

SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT.

THE BOOK OF LIFE.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 27TH, 1862, BY

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AT THE SURREY TABERNACLE, BOROUGH ROAD.

"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."—
Revelation xx. 15.

THERE cannot, I think, be on our minds any doubt but that the book of life is the gospel of God. If we say it is the covenant of life,—for the covenant of salvation is in Malachi called the covenant of life and peace,—it will mean, in substance, the same thing. We know of no book that ministers life—we know of no book of eternal life, but the gospel. I make these remarks, because there is a tendency among some good people to suppose that there is some mystic book somewhere that has never yet been seen, that is by-and-bye to be brought forward. Now, I do not myself think so; for I do not think that we need another book to set forth the Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel sets forth that mercy of God which is for ever; the gospel sets forth that Christ of God who is for ever; the gospel sets forth that kingdom of God which is for ever; and the gospel describes the people that are the people of God for ever. Taking it, then, for granted, that the book here spoken of is the gospel, then the question is, What is meant by being written in this book? My answer is, that everything is meant by it. It means, as we shall have to show, personal identification with the gospel; and it means, also, the good pleasure of the great God; for their names were therein recorded, as we shall see, as we go along, from the foundation of the world; before they had personal existence, their names were recorded there; and, in due time, they became identified with the gospel, with the word of life, with the book of life; and becoming identified therewith, that is the proof,—and that is all the proof we can have on this side the grave,—that the names of such persons are written in the book of life, that is, in the gospel. So that they will not be found in any one of the books we named last Lord's day morning; they will be found only in that book where the Saviour's name is, and that is in the gospel. And then, again, this identification with the gospel discriminates and distinguishes the people of God from all other people. And you will at once see, also, that the language shows that our eternal destiny is entirely, by the mercy of God, independent of and apart from all human merit, all creature goodness or badness. And that is the turning-point, that "whosoever was not found written in the book of life." And you may apply this text,—this part of it, at least,—to every doctrine of the Bible, and it will stand good. For instance,

whosoever is not found written in the love of God, is cast into the lake of fire; whosoever is not found written in eternal election, is cast into the lake of fire; whosoever is not found written in eternal predestination to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, is cast into the lake of fire; whosoever is not found within the range of mediation, is cast into the lake of fire; whosoever is not found in regeneration, is not regenerated, is not born of God, and hath not the Spirit of God, shall be cast into the lake of fire; whosoever is not found in the covenant,—the new covenant,—for the new covenant embodies everything of a gospel kind, shall be cast into the lake of fire. Thus we see how this language will apply to every doctrine of the gospel; all showing that the book of life means the gospel. Now, of the lake of fire, and the endless duration of future punishment, I shall say this morning a mere nothing. There is something very solemn and very fearful in the idea of the endless duration of future punishment and I shall, therefore, not touch this morning upon that solemn, and, I may say, awful subject; though I do feel a desire to give, at some future time, a sermon upon the same.

Our subject this morning, then, is that of *the book of life*; and in this book of life, or concerning this book of life, I shall notice three things. First, *that it is vital*; second, *that it is exemptional*; and third, *that it is admissional*. These are not all the characters in the book of life, but these are the three that will embody what I want to say this morning.

First, then, *that it is vital*; hence here called the book of life. And if our names be written in this book of life, then the law of life is written vitally in our souls. And this is the first thing I have this morning to attend to. Let us hear what the Lord saith in the 31st of Jeremiah:—"I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." And then, a little further on, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Now, the law which he puts into their hearts, is the law of life; that kind of life by which they love God; for that is the fulfilling of the law and the prophets, is love, by which they love God with all their hearts, with all their minds, with all their strength; and by which they have, of course, in this love to God, a love sincere to the brethren. Now, to prove that I am right in this, it says there, "I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more." This is a gospel new-covenant matter. Now, let a sinner be convinced of his iniquity, let him be convinced of his sin, his sinful state by nature, and then let him be led into the great secret that by Jesus Christ this iniquity is freely and eternally forgiven; and that by Jesus Christ, this sin, past, present, and to come, is forgotten, to be remembered no more for ever, never again to be remembered; you may look forward to all the circumstances of time with a full assurance that your God here in Christ Jesus is light, and in him is no darkness at all. Your sins are a cloud; but he hath blotted out, as a cloud, your sins, and as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and Christ becomes the morning without clouds. Here is vitality; and it endears the Eternal Three. God is to be endeared to his people in the relations in which he stands to them. He is not to be endeared to his people as a God of judgment, and as a God of wrath, but he is to be endeared to his people in the relations which he bears to them. Put them in a legal relation to him, a law relation to him, where there would be between him and them, their sins and his wrath; there he could not be loved; but put them here into this vital faith relation to him in Christ Jesus,—here you get into the great secret the woman was in, when it is said that she loved much, because much was forgiven. Let us hear what the apostle saith upon this vital matter, this experience, this identifying the soul with the gospel, because therein is your name evidently written in the Lamb's book of life. The apostle gloried in this vital matter; he delighteth in this beautiful theme of the entire abolition of sin and wrath, that such

