

SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT.

WHEAT AND TARES.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 25TH, 1862, BY

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AT THE SURREY TABERNACLE, BOROUGH ROAD.

“And bring forth fruit with patience.”—Luke viii. 15.

In addition to what was said last Lord's day morning upon the preceding parts of this verse, there are four things more I wish to say on this last clause of this same verse, and the four things are these:—First, that *the people of God themselves, who are here called good ground hearers, are spoken of as wheat ripening into perfection*; secondly, that *these persons who ripen into perfection stand in contrast to the tares that are sown among the wheat*; and thirdly, *the fruit which they bring forth*; and fourthly and lastly, *the manner after which that fruit is to be brought forth*—they bring forth fruit with patience.

First, then, *they are spoken of as ripening into perfection*. They are spoken of as coming to their grave as a shock of corn cometh in his season; and we must therefore first show what this ripening, in the gospel sense of the word, into perfection is. The Saviour, in the 4th of Mark, gives us a parable upon this: “It groweth up,” he saith, “first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.” This is intended to set forth the people of God ripening into perfection. This I will try to describe as minutely and carefully as I can. Well, then, in the first place, relative to this ripening into perfection, or relative to this perfection of state by which such persons are prepared for eternity, and are, as you are aware, in that state called wheat. “He shall gather the wheat into his garner, while he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” They are perfect constitutionally, in God's counsels. God the Father chose them in Christ Jesus the Lord, and imputed their sins to Christ, and imputed his work unto them, and constituted them, in this matter of choosing them and making them one with Jesus, he hereby constituted them perfect, just as free from sin as Christ himself. And the Saviour became, by the counsel of the Father, by the Father thus constituting him not only their head, but also their mediator; not only their head and mediator, but also their surety; for there is a difference in all these three characters. Christ might have been the head of the people, to rule over them, without being at the same time a mediator for them; and he might have been a king to rule over them, and a mediator to establish peace, without being their surety; but he is all three. The people were given to him; he is the last Adam, and he therefore stands also the head of the people. And the Lord, foreseeing the fall, constituted which the Lord formed, all the sins of the people fell upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and his mediatorial work set to their account, he there stands as the surety for them; yea, God himself in this matter by immutable oath is the surety for them; he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself,

saying, In blessing I will bless thee. Here, then, is perfection. Then the second step is that which the Lord Jesus Christ hath actually done. The Lord Jesus Christ came to do the will of the Father. And the Saviour gives us the negative, implying the positive side of God's will, when he says, "It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish." And then he gives us, in another place, the positive of God's will, thus, that "this is the will of him that sent me, that of all that he hath given me I should lose nothing." Now the Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, going to the end of the law and to the end of sin, hath, as the Apostle says, perfected for ever all them that are sanctified. Now, in order to be ripened personally into perfection, we must have right faith in him. After all, being ripened into perfection means nothing else but experimental reconciliation to God, reconciliation to God in his way of saving us. Therein lies our fitness for heaven; therein lies our perfection; therein lies our acceptance; therein lies everything that includes our eternal welfare; for it is a self-evident truth that the Lord and his people are to dwell together for ever and ever. But then, a scripture saith, and rightly, too, "How shall two walk together, except they be agreed?" Here, then, first, we must know our need of the perfect work of the Lord Jesus Christ. But then, when I say that I wish to explain the matter as clearly as possible, that this work of the Lord Jesus Christ must be to you everything; you must have done with the law, and you must learn that there is nothing for you there but condemnation, and you must see the Saviour's atonement as freeing you from every threatening of the Bible; and also when you come short, which we all do more or less, of a great many precepts of the gospel, for all those shortcomings, for all those deformities, for all those infirmities, and for all those faults with which you are compassed, this perfection of Christ must be the remedy. Never mind what men may say, never mind what they call it; this is God's way of doing the work; and if you think to make up the deficiency by redoubling your diligence, or by doing something wonderful, then you are just taking the place of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness; and we cannot too clearly understand that scripture. I have very often reminded you of the twofold meaning of that scripture, and I do so once more, because it is a scripture that we ever need. Now, first, the fountain opened for sin refers to Christ's atonement as having taken sin entirely and eternally away; and then the other addition, namely, for uncleanness; the literal meaning of that is this, that under the Old Testament age, if a person touched a dead body, or in any way, according to the laws of that dispensation, became unclean, and was thereby excluded from the holy things, then there was for that man provided a sacrifice, called a sin-offering, sometimes called a trespass-offering; so that by bringing in this sin-offering or this trespass-offering, then the fault of the man was by that offering at an end. So that if there had been a fountain opened without this provision for the offering to adapt itself to the necessities of the sinner, then communion between the Israelites and the holy things would soon have been cut off. But every time that sin rises, and seems to cut the man off from communion with holy things, in steps the sacrifice in that adaptation to the man that cuts off the iniquity, the fault, the sin, and keeps up that free communion with eternal things that shows forth the mercy of the Lord. If therefore you are taught of God, you will understand the meaning of the apostle, which I must confess it is a lesson that I desire more and more to learn, however painful the means may be, where the apostle says, "The life that I now live is by the faith of the Son of God, that loved me and gave himself for me;" that is, he stands in the place of all my sins; so that, as our iniquities abound, thereby a consciousness of our need of Christ aboundeth also; and this made the apostle say, in answer to the Lord's answer to him,—when the Lord said,

