

SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT.

THE PEOPLE WHO ARE WELL PROVIDED FOR.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 29TH, 1863, BY

MR. JAMES WELLS,

AT THE SURREY TABERNACLE, BOROUGH ROAD.

“What he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.”—Isaiah lxiv. 4.

THE world had, when these words were recorded, been standing some thousands of years, so that, had it been possible for the natural man to hear understandingly, and to perceive clearly, and to enter into the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, there had been plenty of time and opportunity for them so to do. But here is the testimony that no man had done so. And so the apostle, quoting those words, explains it thus, that “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love him; but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.” So then the letter of God’s word, though that letter clearly declares the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, yet it is not the letter of the word that can give life to the soul, that can give eyes to the blind, that can give ears to the deaf, or can turn the natural man into a spiritual man. And so, before a man can discern spiritual things he must be himself a spiritual man. There is a great difference between these things being revealed by the letter, and revealed by the Spirit. When they are revealed by the letter, and only by the letter, they reach the mental powers, they enrich the intellectual powers, they elevate the mental and moral character of man, and there they stop, they go no farther. A man may be a great professor, and by great gifts a great preacher, and may appear very wonderful, and all the time his religion shall be merely in the letter. And you will say, Where is the difference? Suffice it to say that where the Holy Spirit reveals these mysteries, he always does, without exception, if not in the same degree, yet in the same kind, bring a man to feel that he is what the apostle Paul felt he was, when he describes what he felt himself to be in the seventh chapter of the Romans. There is the killing power of the law, cutting the soul up root and branch, and bringing to light its real condition, and it lays the sinner low; and he looks at the word, and men are saying, There is the forgiveness, come and take it; there is the promise, come and take it; there is the mercy proposed, come and take it; there is the salvation presented, accept it. Let a man go and preach such a doctrine as this to Saul of Tarsus between the time that he was convinced and the time that God’s messenger came, namely, Ananias, and what would it have been to Saul of Tarsus but as smoke to the eyes, and as vinegar to the teeth? It would have been a mockery; he would have felt he could get at none of these things. But when the moment arrives for him to realize these things, then the Lord sends Ananias, and by Ananias brings these things with power into the soul of Saul of Tarsus, so that Saul of Tarsus realizes his election of God in the personal enjoyment of that election; realizes forgiveness of sins in the personal enjoyment of that forgiveness; he realizes the good will of God in the understanding and

in the enjoyment of that good will; he realizes the presence of the Saviour in his adaptation to him as a Saviour, in the personal enjoyment of that Saviour; and he arose, and signified all this by being baptized. And when he went forth, being furnished with this soul-trouble and this soul-salvation, he went forth and told to sinners round, not only what a dear Saviour he had found, but how that Saviour must be found in order that the soul might be saved; that he must be found in the same way that Saul himself had found the Saviour. As I have said, though the experience may not be so deep, it must be deep enough to go down to the bottom of all the creature's conceit, and wisdom, and strength, and holiness, burn up and destroy the whole, lay the creature prostrate; and then God comes in, in the sovereignty of his pleasure, in the salvation that Jesus hath wrought, and brings the soul up into the bond of the everlasting covenant. That is the man that doth see the things that God hath prepared for them that love him; that is the man that could preach from such a text as this, and tell the people something of the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; for he hath revealed them to us by his Spirit. All experiences must be tested by the letter of the word, but I say, where it is only the letter of the word, it is then only moral, mental, and intellectual; but where it is by the Holy Spirit, there is this new existence that brings you out of the old world altogether into a new world. Now, if we have not this vital experience, this vital, living religion, then if our religion be a letter religion, what will that do for us? I mean, a mere letter religion. "It will kill us; "the letter killeth." There is a fourfold respect in which the letter killeth. First, in the Adamic law; there the letter killed in a way of penalty. "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt die." That we will call federal law; there the letter killed as in a way of penalty. Then came the personal law of the ten commandments; that also killeth in a way of penalty. Then cometh the broken covenant; that also killeth in a way of penalty. Then cometh the gospel, and that also killeth in a way of testimony. If I am a mere letter professor, that gospel testimonially kills my religion, declares it a thing of nought; and when I come to die, that very gospel which I have professed will bear testimony against me, that my soul is not arrayed in the covering of God's Spirit, that I have never been experimentally led to renounce self, and all my own righteousness, and to receive, by the power of the eternal Spirit, the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is what the apostle means when he says, "Unto the one," to the man that is vitally taught, taught of the Spirit, "we are a savour of life unto life;" unto such we testify that such have eternal life, that that life is in Christ, that that life can never die, that they can never be severed from that, nor that be ever severed from them; "unto the other," who make no profession at all, or rather unto those who make a mere letter profession (as well as unto them who make no profession at all), "we are a savour of death unto death;" our testimony is, "If any man hath not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Thus then, my hearer, while the natural man hath not seen the things that God hath prepared for them that love him, the spiritual man doth see them; not indeed in the fulness and perfection thereof, because we know only in part; but by-and-bye, that which is now only in part shall be done away, and we shall know as we are known; now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Nevertheless, it is true at the present, that those who are taught of God, unto them it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; but unto others it is not given.