shall not be cast into the lake of fire; for there is no wrath for such. Hence he says, "Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistles of Christ, known and read of all men;" that is, all men who are spiritual men. The natural man cannot read the spiritual man. The natural man may read the spiritual man morally,—and they take pretty good care to do it, and reckon him up pretty nicely,—and they may read the spiritual man temporally, and when they can get a chance to get a reckoning against him, that will gratify their enmity, they are not backward to do it. But while the natural man, then, can read the spiritual man morally and naturally, yet he cannot read him spiritually. They know nought of his soul-trouble; they know nought of his living desires after mercy; they know nought of those heart-melting, sweet, and precious seasons when the soul is brought into the embraces of endless love, and feels its interest in a covenant ordered in all things and sure.

They cannot read us here, and, therefore, cannot reckon us up. So that when the apostle saith, "Ye are declared to be the epistles of Christ, known and read of all men," he means of spiritual men; for the spiritual man discerneth all things, yet he himself is judged, or discerned, as it should be, of no man. The world knoweth us not; it knew him not, and it knoweth us not. Some of you may shake your empty and conceited heads, and think you can read us spiritually, but we know you can't; you think you can, but we know you can't; for we have been just where you are, but you have never been where we now are. So that, after all, there is a hidden secret in the Christian, that, however much the mere natural man may read about the sentiments of that man, there is a hidden mystery in his experience that none can know but he that receiveth it. There is the white stone of dignity, the sweet and blessed assurance of the truth of God, and the preciousness of it; with the new name, denoting the Christian's new state,—for he is a new creature,—that no one knoweth saving he that receiveth it. Therefore, the "all men" means all spiritual men. "Written not with ink;" no, the devil would soon alter the letters if it were, depend upon it, and make it then read very much against us; and, therefore, thank God for that; it is not written with ink; nor upon tables of stone; we should have Moses upon us if it were so, with all the indignation of a fiery law; but written by the Spirit of the living God on the fleshly tables of the heart. There it is; there is the living soul, and the truths are graven upon the soul. Now, mark the apostle's words; he declares our helplessness in these matters. "We are not sufficient to think any thing." Not sufficient to think? No, unable to think a thought that will do us any real good; but "our sufficiency is of God, who hath made us able ministers." Let us take away the word "ministers," and put the word "servants." The word "servant" does not always mean a minister, but the word "minister" always means a servant. "Who hath made us able servants of the new covenant." That is, an able servant is one that has three or four good qualities; first, he understands his work; second, he likes it; third, he sticks to it; and, fourth, he is honest in it. Now, that is an able servant. A good servant, one that understands his work well, never makes a mistake,—not a material one; and one that so likes it that he sticks to it; one that likes it, and he sticks to it; and he is upright and honest in it. Now, that is a good servant. "He hath made us able servants of the new testament; that is, of the new covenant; that is, he has blessed us with an understanding of the fact that Jesus is not the Mediator of a fallible covenant, but the Mediator of an infallible covenant, the better covenant, established on better promises, and that the Lord makes us love it. Here is the law of love; here in this covenant we love God; in this book of life we love the eternal Three, and we cleave to him with all our souls. Ah, I like the words of the poet, they have vibrated through my soul sometimes when you have sung them, not because you have sung them so well, though you do sing pretty well

sometimes, and sometimes you make rather a bungle of it; but the word have thrilled through my soul sweetly,

“And still my soul would cleave to thee,
Though prostrate in the dust.”