"My grace is sufficient for thee; my strength is made perfect in weakness."—"Most gladly, therefore, will I glory in mine infirmities,"—I will glory in being the subject of these infirmities, I will glory in being conscious of them;—"that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

There are very few ministers,—bless the Lord, there are some!—I bless the Lord for that, that there is a remnant according to the election of grace.—but there are very few ministers, and few professors, in our day, but would call this Antinomianism, and call it dangerous doctrine. And why do they do so? Why, because the law of God has never ploughed up the wickedness of their hearts, they have never been convinced of their total depravity in the eye of God's law; they measure themselves by themselves, and so come to a wrong measurement; they measure themselves by one another, and so come to a wrong measurement. But when once the Lord takes a man in hand, and puts him into the scales of the law, he is found wanting then in every respect; when the Lord takes up a man to measure him by the exceeding length, and breadth, and spirituality of his law, then that man finds that he has indeed sinned, and come short, infinitely short, of the law and glory of God. Then in comes Christ Jesus, and he grows up into Christ Jesus, he lays hold of his perfection. Ah, he says, I cannot pray without this perfection of Christ; I cannot have access to God without it; I cannot praise God without it; I cannot have life without it, nor sanctification, nor justification, nor the approbation of God, nor the promise of God, nor the Spirit of God, without it. I cannot run in the way of his commandments without it; I cannot get to heaven without it; I cannot have the victory without it. All comes there; so that the life you now live will be by the faith of the Son of God,—putting him into the place of all your necessities. Ah! say some, this is going a long way. Well, friends, I would rather, after I have said what I have to say this morning, retire into private life, and, were I so situated, obliged to take the humblest occupation, I would rather do it, with the enjoyment of this perfection that is in Christ, than I would live to see the day when I should give up one iota of that perfection, and conform to the fashions of the day. I should be a miserable creature without this perfection that is in Christ Jesus the Lord. Now, my hearer, can you say that, through the Lord's mercy, you have been so led along that nothing else but this perfection that is in Christ, after this order of adaptation, can take from you the terror of God? Can you say, Let men say what they may, if it be not so, I should be afraid of God; I should be afraid of life, and afraid of death, and afraid of judgment, and afraid of eternity, and afraid of everything? But, said the angel, knowing the infinite variety of adaptation there is in Christ, "Fear not, for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified: he is risen from the dead." Now, then, to grow in grace is to grow in an increased acquaintance with our need of these things; is to grow in an increased reconciliation to the Lord. The Lord's people speak of their hardness, and darkness, and besetments, and trials, and what poor, helpless, prayerless creatures they feel themselves to be; and that they think they shall give it up,—it is no use. They read, and get nothing; and hear, and get nothing; and pray, and get nothing. Better give it all up together. But how can you give it up? What is all this poverty for? What is all this downward experience for? Why, it is only to make way for the truth of which I am now speaking; to demonstrate to you that the Lord loves you freely, that he approves of you entirely and eternally in his dear Son. Here lies the secret. Then, again, we have said that God the Father constituted us perfect in his dear Son. Now we must be brought, in order to be prepared for eternity, to prove that we are wheat, and not chaff; to prove that we are good ground hearers; to prove that we are ripening into perfection, or preparation for glory; there must be a growing up into the counsels of the Father. I will first mention, in this