I will take our text in two parts. First, *the provision*; and secondly, *the person for whom that provision is made*; "him that waiteth for him."

First, *the provision he hath prepared*. I will just take these words first as referring to the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ waited for God; that we shall show clearly when we come to analyze that part. Let us

look, then; at the provision that God made for Jesus Christ, for the man Christ Jesus. And as I go along, of course I shall connect you with him, and show that that same provision which he hath made for him he hath made for you; for we must never sever the Saviour from his people.

Now, then, the first provision that I shall notice, if it may be called a provision, and I think it may, is the Saviour's constituted fitness, as man, for eternal glory. That is one thing that God had for him—the Saviour's constituted fitness for eternal glory. Now, wherein lay his constituted fitness for eternal glory? Why, you will say, in the perfection of his work. No, it doth not lie there. The perfection of his work entitled him to glory, brought him to glory, and is his right, and is the Christian's right to eternal glory; but the fitness doth not lie there. The constituted fitness of the Saviour for endless glory lies in that transfiguration, in that transformation, in that change which he underwent when he ascended to heaven—chiefly that of strength I shall dwell upon, including many other things as I go along which suggest themselves. Now, we well know that no person with a very unhealthy body, and at the same time an unhappy mind, can be happy. Take a man's health away, and then take his peace of mind away; you may surround him with all the luxuries, and all the splendours, and all the riches, and all the glories of the universe; but then he has no health, he has no strength, he has no fitness to enjoy any of them; and besides, his mind is uneasy, there is a something in his mind that these things cannot cure. Now, surround that man with all these things, that man is as unhappy as ever; you cannot make him happy. But give him health, and take away his trouble of mind; if you can give him perfect health, perfect strength, make him vigorous, so that his own body shall be a delight to him, make his mind perfectly happy, then you get the man happy in himself. Now, then, when the Lord Jesus Christ entered heaven, he underwent a transfiguration, and though he did not become holier than he was before, because he was always perfectly holy, but he was constituted with wonderful strength—a strength of body, for that we shall dwell upon a little here, that it is impossible for him, though eternity is wonderful to contemplate, ages and ages roll round, and yet such is the present constituted state of the Saviour as man, that weariness, or hunger, or thirst, or any pain, or any drawback whatever, will not be possible; no, not to all eternity. Hence we have him represented in his purity, in his vivacity, in the firmness of his standing, and shall I say in his wonderful fulness of health? Hence, see him among men, and see him in heaven; how different the two representations are! There it is said of him that "his head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire," expressive of vast visual power; so that the visual power of Christ as man there corresponds with the greatness of the world, and corresponds with the strength of the light that shines upon him; that his visual powers are such that every ray of that light that is infinitely above the brightness of the noonday sun is a delight to his eye; such is the wonderful strength of his visual power; so that in seeing that glory, the sight of it does nothing but charm, delight, and fill the soul with ecstasy; and so of the ear, of course corresponding with the same. And it is also said of him that "his feet were like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace." It is all expressive of strength; that he stands firm, without the possibility of any weariness or weakness whatever. "And his voice as the sound of many waters," to denote that he speaks with mighty power, and yet with perfect ease. "And his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." Now, this is what the Christian is to come to in a brighter and better world. It is this purity and this infallible strength; herein lies the Saviour's fitness, his fitness for eternal glory. Why, it takes here but very few hours to make us weary, and takes but very few years to wear the most robust out, and bring us down to the grave. But here, in this constituted fitness, there is no such

