

# SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT.

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THE RIGHT PEOPLE.

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## A SERMON

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 3RD, 1863, BY

MR. JAMES WELLS,

AT THE SURREY TABERNACLE, BOROUGH ROAD.

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“The children of thy people.”—Daniel xii. 1.

WE have in close connection with our text a kind of fourfold representation of these people, the Lord's people, which Daniel's people were spiritually. First, *that they are associated with the book of life*—“At that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.” Second, *that they have before them everlasting life*; and third, *that they have before them everlasting light*; and fourth, *that they have such a knowledge of God as no other people have*. This is the fourfold representation given of them in close connection with our text.

First, then, *that they are associated with the book of life*. Now, what is the book of life but the covenant of grace? Or if we say the gospel is the book of life, it is substantially the same, because the gospel is nothing else but the unfolding, and the going forth, the revelation, the opening up and the spreading out of the counsels of the everlasting covenant. Hence, in the 2nd of Malachi, the Lord says of Levi, referring, no doubt, ultimately to the dear Saviour, “My covenant was with him of life and peace.” Here, then, you see that the everlasting covenant is called the covenant of life. And you are aware that again and again—yea, it is the very first, the very foundation feature of the gospel is being the ministration of life, that while the law is the ministration of death, the gospel is the ministration of life. Now then, the names of these people, that is, their character, are written in the gospel, so that they are to rejoice that their names are written in the gospel, for if their names are written in the gospel, then their names are written in heaven, because the gospel is from heaven, the gospel savours of heaven, the gospel brings into peace and fellowship with the God of heaven, and the gospel will never leave us until we get to heaven; it will give us an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. There is a considerable variety of respects in which it may be said of their names, that they are written in the book of life. In the first place, characteristically. And I do not mind this morning, in this part, running over some of the ground that I have lately run over upon this matter. Now their names are written in the book of life characteristically; that is, the Lord hath described them even from the foundation of the world. He describes them there as the seed of the woman, in contrast to the seed of the serpent. And these seed of the woman are characterized by the apostle when he says, “They that be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.” So, then, the meaning of their names being in the book of life, at least, the first part of that meaning, is this, that their character must answer to the gospel description of a real Christian. Gather a few features together, and if you feel your character answer to what is there said, then your name in all other respects is in the book of life; and if your character

answer to those I am about to mention, and then, you come in some other points short, your character seems to come very short, then you must let the Lord Jesus Christ take that place which you feel you are not able to fill up, whether it be not only a law place, but if it be a precept of the gospel, where you come short. For instance, "He that is angry with his brother without a cause," and the several other heart sins which the Saviour there enumerates, which I suppose every Christian, knowing what every Christian does, more or less of his own heart, must confess that he is guilty. He says, Peradventure I was going too far; this scripture condemns me; I am guilty of these heart sins, and the Lord looketh on the heart;—then, my hearer, I have no remedy for you whatever but the Lord Jesus Christ, and if you are too proud to let him stand in those precepts instead of you, if you are too proud to own that you are so sinful in your heart, you cannot abide that precept, and therefore obliged by faith in Christ to escape the consequence, and to bless his holy name, that while you are the subject of these heart sins, he had no sin in him,—

"His life was pure, without a spot,  
And all his nature clean."