part, one scripture that I have mentioned so many times before, that, "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel,"—now I have stated what his counsel is in constituting a poor sinner complete in Christ; and it there says that in the revelation of this immutability of his counsel, "that we might have strong consolation." The apostle then describes the persons to whom this consolation belongs, which I will not now stop to describe, as I have many more things to say; but let us ask ourselves the question, Is the immutability of God a source of consolation to us? Is it dear to us? Is it delightful to us? Can we truly say that we feel as sure as we do of our existence that were it not so, we must be lost, and that we are prepared to say, with the Lord's people of old, "It is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed"? Here, then, lies the perfection,—I mean, in the manifestation of it. It means this reconciliation to the perfection of Christ, and to the counsel of God, in the order of that counsel, and in the immutability thereof. Oh, my hearer, it is a sweet life to live. I will again repeat the words:—"The life I now live is by the faith of the Son of God, that loved me, and gave himself for me." Bless the Lord! when you are once acquainted with this gospel secret, that Christ is everything, it is astonishing how it heals diseases, how it strengthens our faith, how it causes our hope to abound, and how it cheers us up through the darkest paths; for, after all, as I have sometimes said, though we are sinners, we are but creatures, but Christ is Immanuel, God with us. The wheat, then, or the good ground hearer, is the man that has this honest acquaintance with the truth; the man who loves the truth with all his heart, with all his mind, and with all his soul. Here is a vitality in this; here is a vital hold of what Christ hath done; and here is a vital hold of the counsels of God the Father, and his immutable oath. These are they that are prepared for heaven; and nothing but this reconciliation with God can evidence our preparation for eternity.

Now, these persons who are thus reconciled to God, stand in contrast to the tares. I will just notice that parable here, to show the contrast, and will take that parable in the 13th of Matthew as belonging to the Jewish age. I think that taking it thus, in its primary meaning, will throw a light upon its ultimate meaning. Now, then, these good seed these persons who are thus brought to know their need of Christ, reconciled to his perfection, and reconciled to the counsels of God in and by him; "He," saith the Saviour, "that soweth the good seed is the Son of man." So that these persons did not constitute themselves wheat. And you must understand the tares spoken of are religious people,—mind that! That is clear, by their being sown among the wheat, associating in the same dispensation with the wheat. "He that soweth the good seed," the "is the Son of man." So, as another scripture saith, "the preparation of the heart, and the answer of the tongue, are of the Lord." So that of religion must be either of God, or else of the devil; for he is transformed as an angel of light, and his ministers,—remarkable scripture that is,—ministers of righteousness. His ministers are righteous ministers in the eyes of the world. You do not hear the world speak against them; the world calls them pious men, good men, upright men, wonderful men. "His ministers as ministers of righteousness;" but God's ministers are the offscouring of all things; God's ministers dangerous characters; God's ministers everywhere hated, despised, spoken against, and contemned upon them. Now, I say the tares among the wheat, then, they are religious people. "The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one. The enemy that soweth them is the devil." I believe the devil is converting hundreds and hundreds of people in the day in which we live. Plenty of people that are converted, I believe Satan to be the author of their conversions. I believe they are nothing but tares among the wh