thing as weakness, or mortality, or decay, or anything of the kind. This appears to me to be one of the essential provisions that God hath made for him that waiteth for him. What would heaven be to the man Christ Jesus if he were not thus in strength constituted for it? What would eternity be to him as man if he could grow old, if he could grow any older, if the rolling on of endless ages could make any difference; what would eternity be to him? But no; he is so constituted as to be made as man to be what the place itself is—every way perfect. And just so this is what the Christian shall come to. And I feel more and more persuaded that the Lord has done wisely in hiding this glorious state from us, in a great measure hiding it from us; for if we could see clearly what they are who are in heaven, the bodies that are there—Enoch and Elijah,—if we could see clearly what they are, in what contempt we should hold our present weak, decrepit, mortal, miserable condition, and we should think, What poor creatures we are to make so much about these poor, tottering tents, about these poor earthly tabernacles, that must very soon come down; and we should look forward with more eager longing for that day when we shall come to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, and when we shall be like Christ Jesus, when our visual power shall be like his, when our auditory powers shall be like his, when our strength to stand shall be like his, when our array shall be like his, when our countenances shall be like his, when our joy shall be like his. This, then, is one thing—the fitness. Now the Lord's people, then, will come to this fitness; and that fitness—their fitness for eternal glory—is, of course, begun while here below. I have already hinted that the natural man cannot enjoy spiritual things. Your fitness for heaven lies in the life you have in Christ, in the perfection you have in Christ, in the purity you have in Christ, in the justification you have in Christ Jesus the Lord. And if we are now thus delivered from the power of darkness, can see these things, and love these eternal things, and can enjoy them, then that is a proof that we are for heaven, and that heaven is for us. Thus, then, the natural man doth not see the excellency of Christ in his personal fitness for eternal glory; the natural man doth not see how, or in what way, the Christian is fitted for eternal glory. There is a hidden mystery in it. It consisteth in what I have said,—delivered from the power of darkness, and brought into the kingdom, into the order of that kingdom, by the eternal priesthood of Christ, into the kingdom of God's dear Son; there is just what we need,—redemption and forgiveness of sin. Now, the Old Testament saints saw the Saviour clearly, both in his humiliation and in his exaltation. I need not quote scriptures to prove this.

But I notice the next part of the provision. The next thing the Lord prepared was not only this essential, this personal fitness; and you will readily recognize the idea that it would be no heaven to us without this constituted fitness; if there were any sin, if there were any weakness, if any ignorance, if any drawback whatever, that would spoil the whole; but the Lord has so ordered things that the people are to be like Jesus Christ. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. Therefore the world knoweth us not" in this our eternal oneness with Christ. They may know us after the flesh, and know us in many other respects, but they cannot know us here, in this our eternal oneness with the Lord Jesus Christ. "This we know; we shall be like him, and see him as he is." The next thing prepared for Christ, and of course for his people, is that of an everlasting kingdom. And if you get a pretty clear view of how it was Adam lost his kingdom, you may then get at, pretty easily, how it is the Saviour cannot lose his kingdom. Now, Adam lost his kingdom, his dominion, his standing, by sin. Sin was stronger than the holiness, and righteousness, and wisdom, and knowledge of Adam. But when sin came in contact with the Saviour, his holiness proved to be stronger than sin, his