This is the way the Christian is to get over those difficulties. Never mind about what people call it; it is God's own way, for Christ is all and in all. And we have the Saviour's own declaration that extends to this and to everything else; he says, "Without me"—I would not have these words blotted from my Bible for all this world—"Without me ye can do nothing." Bless his holy name! it is a declaration of unfathomable sympathy with us. He knows what poor nothings we are, and without him we can do nothing; and there he sympathizes with us, and wins our best affections. Nevertheless, our character must answer to the character described in the Bible. And what can be more delightful than to be met with the sweet declaration, "Blessed are the poor in spirit;" that is, the spiritually poor? I have often said that there are many nouns in the Bible, and that those nouns originate in the structure of the original languages, which would be more clearly understood if turned perhaps, in some cases, into adjectives, and in other cases into adverbs, in our language. Hence there the poor in spirit means the spiritually poor. Now, we all know what natural or literal poverty is. Literal poverty is of course a figure made use of in the Bible of spiritual poverty. So, blessed are the spiritually poor; that is, the man who is conscious of his need of Christ's atonement in its efficacy; the man who is conscious of his need of Christ's righteousness, and the man who is conscious of his need of that mercy that is by Christ Jesus. Now, if I answer to that, if I am that poor creature, there is my character in the gospel, and if my character is in the gospel, then I am there; and if my character is in the gospel, if my character answer to it, then I am one of those chosen in Christ before the world was; I am one of those who are blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus; I am one of those predestinated to the adoption of children by Christ Jesus; I am one of those that shall obtain in Christ Jesus an inheritance, being predestinated thereto according to the good pleasure of him that worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. But then we must test this poverty of spirit; and let us be careful. First, then, do we know our need of this mercy? Let us hear what the Saviour saith; and I hope I shall be able to set forth what I am now going to say clearly to you, because it is essential, an essential part, to test the reality of your character. Now, you will say, Well, yes, I am that poor creature. Now mark what is said,—"Blessed are the poor in spirit; theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Now the question arises, What kind of a kingdom is it? What kind of people are they that shall possess the kingdom? Oh, my heart rejoices in the thought, that there is not anything more clear than this, that that stone cut out of the mountains revealed to Daniel, in the second chapter of this book, is an everlasting kingdom; Daniel saw

its commencement, he saw its progress, he saw its stability, he saw its indestructibility, he saw its immoveability, he saw it survive, he saw it surpass, he saw it stretch into eternity, and for ever outlive all other kingdoms. It was no Arminian kingdom, no duty-faith kingdom, but a kingdom of eternal certainty. And then, in his 7th chapter, when he again returned to this kingdom, he goes on again rejoicing that it is an everlasting kingdom, and that the King of this kingdom's dominion is an everlasting dominion, that shall not pass away; and that the persons who are to possess this kingdom are not persons in any way whatever associated with any human merit, but are brought to renounce the whole. "The saints of the Most High"—there is no uncertainty about it—"the saints of the Most High,"—these poor in spirit, that fall in with these provisions of mercy, and that fall in with this spirit and order of the everlasting kingdom—"the saints of the Most High *shall*"—there is no uncertainty about it—"take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom;" and after they have got possession, it shall not be as it is in the things of this life. You get possession of a thousand things, and lose them, are obliged to give them up. This is a poor, changing, uncertain world; but here, when they get possession of this kingdom, they shall possess it "for ever, even for ever and ever;" and shall stand in their lot at the end of the days, and shall enter into eternal rest. Now, then, if thy spiritual poverty be real, if thy conviction of thy poverty be real, and thou becomest one of the children of Daniel's people, thou shalt come into the same kingdom, and that same saintship,—mark, it is not a human saintship,—oh, no! it is a divine saintship; it is the "saints of the Most High," "sanctified of God the Father, preserved in Christ Jesus." And you will drink in that truth, "sanctified of God the Father;" you will drink it in, and it will do the soul good, and endear the blessed Author of it; and "He, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." That is a testimony that you will drink in, and it will set your best affections upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will say, Oh, yes, I love him with heart, soul, mind, might, strength, and power. I do love such a Saviour as this, that has constituted me without blemish and without fault to all eternity, before the Great Judge of all, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of truth. I have no desire to speak controversially, if I can help it, but who can help it in the day in which we live? Not mindful to drink in these truths of eternal certainty? Then you are not one of the children of Daniel's people, if you do not drink them in. And, first, mark the words that came before us the other night upon this great subject of saintship, "We are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." Now, mark, if there be no truth, no salvation; if no truth, no sanctification. Chosen us from the beginning unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit; and the test of that sanctification is the belief of the truth in the love of it. And what is that truth? The whole of it is summed up in a covenant ordered in all things and sure. Such are the children of Daniel's people in character; such are they, shall I say? in doctrine; such they are in decision for these things. Daniel suffered for these things; the people of God, in all ages, have ever suffered for them. Thus, then, my hearer, if thy character answer, then, to this poverty, then thy name is in the gospel, thy character is there. Well, but, say you, if that be the meaning of my name being in the book of life, how can my name be there from the foundation of the world, or from the beginning; and I am only just come, and would not have come now, only the Lord brought me, the Lord made me? How does that accord? Why, it accords thus,—that your character was there before you came into it. There is the poor in spirit described,—just what you were to be at the appointed time; there is the poor, destitute

creature described,—just what you were to be at the appointed time; there is the hungry and the thirsty, the mourner and the seeker after God, all described. While in a state of nature you cannot answer to these descriptions; you knew nought of these things then; but you know them now. So that your character was there before you came into it. Take it in that way, then. I know there is a tendency among people of God to think the book of life is some mystic record, some mysterious record that has never been heard of, or at least never seen. You will never see another book of life but the gospel; it is said to be an everlasting gospel, and I want nothing better, because there cannot be anything better. The gospel is the Lamb's book of life; he hath recorded therein the characters of his people; their election, their salvation, their safe preservation to glory, their resurrection at the last day, and everlasting glory that shall follow upon that. But again, "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." Now there was to be a time of trouble, as this verse saith, such as was not since there was a nation. Go to the 21st verse of the 24th chapter of Matthew, and there you will see that this time of trouble was a time of trouble with the Jewish nation; that it means the destruction of that nation,—the same thing, almost the same words. Men tell us, Ah! it is a time of trouble in the future; and they have printed books to frighten children and old women; and some have made a pretty good market of it, by their assuming to be prophets, and prophesying these wonderful things, which will never come to pass. "At that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." Was it not so? The poor of the flock, that waited upon Christ, knew that both the word of judgment that doomed that nation to destruction, and the word of mercy pertaining to Christ, that it was the word of the Lord; and so these Christians escaped that destruction; not one perished. Then, "at that time thy people shall be delivered." So that time of trouble is gone, eighteen hundred years ago, to return again no more for ever.

Thus, then, if you belong to Daniel's people, you know what this spiritual poverty is, what this spiritual necessity is; and if that poverty be real, it will cause you to fall in with the same order of things. The same King and the same Priest that finished transgression made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness, and that reigneth for ever; and thus the persons that take possession of this kingdom are saints, not of men's making, nor of their own making; they have not made themselves, but the Lord hath made them. "This people have I formed for myself: they shall show forth my praise." If thou belongest, then, to the poor and needy, then thou dost not belong to the lost; by nature you belong to the lost—"children of wrath, even as others;" but through grace you are brought to know your need; through grace brought to seek mercy; through grace brought to seek the Lord in the spirit of that scripture thought very little of in our day; brought to seek the Lord in the due order. "We sought not," said that wondrous man of God, David, "we sought not the Lord after the due order;" and the Lord manifested his disapprobation of that. So that his people shall not only seek him, but after the order of his own truth, his own kingdom, his own priesthood, his own eternal salvation.

Secondly, They are distinguished not only by this spiritual poverty that disciplines them, and brings them into harmony with the infinite and eternal provisions of mercy, but *they are distinguished also as having eternal life in prospect*. Hence the next words, "Many of them"—not *all* of them, mind that—"many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." When was this fulfilled? In the apostolic age. Was it entirely ended, then? No, certainly not, for neither has an end; there is ever-

lasting life on the one hand, and shame and everlasting contempt on the other. Now let us see if we can get the meaning of it. The word of God saith that "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up," as the remedy for poor sinners. Sin is the poison that the serpent has infused, and Christ is the remedy; he extracts the poison, heals the soul, and unites us to God—takes us away from death. Such shall not perish, but have everlasting life. Now then, in that day, what vast numbers who were dead in trespasses and in sins, sleeping in the dust of the earth, they were awakened up to everlasting life; mark this, not to an uncertain life, but to an eternal life. - In the apostolic age the churches—at the first part of the apostolic age—were wonderfully established in the eternity of the gospel. Indeed, temporal matters were with them so trying, and their path in this world so gloomy, that there was hardly anything they could look at without being cast down at the sight, without their hearts being made heavy at the sight. Their homes were either poor, or taken from them; their liberty was very circumscribed, or altogether taken from them; and they knew they were watched and waylaid by the tyrannical powers around; and there was not a thing on earth they could look to, to get any consolation from. We know nothing practically and really of this; but it was so with the saints then. And what was the result? Why, the result was, that as they had so little consolation after the flesh, and from the things of time, they looked more to the things of eternity. Ah! what a spirit of martyrdom did they possess! Not prisons, nor wrecks, nor fires, nor tortures, nor threats, nor thunders, nor anything that men could devise, could move them from their standing in the truth, and the sweet assurance they had of eternal life; and being justified by faith in Christ, they were bold as lions, and counted not this life dear unto them that they might finish their course with joy. At that time many were awakened up to everlasting life. And this matter of awakening up sinners to everlasting life has gone on from that day to this, and it is going on now, and will go on down to the end of time. And I mean, one of these Lord's day mornings, if I can get my mind right for it, I will just give my creed, in a very few articles, in relation to the future, in direct opposition to doctrines that are abroad now, and which appear to me to be nothing but old wives' fables: but that I will not meddle with this morning.

But then it also saith, "And some to shame and everlasting contempt." That did not take place, say some. Certainly it did take place. The Jews slept in the dust of their own traditions—earthly devisings; they slept on and on, and never awoke until they saw not one stone of the temple left upon another; until they saw themselves scattered amid the nations, and they, who had sold the Saviour for thirty pieces of silver, were themselves—thirty of themselves, sold in the slave market for one penny; and the slave market so full that slave-dealers would no longer give a penny for thirty of them, nor a hundred of them; as Moses said, "Ye shall be sold into all nations, and no man shall buy you;" for the market shall be so full that they will not think you worth buying. Then the Jews were awakened up to shame; then they were clothed with shame; then they came under that contempt which they have been under from that day to this. But we are not going to stop in this view of it; but still we must give the historical in order to get more clearly into the spiritual and proper meaning. Have you never read the latter part of the last chapter of the prophecies by Isaiah? and do you not read there of the new heavens and the new earth? I will quote the words, because it comes just to what we have here. We have, on the one hand, everlasting life; we have, on the other hand, everlasting shame and contempt. Let us make the matter clear, then, and see how solemnly those Scriptures apply to the final destiny of the wicked, and how gloriously, on the other hand, the gracious part applies to the final destiny of the saints: "For as

the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make"—the new heavens of course meaning the kingdom of Christ, that new covenant state of things he has brought in—"shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain." How can my name remain? My good name is sure to remain. How is that? Because I am named after Jesus Christ; the whole family are named after Jesus Christ; they are named by his name. "This is the name wherewith she shall be called, Jehovah our righteousness." And as he remains they remain; they shall remain, and their name shall remain. Why, my name is as good in heaven as Jesus Christ's is, and so will yours be. You afraid to go to heaven! Why, your name is as good there as the name of Jesus Christ can make it; your name is as good there as his atonement can make it; your name is as good there as his righteousness can make it; and not an adversary nor an evil occurrent throughout the blissful regions of eternity. Ah! some Christians that have suffered much in this world, I was going to say, it will take some time before they know where they are when they get to heaven—everything so blissful, all the socialities so genial; the entire absence of everything that is unpleasant, and the entire presence of everything that is pleasant; there will be realized in perfection the testimony of God's word, "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Now, these people who are brought to these new heavens, this new state of things, and new earth, and their seed and name to remain, they shall come up "from one new moon to another," from one lumination to another. So it is; we get a little light now, and then a little darkness, then a little fresh light, and that sends us on again. I have left off preaching a thousand times. Ah, when you have finished your sermons. Ah, and before I have begun them. Sometimes I have thought, I can preach no more, it is no use. Presently a little moonlight; a little light, but no heat. Philosophers do tell us that there is heat in moonlight; it may be so, but if there is, it is very little. Nevertheless, if I get into the moonlight, I shall get next into the sunlight, for the promise is that the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun." So if I get a little gospel moonlight just to light me, that will lead me into the sunlight, according to the Lord's own word. "And from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me." And so it is true; they do not locally, but spiritually. "And they," that is, all converted flesh, justified, sanctified, and decided for God, "shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me;" that is, the Jewish nation; their tribes are dead carcasses nationally and ecclesiastically, and there they shall remain, except the remnant among them, according to the election of grace, that shall be brought in by Jesus Christ. "That have transgressed against me"—that refers evidently to their special transgression of crucifying Christ, and following up that awful deed by persecuting his followers. "For their worm shall not die." Just as the worm was at the root of Jonah's gourd, so there is the worm at the root of Jewish nationality; there the worm remains, and raise their national gourd again they cannot; form themselves into a nation again they cannot; the worm lives at the root, and they will never be able again to turn themselves into a national tree. "Neither shall their fire be quenched." So the fire of God's judgment still burns—look at the land of Canaan at this day; "and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." There is no sect under the heavens whose religion has been more universally rejected than the Jewish religion. In ancient times it was not so; they made many proselytes in ancient times, and compassed sea and land to make proselytes. But who ever heard in modern times of a man becoming a Jew? Very few, I think, very few. They make no conversions; their religion is universally hated. Thus, then, they were awakened up to shame and everlasting contempt; while those, on the

other hand, brought to receive the gospel, were raised up to everlasting life. So much for the history, or for those scriptures as they relate to things past. I say now to the ungodly man, to the unregenerate man, to the prayerless man, there is a worm at the root of all your hopes; and your gourd—all that you hope for under the sun—will by-and-bye be blasted; there is a fire in your bones, and that will go on until your bones mingle with the dust, and the result must be you must stand at the last day exposed to universal shame, and to eternal contempt. That is the light in which that solemn scripture applies to the ungodly now. And then mark another thing; "they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." The godly man hates the ungodly man,—not hates his person, but hates him as an ungodly man. You hate the man that can blaspheme; that is, you hate his blasphemy; you hate him in his character as an ungodly man; you hate him in his character as an enemy to the gospel; you hate him not in his soul and person, but in his character as a gospel despiser. Now, mark, "they shall be"—the ungodly—"an abhorring unto all flesh;" that is, to all converted flesh; for, mark, "all flesh shall come to worship before me;" and the all flesh that are thus brought to know the Lord, they are brought to hate every false way, they are brought to stand opposed to that which stands opposed to God's eternal truth. Such, then, are the children of God's people; first, that they are poor in spirit, brought into the spirit and order of Christ's eternal kingdom, and are delivered, the others are not delivered; second, that they are awakened up to everlasting life, and they know that they have eternal life, and that that life is in Christ; while the others go sleeping on, and know not of the worm that is at the root of all their hopes, know not of the fire of God's judgment that goes burning on, and will never be quenched, either in this world or that which is to come. Oh! when I look at the man dead in sin, here he lives with this worm at the root of all his earthly hopes; here he lives with the fire of God's judgment, and that fire will not be quenched while the man lives, it will not be quenched when he dies, for he must lift up his eyes in hell; it will not be quenched at the last day, for the Saviour will light it up then as the Judge to perfection with the brightness of his own burning majesty, and it shall not be quenched to all eternity; this fire shall burn on, on, and on, to ages that are endless. Such is the awful condition of the man that is lost. Happy, then, thrice happy the man who sees something of the awfulness of the pit out of which he is digged, and is brought to lay hold by precious faith of Christ Jesus as the way of escape from the wrath to come, and the way to that life that can never die. Which art thou among then? Of what people art thou? Art thou among the poor that feel their need of mercy, and art thou among them that believe in Jesus as the ransom; and art thou a seeker after eternal things, and dost thou see the infinity of the gulf fixed between the two people? If thine eyes be thus opened, then thou belongest to Zion, thou belongest to Jesus Christ; then all is thine, for thou art Christ's, and Christ is God's. So you see these words being fulfilled then, that those that believed were awakened up to everlasting life, or rather their belief was the result of their awakening, and the Jews awoke up to shame and everlasting contempt, that does not take away the words from their being applied to the future destiny of the wicked on the one hand, and the destiny of the righteous on the other. I was thinking this morning I hoped when I died I should have a goodly number here that understood the Scriptures. And though I am never forward to persuade young men to go out to preach the gospel unless I can have some evidence that they have experience and gifts so to do, yet if it were the Lord's will, I should like to see some among us, some more, spring up, and go forth and testify of these things. For, certainly, all over the country the truth of God is almost everywhere opposed; and some of those who are decided for the truth seem the most unsuited to the age.

I will take the spirit of the standard. There are several places where their ministers will not preach because the congregations do not choose a standard minister. They have chosen a minister that they hear very well, but because this minister does not choose to put his neck under the standard yoke, the standard ministers will not preach for him. Yet those standard people have most of them a great deal of excellence about them, and very decided for the truth. I do grieve to see them reject good men. I like to see them stand out for the truth; but I am sure it is not the spirit of Christ when we reject good men. A little difference there may be; but if there be vital godliness and real decision for the truth, I can but lament to see men that are otherwise so valuable stand rather opposed to the progress of the gospel, and seem to stand to hinder the gospel more than to help it, unless it come exactly in *their way*. I, your humble servant, I am not all you could wish me to be; I do not preach exactly as you wish me to preach; you know my infirmities; but whatever minister you have, you will have some infirmities to put up with; and therefore, if you are determined to receive no minister until you can receive one that hath no exception whatever, why, then you must wait till you get to heaven, and have Jesus Christ, for he is the only one that never had one exception. All the Jewish priests, and I am sure Christian ministers the same, were compassed with infirmities, and though they hide these infirmities as well as they can, yet they will appear sometimes. And never mind, if the minister have infirmity, he is conscious of it, and it makes him ashamed to preach himself, and is glad to get behind Jesus Christ, and there hide himself, and sound forth no name for the life and hope of a poor sinner but Christ and his eternal salvation.

But there are several more things here which I fear we shall not be able to get into our eight pages if I go much further. Now these people who are thus spiritually poor, and brought into the spirit of the kingdom, and are brought into this eternal life, they are represented, in the next place, as being brought into light. Just a word upon that, and then I must close. It is said of these same people, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament." Now these people are wise; they are made wise to eternal life, to eternal salvation. The sun is the brightness of the literal firmament, and Christ is the brightness of the heavenly and spiritual firmament. And therefore they that are wise shall shine as Christ shines. He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, and they shall be like him, and see him as he is; shall shine as he shines. "And they that turn many to righteousness;" that is, to the righteousness of faith—I do not wonder at so many conversions taking place when the gospels of our day preach the converting men to their own righteousness. Ah! we have turned the man to righteousness. Why, that is where he has been all his days. To turn many to righteousness is to turn them to the righteousness of faith, the righteousness that is in Christ Jesus. "Shall shine as the stars for ever and ever. Christ must be the pattern star. And the Saviour saith of him that overcometh, and keepeth his works unto the end, "I will give him the morning star." Christ is the morning star; and to give you the morning star is to give to you to be like him. He is the Morning Star, and you are to be like him. Ah, my hearer, our God is a glorious God, our gospel is a glorious gospel, and our hope is a glorious hope, and our standing is a glorious standing; our cause is a glorious cause; it is a glorious life; it will be a glorious death, and a glorious resurrection, and a glorious eternity. May the Lord reveal his glory to us more and more, for his name's sake. Amen.