The tares there are not the kind of grain we call tares, but the original word there means a kind of produce that was of a poisonous character. And so, how many are there professedly converted, but what are they converted to? Not to the perfection of Christ; not to the immutability of God's counsel. They may profess to be, but they, in reality, hate it. Well, now, the good seed stand out distinct here; the one is reconciled to that order of things I have stated, and the other hates that order of things. And the Saviour says, "The harvest is the end of the world;" or, as it may there be rendered, "the end of the age," that is, the end of the Jewish age. Let us take it, first, in its primary sense,—the end of the Jewish age, "and the reapers are the angels." As, therefore, the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this Jewish age. The Son of man shall "send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity."

Now I must stop here to find out what those things are that offend, and who the persons are that work iniquity, in order clearly to distinguish the wheat from the chaff, or rather the good seed from the tares. "They shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend." The original word, there translated "things that offend," is frequently translated "stumbling blocks," and that is the meaning there—that these angels, not angels literally, but angels officially, that is, God's ministers, they shall gather out of his kingdom the stumbling blocks. Here are stumbling blocks laid in the way of the Lord's people, and those stumbling blocks shall be gathered out. Well, perhaps you say, if I could see some Scripture that represents the kind of gospel which certain things are impediments to, then I should see the meaning of those things that offend. Well, now, I could go to many Scriptures, but I will go only to one, that is to the 62nd of Isaiah. You recollect what a beautiful epitome is given of the gospel in the beginning of that chapter; indeed, all through the chapter. I will just remind you of its commencement, and that will suffice. "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth;" and so that chapter goes on, descriptive of Christ's righteousness, of the matrimonial relation between Christ and the church, and of God's immutable oath; "The Lord hath sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength, Surely I will no more give thy corn to be meat for thine enemies." Then, after speaking of this righteousness, and salvation, and matrimonial relationship, and the new name which he puts upon the church, and then the certainty, by his immutable oath, of their needs being supplied, he then gives this command: "Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people." Now, there is the gospel; and whatever doctrine, such as duty-faith, free-will, or any other doctrine, that stands in the way of that gospel spoken of in that 62nd of Isaiah, those are the things that offend, and those are the things to be gathered out of the kingdom in a way I will presently try to describe. "They shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend." Why, so far from many ministers in our day being employed in taking away conditionality, and taking away their universal offers, human inventions, and letting this gospel have free course, they are everlastingly putting these stumbling blocks, these impediments; they are everlastingly putting these impediments in the way. Now, those who are taught of God are commanded to take these away, and lift up a standard to the people, and let the people see Christ Jesus and his salvation, the new name, the matrimonial relation that subsists, and God's immutable oath. Whatever stands opposed to that offends; and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend; those doctrines that stand opposed to that order of things described in the 62nd of Isaiah, those things shall not remain

