve Sermons by Mr. JAMES WELLS. Price six-pence. Sent free for seven stamps. J. Cox, 100, Borough Road.

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