Again, this book of life means also the entire destruction of the adversary and all his powers. And if I am identified with this book of life, I am brought to where the adversary, as far as I am concerned, and all his powers, are brought to nought. Thus, 29th of Isaiah;—“In that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book.” I have told you what the words are,—forgiveness, oblivion, a covenant ordered in all things and sure; “In that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness.” Oh, how true that is! When God throws the rays of this new covenant into a sinner’s mind, he lifts up his eyes; he says, What a scene is here! what glory is here! oh, what attractions are here! Farewell, formality! farewell, free-will; farewell, duty-faith; farewell, creature doings; now my soul is brought to the high mountains of Israel, set free from all human trammels, and shall range in this everlasting covenant; it is in the glass of this gospel that I behold the glory of the Lord, and am changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of our God. Oh, my hearer, did the rays of this covenant ever fall upon your mind? Why, you know you can see the sun only in its own light, and you can see the covenant of grace only in its own light; you can see Christ Jesus only in his own light. The rays of his glory coming from this covenant into your mind will awaken in that mind affection and admiration,—sure to warm the heart. Again, 29th of Isaiah; now comes the secret; “For the terrible one is brought to nought;” mark, “the terrible one is brought to nought,” not *by* us, but *for* us, “and the scorner is consumed.” Ah, thou scorner, thy scorning will last but for a little moment, and thou shalt wither as the green herb, and soon be cut down. And he who stands upon this new covenant ground, and has been so cut down by conviction as to be reconciled to God, shall be cut down, plucked up, no more for ever. “And all that watch for iniquity are cut off;” mark that! The world in all ages has watched for something against the people of God, especially the ministers of God. And so they sought to catch something out of the Saviour’s mouth, that they might accuse him; they set as it were a print upon every step he took, in order that, if possible, they might have something against him. But then, all these are cut off. “That make a man an offender for a word,”—for the word of life,—“and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate,” and turn aside the just for a thing of nought.” Now we see this. If we are one with the book of life, there will be not only the love I have spoken of, not only shall we be able to serve God in the new covenant, but here will be this illumination; we shall see what Christ hath done, that he hath brought sin, and Satan, and all the territories of hell, to nought. And now mark the language. “The meek also shall,” by what the Lord hath done, “increase their joy in the Lord; and the poor among men,” mark that, “shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.” Now then, I will ask you four questions, and then leave this part of the subject. First, are we brought to see, and feel, and know, that the Mediator of the new covenant only could blot out sin, and the remembrance thereof: and is it so revealed to us as to endear the Lord to us? For that is the test of the divinity of the revelation. Human acquirements may fill the head with good sound speculative notions, but divine teaching reaches the heart, and every discovery by the Spirit of God endears God himself. Second, do we understand this new covenant; does that also endear the Lord; do we cleave to it; and is it a matter of conscience with us that, grace enabling us, we would gladly follow the martyrs of old rather than give up one particle of this new covenant, or in any way compromise it? Third

are we so illuminated as to see that the enemy and all his territories are brought to nought, and that salvation and safety are of the Lord? Fourth, do we feel our poverty of soul? For it is the poor among men that rejoice in the Holy One of Israel, that is, in Christ, who is the end of sin, and, therefore, the Holy One of Israel for us, and the Holy One of Israel to us; he is our sanctification, and by him we thus come up with acceptance before God. Now, if this be thy position, Christian,—my hearer, I would rather say—if you are brought into this state, then your name is in the book of life, as is evidenced by these truths being written in your soul; you are made one with him.

Second, this book is not only vital but also *exemptional*. It is exemptional in a threefold respect. First, in exempting us from the wrath to come; such shall not be cast into the lake of fire. This globe shall be burned; but what care I for that? I have a new earth. These atmospheric and cloudy heavens, and perhaps the moon, will pass away; but what care I for that? I have a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. This life is dwindling to a span; but what care I for that? I have a better life. The earthly house of my tabernacle must soon come down; but what care I for that? I have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. And what, after all, are all the circumstances of human life but as so many shadows? There is a good old Huntingdonian, eighty-four years old, said to me on Friday afternoon, "Ah," he says, pushing his hands out like that; "what is it all? It is all vanity, all vanity." I said, "How are you for eternity?" "Oh, I am right there. I am happy there. I know I am right there. Yes; Jesus is precious; the way is clear; and all I am waiting now for is the Lord to say to me, Come up hither." "Then you have no fear of death?" "Not the slightest; not the slightest." Dear old saint!—eighty-four!—I thought to myself, if I should live to that age! Whether I do or not, if I can die as happy as that, I shall do. He was not a man like some of the Huntingdonians, who are so only in name, that are gone now over to duty-faith and other false systems, but he is a man who sacredly abides by the truth as it is in Jesus. "Mark the perfect man"—the man that is perfect in Christ; "and behold the upright"—upright to that perfection he has in Christ; "the end of that man is peace." Then, my hearer, the book of life is exemptional—exempting us from the world's destruction, exempting us from the wrath to come; for the world's destruction—as we observed last Lord's day morning, as shown in the Epistle of Peter—and the destruction of ungodly men synchronize; they both take place at the same time; but the saints shall be destroyed never. Their life is hid with Christ in God; and when Christ, who is their life, shall appear, then shall they also appear with him in glory. As this book of life exempts from the wrath to come, so it exempts us from the fear of man. In the 13th chapter of this same Book of Revelation there is the ten-horned beast—that is, the various Satanic powers organized to oppose the truth and people of God—making war with the saints, and overcoming them; and they were, as to their mortal lives, many of them overcome; and many would rejoice to see us in that position now. Who is able to make war with this great beast, with this great power?—didn't like to call him a beast, of course, dear pious creatures. Who is able to make war? What, are you not going to agree with that which is so public and so popular, and the tide going all one way? Well, but don't you know that dead fish float with the tide, and living ones go against it? And all shall worship this wild beast, all shall worship these human systems, "whose names"—there it is—"are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." That is the secret of their boldness—those two things. First, here is the sacrificial Lamb, that has taken all my sins away; whom shall I fear? Second, our names were recorded in this covenant, in this gospel, from the foundation of the world.

Here, therefore, is sacrificial perfection and a sworn covenant; the living God on my side by sacrificial perfection in a sworn covenant; whom shall I fear? They would not worship him; they stood out, resisted even unto blood, and overcame at last by the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony—loved not their lives unto the death. It exempts us from the fear of man. I do not wish to be harsh in speaking of other ministers, but I will say this, that without some conclusion very detrimental to their profession, I cannot understand the vacillation of some men. I can't understand it—how they can side with the same line of things that we are in, and then presently up springs something a little more popular, and they go immediately over to that. I had better, perhaps, say I can't understand it. I will say one thing more concerning it, and that is all I will say. I wish to speak soberly; but I will say one thing—that while I cannot understand how they can do so, I will say one thing, "O my soul, come not thou into their secret, unto their assembly; mine honour, be not thou united." I will say that as a dying man. My hearer, if the gospel be worth anything, it is worth everything. Let us hold it as a fable, a jest, and then we shall turn, and twist, and trifle, like players in a theatre; but if we hold it, as we do, the sure word of the eternal God, which is to be the test of our ultimate destiny, let us treat it as such, and may we never, never dare to compromise that truth, that gospel, with which we are thus entrusted, knowing that, while we shall be hated of all men for the truth's sake, he that endures that hatred unto the end, the same shall be saved. Thus, then, if our identification with this book of life be real, it will exempt us from the fear of man. I do not say that we may not, at times, feel our weakness. I do not say that we may not, at times, like Peter, be almost led to deny the Lord; but we shall not settle down in that denial; nor could he settle down in that denial—he was unhappy in it. A ray of unaltered love from a Saviour's countenance melted his heart, and he went out and wept bitterly. Jesus loved him still. Peter's fall wrought no fall in the Saviour's love. Peter's alteration wrought no alteration in the Saviour's loving heart. He looked upon him. Ah! poor Peter. Are you the man that a few hours ago said, "If all deny thee, I will not"? yet you are the first to do it. But I love you still—I love you still. Peter did not settle down in that denial. So, then, these exceptions rather prove the rule than not. And all shall worship that power that carries the sway among men, except those whose names are written in the book of life; they shall know better, and they shall do better, and be better, and shall stand out, even in the stormiest times; with the Lord on their side, they are in safety. Third, it is exemptional also from delusion; cannot deceive these people. If I were a duty-faith man, or a free-willer, how I should grind my teeth at that scripture. I should almost swear somebody put it there without the Lord's authority. When I was among the Wesleyans, that scripture used to puzzle me. I used to look at it, and listen to it. I didn't kick at it, because I had not been taught enmity enough for that. Why, say you, what is that? Why, "If it were possible, they should deceive the very elect." The impossibility of being deceived is said of no other people but the elect. I think you free-willers must feel exceedingly vexed it is not said so of you—not said it is impossible for you to be deceived. You say, Ah! these elect. Well, wouldn't you like to be one of them? Well, I think I should. Well, perhaps you are one; but if you are, your prejudice will drop; your darkness will depart; light will come into the mind, love where there is enmity, and you will come into reconciliation to the truth as it is in Jesus.

Now, in the 17th chapter of Revelation, 8th verse—8th verse again; 8th verse of the 13th chapter, you see, where they overcome the fear of man; and here, in the 8th verse of the 17th chapter, they overcome delusion,—here is a great organized system, and all shall wonder after this system, all shall wonder, that is, admire; they "all shall admire,

whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world;" just now it was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, now the people's names are there from the foundation of the world. And all shall wonder. What numbers are there admire Popery, and other systems so respectable that it is almost a hanging matter to speak against them. Why, it has been said to me in times past, How dare you speak against such and such a system? How dare I, too! Oh, poor little moth; poor little maggot; poor little worm! How dare I to do it? How dare I? How dare you ask such a question? But "all shall admire whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is." There, say you, who can understand that? Well, some learned men have given us some very good historical ideas upon that difficult scripture. I must not occupy time in describing to you what the learned say about it, because it is only human learning, and only heathen history, after all. I take the beast there to mean the whole body of the powers of darkness. "Which was, and is not." How is that? Thus, the beast, the wild beast, the embodiment of Satan and all his powers, was in universal dominion; he had the whole human race under his power; all were deluded, all had gone astray. That is the beast that was. But now that Christ has died, he is not universal; Satan is not now universal in his dominion, for the elect of God come out from under his dominion. And therefore, while he was in the universality of his power, he is not at all now over the people of God—that is, not those that know the truth. Thus the beast that was, and is not. Bring it home to personal experience. These powers of darkness once governed you; it was the beast that was; but now he is not, not with you. Why not? Because you are brought out from under his power; you are brought to God. So it is the beast that was, and is not, and yet is over others—over others, not over you; you die no more, you are deluded no more, you go back to Egypt no more. As the body is raised from the dead at the last great day, immortal, to return to the dust no more; so the soul is regenerated now, to go back to unregeneracy no more. Thus the beast in relation to you personally was; now he is not; yet he is over others. That is the way the Christian explains it. Well, say some, you seem to make so much use of experience. Of course we do. And do not you in the world, Mr. Sharper, do so too? When you make a blunder, and lose a penny,—Dear me, what a fool I was! I shall be wiser next time. What is that but making use of experience? Well, if you are to make use of experience to get a penny temporarily, surely we are to make use of experience to get a penny spiritually. What is our experience for? For all of us by nature are in these things fools, and nothing but divine experience can make us wise. So, then, the saints of God shall not admire, they shall not admire those systems. No; they have but one object of admiration, and when they have done admiring him, then they may go and admire others; when they find nothing more to admire in him, they may go and admire others. But, no; their language is, "He is the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem." Thus, then, here is vitality; here is victory over the fear of man, victory over the delusions of man, so that we shall not admire error, or erroneous systems, however respectable they may appear before men, or however much they may be dressed up; but we will admire Jesus Christ; we will say of his tabernacles, How admirable they are! we will admire him; and he shall come at the last great day to be admired in all them that believe.

But, lastly, as this book of life is vital, identifying us thus with eternal life, endearing supremely a covenant God; as this book of life is exemptional, exempting us from the wrath to come, and giving us the victory over the fear of man and the delusions of man, for whatever war they make

against the Lamb, the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings; and they that are with him are called, and their calling proves their election. Called and chosen. Calling is mentioned first, because with us calling is first. With God election is first, but with us calling is first; he first calls us; then comes the manifestation of election. "Called, and chosen, and faithful." Why, it is the elect that are faithful, you see; you see, here they are again. Now, perhaps I am speaking to some who do not like the word *election*. It is because you do not know your need of it, and do not understand it. But do not you see, now, how well they are spoken of in the Bible, that they are called and chosen? Ah, I do not like these chosen people. Well, but the Lord says they are faithful; look at that. Well, but I do not like them. Well, but the Lord does. Now you go home, and if you cannot before dinner, do after dinner, just retire, and kneel down, and tell the Lord you do not like that chosen people. Well, say you, I could not do that. Why not? If you were honest, you could. Well, I should not like to do that. Well, I am glad you have a little feeling somewhere.

But now I have come to the admissional. I must just give a hint on that, and that is all I can do. This book of life is admissional. If I am identified thus with the gospel, if I am an able servant of the new covenant, if I overcome the fear of man, if I am delivered from delusion, and am thus called, and chosen, and faithful, then I shall be admitted into this city. "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth; and we can enter there without defilement only by that perfection that is in Christ; "nor worketh abomination;" and we can enter free from abomination only by the same thing, the completeness that is in Christ; "or maketh a lie;" and we can enter there only by the truth; "but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

Thus, then, my hearer, men may trifle with their own souls, and trifle with God's truth: but there stands the law of Zion; and if that law be not in my soul, and I am not brought into identification and oneness with that law, where God is I never can come. If, on the other hand, I am made one with it, then nothing can shut me out of the city; I am constituted a citizen, registered in heaven, and there to dwell, and that for ever.