finally in the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now we have nothing to do but go to the Pharisees in the Saviour's day, and especially to the 23rd of Matthew, as well as other passages, and to see what hindrances they had thrown in the way. The Saviour saith, "Ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in." Now, then, all these stumbling blocks, these hindrances, are to be taken out of the way, and the gospel is to have free course. "They shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend." And the Saviour himself ministerially did this. Why, when they came to him with all the importance of human investiture, and of human dignity, and looked at the Saviour with all the sternness possible, "Why do not thy disciples keep the traditions of the elders?" he said, "Why do ye make void the word of God?" See the mighty difference between the two. The Pharisees advocated the traditions of the elders, but the Saviour cast the whole of these stumbling-blocks out of the way, and said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things"—these new covenant mysteries—"from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Again, "And them which do iniquity." Iniquity there means, for the original word is not the usual word for sin and transgression, but the word that belongs more particularly to an organized system of hostility against God's truth; and all the Pharisees, therefore, were workers of iniquity. And the New Testament dispensation was not long established before this organized system of hostility to the truth crept in. You see it noticed in Paul's Epistle to the Galatians especially. He labours all through that epistle to cast out the mystery of iniquity, and to insist that the mystery of godliness shall occupy all the parts of the Church, and all the space of the Saviour's kingdom. So that they which do iniquity are persons that belong to organized systems of hostility to God's truth. If you are a free-willer, you are a worker of iniquity, because you belong to a system of hostility to God's new covenant truth. If you are a duty-faith man, you are, in that respect,—let your state before God, as to your soul, be what it may,—you are, as far as you are a duty-faith man, a worker of iniquity, you belong to an organized system of hostility to God's truth. Now, they shall gather out of his kingdom, then, all stumbling-blocks, all these things that stand in the way of his blessed truth; and them which do iniquity. Now, if I am right in my definition—mystery of iniquity—the man of sin is spoken of as the head of that mystery of iniquity, and all that are one with these organized systems opposed to God's truth, are to be cast out. But then some of them have great faith, sir. I know they have, of a certain kind; impudent enough for anything. Ah, but some of them have very great knowledge, sir. So has the devil. So had the serpent, when he was too much for Eve. Ah, but, sir, some are very benevolent. I know that; they give all their goods to feed the poor. Well, but some have been so zealous, that they have died rather than give up their religion. So have many of the heathen; that all amounts to nothing. So the apostle, when he saw the mystery of iniquity working in Galatia, said, "Have ye suffered so many things in vain, if it be yet in vain?" Thus, then, if I am a good ground hearer, my soul is identified with Christ's perfection, with God's eternal counsels, as described in the 62nd of Isaiah. On the other hand, if my religion be of the wicked one, then I shall belong to duty-faith, or free-will, or some organized system of hostility to God's truth, and I am then a worker of iniquity. "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity." Workers of iniquity! Why, Lord, we never saw thee hungry, or thirsty, and did not sympathize with thee. Why, I never knew you; you might have done these things from various motives, but with all your doings you have never received the love of the truth, and never worked in love to it. Now, these tares are to be "cast into a furnace of fire, and there shall be wailing and gnashing

of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

Well, now I come to a difficult point, which I will try and make as clear as possible. If that parable belong to the Jewish age, how then is it true that he gathered out of his kingdom "all things that offend, and them which do iniquity," seeing, say you, the Jews never came into his kingdom? Stop, friends, the kingdom of the Jewish dispensation, and the kingdom of the christian dispensation, are one and the same in spirit, one in origin, and one in design. What was the origin of the Old Testament dispensation? Heaven,—God. What was the spirit of it? Christ; he was the spirit, the life, and meaning of that dispensation. What was the design of it? To set forth Christ. What is the origin of the christian dispensation? Heaven. What is the spirit of it, and the essence of it? Christ. What is the design of it? To set forth Christ, and the exceeding riches of the grace of God by him. Well now, Jesus Christ came and reformed his kingdom. How did he reform it? He reformed his kingdom, first, by passing it over from a merely national thing into a cosmopolitan,—a world-wide thing; and secondly, by abolishing the Levitical dispensation, and bringing in his own atonement,—the antitype of the same; also, by giving up the land and temple, and the whole of it, and bringing in the anti-typical. Thus he reformed his kingdom, the same kingdom; but he reformed it, that is, he reformed it. And he will reform his kingdom once more, at the resurrection; he will come; we shall have to preach no more; we shall have to hear no more; ordinances no more; going to and fro no more; then the last reformation will take place; the kingdom will then be reformed, and will take its final form; it will then go into its glory-form, and there it will remain. If any of you should think I am wrong in using the word *reform*, just go to the 9th chapter of the Hebrews, and the apostle there tells us, that the ordinances of that dispensation "were imposed on them until the time of reformation." There it is, you see, that is the reforming of his kingdom; and there is yet another reforming of his kingdom. Now, I have made this remark in order to make what I have to say clear. So that, in the Jews' being cast into a furnace of fire, where there was weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, the angels, that is the ministers, they did this testimonially, they declared that would be their portion. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." Now, did this come to pass? It did. Hence, while the Jews were writhing in agony under the pressure of the Roman power; while the Jews were undergoing the fiery judgments of God, poured out upon them by the instrumentality of the Roman armies; while the Jews were in this furnace, enduring these fiery judgments, at one and the same time, the people of God were standing in the sunlight of God's presence,—of mediatorial perfection,—of the new covenant; they were standing in the light of that sun that will never go down. So that that parable applies to that age; there is the wheat,—those who were reconciled to God; there are the things that offend, namely, false doctrines; there are the workers of iniquity,—those who belong to organized systems of hostility to God's truth; and those who belong to that were cast into the then existing furnace of God's judgment, and there was weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth; while, at the same time, the righteous, real Christians, were rejoicing in the sunlight of the Lord Jesus Christ. But I by no means believe that the meaning of that parable is confined to that age; it unquestionably goes on to the ultimate judgment, when there is a more terrible furnace, into which the workers of iniquity shall be cast; while saints, or Christians, or the righteous, in a higher and more glorious sense of the word, even in glory's presence, shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