righteousness proved to be stronger than sin; he altogether, in a word, proved to be stronger than sin. Nay, not only was he stronger than sin, but sin could not spoil him, could not deface, could not deform, could not defile him in any way whatever. Not only so was he thus stronger than sin, but he hath put away sin sacrificially; he hath put away sin by his one offering, put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And, therefore, if you take the two views, the negative and the positive—first the negative, that he did no sin, thereby proving himself stronger than sin; secondly, that he put away the sins of his people, and they are put away, and gone for ever, blotted out, cast into the depths of the sea; now it is that there is no reason why he should not reign for ever, and so it is that his dominion is an everlasting dominion. On these grounds, you see, and in this way—that he was stronger than sin, did no sin, and that he put away the sins of the people; so that there is no sin left to his account to interrupt his reign, and there is no sin left to the people's account, penally or finally;—"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Here, then, is a personal fitness, and here is a kingdom the nature and duration of which is worthy of his wonderful person. And I am sure, if the question were put to us,—even in our present infantine state of knowledge,—if the question were put to us now, of all governments that we may think of, which amidst them all would we prefer to continue? we would say, Just that one that our God hath appointed; for here we have a King whose heart will never be lifted up above his brethren; here we have a government that puts everything down that would put us down, and that destroys everything that would destroy us; here we have a King reigning until he hath wiped away every tear of every subject of his kingdom; here we have grace reigning through righteousness to eternal life; here we have the Son of God reigning, and God reigning by those immutable counsels, and by those promises, and in that great and everlasting love wherewith he hath loved his people. So that here is a kingdom which he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him; personal fitness, and a kingdom that must endure for ever, because, as I have said, he was stronger than sin, did no sin, hath put away the sins of those that did sin.

The third provision that God hath made for him, the personal fitness and eternity of dominion, would not be sufficient unless with that personal fitness and in that eternity of dominion there was something to correspond with the duration thus endless: and what is it? For the longer you have to be in a state—any one state—so much the better that state ought to be, in order to keep you content so long. We can bear uncomfortable conditions a little while, but if we think we have to endure them any length of time it is dreadful. So the longer the state, the better the condition ought to be, in order to make the people content with it. Now, here is a personal fitness for eternity—incorruptibility, strength; and here is a kingdom in which Christ shall reign for ever. Now take the condition. Is the condition such as to make the people content? Well, the condition is thus described,—“Fulness of joy in thy presence, and at thy right hand pleasures for evermore.” Now if that doth not make the people content, what can?—“Fulness of joy,” and “pleasures for evermore.” And the people of God, as you are aware, are united with this thus, that “everlasting joy shall be unto them.” Here, then, is the personal fitness, here is the duration, and here is the condition of that duration—fulness of joy, pleasures for evermore. And this last representation means God himself, for God himself will be Christ's fulness of joy, as Christ will be God's fulness of joy; and God himself, by Christ Jesus, will be a fulness of joy to the saints. “Thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance;” “unto God my exceeding joy;” and all our springs are in him, and as he is the joy, and is the everlasting God, the joy of necessity must be everlasting. Here, then, is the personal fitness, and here is the duration, and here is the condition in which it is to endure—

fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore. Put these things together, how nicely they fit! You very seldom see these things in human life. I recollect, a little time ago, I met, in company, with a very aged gentleman, very rich indeed—poor, feeble, tottering old man, not able to enjoy anything he possessed. He might well say with Barzillai, “Can I any more discern between good and evil? Can I any more taste what I eat or what I drink? Can I any more hear the voice of singing men and singing women? Wherefore should I be a burden to my lord the king?” Now, my hearer, it is a solemn fact that whilst we are blessed with the mercies and comforts of life, yet in a very few years’ time we shall every one of us be less and less capacitated to enjoy the comforts of this life, and a little longer we shall be altogether incapacitated. The grasshopper becomes a burden, the nerves become sensitive, the man becomes irritable, life becomes a burden, and all this world is dull and dreary, wherever such a one roams, and he feels what a miserable existence it is. Oh, what a miserable thing is old age apart from a knowledge of the truth! But those of you that know the Saviour, presently, when the strong men shall tremble, when they that look out of the windows shall be darkened, when the pitcher is about to be broken at the fountain, and when life, mortal life, is about to yield up all its powers, ah! how sweet then to feel that you have a fitness for higher things; that though you cease to enjoy this life, there is a God whose love you enjoy as much as ever, there is a Saviour on whom you lean. Ah, you say, I am incapacitated for the one, the one is declined and gone, a mere shadow; “surely every man walketh in a vain show;” but here is my comfort, that though this earthly house of my tabernacle become thus a mere burden, yet when this is dissolved we have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Ah, then, happy the man, happy the man that thus knows the Lord! May the Lord cause these things to sink down deep into our hearts, that while some of us have experienced a great many—all of you more or less—of the tantalizations—promises, shall I say?—that poor old nature, the devil, and the world are very forward to make, and all amount to nothing. But not so with our God; no; the joys there are substantial and sincere; the friendship there is constant, the mercy ample, the grace sufficient, the power at hand, kindness infinite. Bless the Lord! Ah, when all other hopes, then, shall pass away, here is this sweet hope. “Eye hath not seen”—no, not the Christian yet in perfection—“the things that God hath prepared for them that love him;” but he hath revealed them to us; we see the personal fitness, we see the duration, we see the condition of that duration, and rejoice in the thought that whatever may here befall us, no decrepitude, no old age, no incapacity, can enter into our standing in Christ Jesus the Lord.

But there is one more thing, and a very important one too, that I have not named, that our God provided for Christ, and that is the church, the people. Jesus Christ will to eternity delight in the people. So that heaven is not only a place of personal fitness, endless duration, a condition of perfect pleasure, but also a condition of perfect sociality. Yes, “thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate; but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah, for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.” It is the delight of everlasting love, “How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!” It is the delight of eternal choice; the Saviour will to eternity rejoice in the choice of the people; I say, he will to eternity rejoice in the choice of the people; he will rejoice that God hath chosen them for him, and him for them, and he will rejoice that he hath chosen them. And it is also the delight of achievement; he achieved for them, obtained for them, eternal redemption. And then he hath obtained them also; he hath chosen their souls, he hath made them willing, and for ever and for ever shall they, without exception, be of one mind in crowning him

Lord of all. And as the Lord will thus delight in the people, so the people shall delight in God. What a state must heaven be! Why, the best condition on earth is a mere dunghill in comparison of the throne of glory, and what is there to be realized.

Now the second part of our subject is *the person for whom this provision is made*—"him that waiteth for him." This waiting means, in the first place, desire. You do not wait seriously for what you do not desire. Now the Lord Jesus Christ did desire God; no man had such an intense desire unto the goodwill of God as Christ had; no man had such an intense desire to carry out the decrees of heaven in the salvation of sinners as Christ had. He took these counsels into his hands, and his desire was to carry out those counsels. "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." So that Jesus Christ did desire God, livingly and intensely, in that relation in which he stood, as the servant of the new covenant; and God desired him, and he desired God, and so it was mutual. And then—and I might as well unite the Christian as I go along here—just so with us; to wait for God means, in the first place, desire. Now Jesus Christ knows whether you do in your souls desire that he, in his perfection, should be your Saviour and substitute. If you have that desire, it is the Lord has given you that desire. The Holy Spirit knows whether you desire that he should reveal to you this Jesus Christ, and bring home into your soul the enjoyment of pardoning mercy, and make Jesus Christ to you supremely precious. God the Father knows whether you do desire to enjoy his counsels, whether you do desire to enjoy him in his immutable covenant, whether you do desire to enjoy him in the eternal election of his people to glory; whether you can pray with David, "That I may see the good of thy chosen, and that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, and glory with thine inheritance." To wait for him, then, means in the first place, to desire him; secondly, it means conformity, to wait for him in his own way. This the Saviour did. The Saviour obeyed the law of God in perfection, that was God's way; and the Saviour abode by gospel truth in perfection, that was God's way. He came to do God's will, and so he abode in God's way; he never deviated therefrom. To wait without waiting in the Lord's way is not waiting at all. And just so with the Christian; if you wait, you must wait in the Lord's way. Well, you say, what is that way? I could express that in few words. You will say, Jesus Christ is the way. I know you would say that, and that is right; but let us have another definition, that faith is the way. You must wait in God's own way, and his way is the belief of the truth. And if you ask what the truth is, it is the gospel of your salvation; and if you ask what the gospel of your salvation is, the answer is, "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." And if you have this faith you will wait in God's own way; you will look into the Bible, you will read that; and the house of God, you will go to that with a heart of prayer that the Lord may meet you there. You will wait in his way, and amidst all the outward privileges that you have, you will find none like that of the public worship of God. The Lord puts more honour upon that than upon anything else; and you will therefore desire, and will wait at wisdom's gates, and watch the posts of her doors. I am not going to speak to flatter any one, but to congratulate the grace of God that is in them. The Lord's people, many of them, if they are so placed that they cannot get out to hear the word of a week-night, they feel it a detriment; and when the service-time comes, if they are so placed they cannot go, they then feel, "I wish I was there and not here." And if they can get there they deem it a privilege. And hence they will sometimes say, "I do like to enjoy my privileges; I would not give up my privileges for ever so." Where they have a prayer meeting, where they can have it—means of grace—"I feel

it a kind of loss if I am not there." I do admire that very much; it does show such spiritual feeling after God; and it does show, after all, that such persons would not willingly leave the house of God for the world, but would willingly leave the world for the house of God. May the Lord, though we do not rest in the means, still may the Lord help us more and more to prize them; what some of you very properly call,—and you do my heart good when you call them so,—your privileges. And then to wait means also to wait the Lord's own time. Now the Saviour did this. He knew there was a time appointed for him to die, and he knew there was a time appointed for him to rise from the dead, and he knew there was a time appointed for him to ascend to heaven; and he knew the time was appointed in which the Holy Spirit should descend; he knew this; and he knows now that the time is appointed when he shall come to ultimate judgment; the dear Saviour has waited God's time. So you and I, my hearer, let us wait. If you are afraid that God is against you, and things are against you, then wait the Lord's own time. And he will not say thee nay; the time of love will come, the time of salvation will come, the time of revelation will come, the time of deliverance will come, the turning of thy captivity will come; for he hath provided mercies for thee here, as well as the fitness, the duration, the fulness of joy for you hereafter. He hath provided also for all your necessities that may exist between this and that. And then, lastly, to wait implies a satisfaction with the end. Now, though you may wait in the right way, and feel willing for a time to stay until the time, yet, if some dissatisfaction with the ultimate object should arise, that would disturb you, you would begin to stagger, and say, I do not think I shall wait now, because, if the end is attained, I don't much think I shall be satisfied with it. Now, my hearer, happy the man that is favoured to see that the end that is to be attained is well worth waiting for. The Saviour thought the end to be attained well worth living for, and worth—look at it, Christian, look at it—he thought the end to be attained was worth suffering all that he suffered to attain it. He thought the end to be attained was worth all, I was going to say, an incarnate God could do. "For the joy set before him," and that joy laid in the four things I have described this morning, or rather hinted at,—must not call them descriptions, too poor for that. Those four things, personal fitness, the endless duration, fulness of joy, and his people with him, in all his own perfection, as the objects of his boundless and eternal delights,—“for the joy set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God.” Look at the end, then, to be obtained; escape from the damnation of hell, escape from fallen angels, escape from wicked men, escape from all our guilt, escape from all our woes, escape from the second death. Then, when we look at what we escape from, and what we are brought into possession of, the end may be well said to be well worth waiting for. Oh, my hearer, what! get weary of waiting for such an end as this? Get weary of running for such a prize as this? Get weary of contending for such a faith as this? Get weary of waiting for such a God as this? May it never be; may the Lord still stir us up, and keep our eye and heart steady upon the prize, that we may still feel the end is infinitely worth seeking for, and suffering for, and waiting for. Amen.