They bring forth fruit. All the fruit that the people of God bring forth is included in one sentence. You cannot think of a fruit of any kind that is not included in one sentence, and that is *decision* for God; that is the way they bring forth fruit. So Abraham did. Now, Abraham, which will you do, part with my truth, or with your son Isaac? With my son Isaac, accounting that God is able to raise him again from the dead; and under that reckoning I will part with him for a time, rather than part with thy truth; and so Abraham was justified by works; that was a good fruit, to show that there was nothing so dear to him as God's truth. Now, Moses, here is a nice path; you can enjoy yourself; you may go and get tipsy every day pretty well, or quite, if you can stand it; all the festivities of Egypt; you may eat and drink, and go on and do just what you like, nobody can hurt you. What do you think of it? Well, I do not choose to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; I refuse that path. I know a nobler path than that. And so, in decision for God he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God. Ah, the people of God must suffer affliction; as it was then, so it has been ever since; the people of God never have the applause of this world long together; they may have it for a little while; but, as a writer somewhere says, when the world does smile, it never means any good; and when it frowns, we need not fear it; for if God be for us who can be against us? So he esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward." There is decision for God; refusing the highest honours of time, and rather undergo affliction for a few days; be at the gate with Lazarus for a few days, rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. And so bring forth fruit like Rahab,—decision for God again, you see; received the spies in peace; sent them out another way; she was faithful; stood out for God; she knew he was God in heaven above and in the earth beneath, and that he had given the land to the Israelites, and all was right. So Cornelius, he was decided for God; he prayed to God always, with all his house,—that was a nice little church there,—and gave much alms to the people. That is decision for God. God in his providence has brought bountifully into my hand; here is his cause, and here are poor people, and I will do what I can to support that cause and alleviate the sorrows of his poor and needy ones. No doubt he acted upon the principle laid down by the apostle, "Do good unto all men, but especially unto them which are of the household of faith." And the Lord approved of Abraham's decision, and of Moses' decision, and of Rahab's decision, and of the prayers and alms of Cornelius; and an angel was sent, and said, "Cornelius, thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God." Oh, how good it is, friends, to have this spirit of decision. You cannot think of any good thing you can do; you cannot think of any good that can be produced, that is not included in that one thing,—decision for God. Whatever we do, if it be not from that principle, it is not acceptable in the sight of the Lord; but when it is done in thorough love to him, then it is a work of faith. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

I have no time to speak of the patience, but just to remind you of it. "Ye have heard of the patience of Job," that all his afflictions could not move him from the truth, "and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy."