

# SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT.

---

---

A PROMISE WHICH CAN BE TRUSTED.

---

## A Sermon

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 3RD, 1865, BY

MR. JAMES WELLS,

AT THE NEW SURREY TABERNACLE, WANSEY STREET.

---

“As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee; I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.”—Joshua i. 5.

THERE is a great difference between the circumstances under which Moses was placed and the circumstances under which Joshua was placed; but nevertheless these two men were one in spirit. Joshua came out of Egypt, and he, having a knowledge of the truth, abode with Moses in the truth all through the wilderness, and he was one, as you are aware, of the spies that brought a good report of the promised land. So that you will observe that the difference of circumstances doth not at all interfere with the unity of the spirit. And the Lord here makes Moses, or rather his gracious dealings with Moses, a pattern of the gracious way in which he will deal with Joshua; and so he did abide by Joshua, and we see that Joshua abode all his days by the Lord, and died in a good old age; and thus the Lord fulfilled his promise. And the dear Saviour saith, “What I say unto you I say unto all;” I therefore do pray that we may feel this morning that our text is that which applies to all the people of God; that just as he was with Moses, so he will be with you, that he will not fail you nor forsake you. And we must therefore look at the language as being gospel language; for it stands in the positive form: “As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee.” I shall therefore have to pass by the greater part of the circumstances under which Joshua was, and treat the subject in the spiritual way that I hope may be profitable unto us all. And of course the first thing to notice will be the kind of character to which such a wonderful promise as this belongs. I am sure there is not a Christian upon the face of the earth that could wish for anything better or for anything greater than such a promise as this, that “As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee; I”—whatever other things may break down or give way, “I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.” I shall therefore, in the first place, notice very carefully *the character to which this promise belongs*; and then, secondly, *the sure fulfilment of the same*. And perhaps there is not more delusion upon any one department than upon this—the character to which the promises of the gospel belong. While we are in a state of nature, if we happen to undergo a natural conversion—not spiritual, but only natural,—we then come and take all the promises, and think they are ours, when at the same time they are not; we call

God our Father, and that without the spirit of adoption authorizing us to do so; we call Jesus Christ our Saviour, without any experimental authority so to do. Such is the way in which Satan deludes thousands, and the greater the delusion the greater the confidence of the deluded.

It is an unspeakable mercy to be so convinced of our state as sinners, to see and to be acquainted with the wrong that we are under, in order that we may thereby see and know that which is essential to make us right with God. Let us therefore trace out carefully the character of Moses, and whether we ourselves possess the same spirit. If we possess the same faith, why then, the promise belongs unto us; for the apostle meets, as it were, all the differences of different Christians' experiences in the one thought, when he saith, "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." However much you may differ in your experiences in other respects, you all meet there, that "ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Let us then look at the character of Moses. First, by faith, when Moses came to years he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Let us take Pharaoh's daughter here as a kind of figure of the world; and so, when the Lord convinces a sinner of his real condition, however sympathetic the world might have been towards him, as Pharaoh's daughter had been towards Moses, and whatever advantages he might have had, yet, when a sinner is thus convinced, in a word, that he is a sinner, he refuses to be called a son of the world, or a daughter of the world. The world will be to you as a wilderness; and those that have hitherto been your companions, because they do not know as you know what they are as sinners, they can be your companions no longer; and those that have been your companions, because they do not seek the Lord's mercy as you do, can be your companions no longer; and those who were enemies to God, and remain enemies, just what you once were, now that you are thus seeking the mercy of God you are thus severed from them. So he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. And whatever honours might have laid before Moses, he saw that they would be but for a season, and that those honours were associated with everything sinful, and therefore he refused that prospect and that path, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God.

Now this was by faith, Moses was convinced of his state; Moses believed in the God of Abraham, in the new covenant sense of those terms, in the God of Isaac and of Jacob; he believed in Jesus Christ; he was let into the new covenant, he was let into that order of things in which we have everlasting life; and there is nothing will more sever a soul from the world than this. Now the next step in his faith was, while he was thus severed from the world, and there was revealed to him a better covenant, and he could not lose sight of that better covenant, he had respect unto the recompense of the reward; he saw that better covenant in which he now is, and chose to suffer affliction rather with the people of God. Now it does not follow that if you are thus brought out of the world and united with the people of God; it does not follow that you must necessarily be afflicted more than you ever were;

that does not always follow, but the idea is this; I will suppose that the people of God are in a state of reproach by the world, suppose they are in a state of affliction, that they are oppressed and slandered, and the off-scouring of all things; suppose that to be the case. Well, saith such an one, suppose it is, they are the people of God, and let their afflictions be what they may, and let them be despised wherever they may in the eyes of the world, yet they are the people of God; I would therefore share with them the reproach which they share, I would rather share with them the afflictions they may be subjected to, than share in the highest honours of this world in opposition to the truth of God and to the welfare of the soul. We see this under several circumstances, and we shall see that wherever there is real faith in God in exercise, that is sure to be the feeling; and such an one will say to himself, "Well, it was better to be inside the ark, with a few poor people of God there, than with the many outside; and it is better under all circumstances to be with them, than to be against them." That was the second step he took. First, severation from the world; and second, willing to bear the reproach of the cross, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Just so now, where the work of grace is begun in the heart, such an one becomes severed from the world, and is willing to endure anything and everything, if he may but be saved; willing to undergo the loss of all things that he may win Christ. Now such an one becomes a new creature, and he understands that scripture perfectly in Paul's Epistle to Titus:—"The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men," or, if you take the marginal reading, which I rather prefer, "The grace of God that bringeth salvation unto all men," men of all grades and all classes, "hath appeared." And so, saith such an one, why the grace of God bringeth salvation; electing grace bringeth salvation; redeeming grace bringeth salvation; regenerating grace bringeth salvation; all-sufficient grace bringeth salvation. Here am I severed from the world, here am I willing, the Lord enabling me, to endure anything and everything for his blessed name's sake, that I may be saved at last; and if I lose my life in so doing, I shall keep it unto eternal life: Gad, a troop may overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last. Now, saith such an one, the grace of God,—how is it that I feel a delight in denying ungodliness? How is it I now feel a delight in denying worldly lusts? How is it that I now feel such a delight in living righteously? How is it I now feel such a pleasure in living godly, that I cannot live a day now without something of godliness; I must have some godly thoughts, and godly desires, and godly exercises; I cannot bear to be without God. O God be with me in thy love, and in thy mercy, and in thy salvation, to live righteously, and godly, and soberly in this present evil world. Yea, saith such an one, the apostle might well say, "soberly," for the salvation of the soul is a sober matter, a solemn matter, and if anything will make the mind sober, it is a conviction of our need of God's eternal mercy, and of the infinity of the price by which the Saviour hath wrought eternal redemption and brought in everlasting righteousness. "Looking for that blessed hope." Every other hope is cursed. Ah, there is no hope that

you have under the sun, that has not the curse mingled with it. Wealth or friends, or whatever it may be, the curse mingles with the whole. The apostle, therefore, would contrast the hope of the gospel as being an exception to all the hopes that are under the sun. "Looking for that *blessed* hope;" saith such an one, here is a blessed hope; it is the hope of eternal life, blessed hope; it is the hope of salvation, blessed hope; it is the hope of righteousness, blessed hope; it is the hope of eternal glory, blessed hope; it is the hope that is both sure and stedfast, and entereth already "into that which is within the veil, whither Jesus our fore-runner is for us entered, being made an high priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek." Here then, "who gave himself for us"; Jesus Christ gave himself for us, "that he might purify unto himself a "peculiar people, zealous of good works." Such an one looks round and says, "Well, once I was of the world, now I am not at home there; but I am at home with the saints of God. Once my hopes were in the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season, but now upon those pleasures I am favoured to turn my back, and take my pleasure in the pleasures of the everlasting God. Once I was looking for something this world could afford, but now I give up the whole, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. You that seek the Lord, if you watch your feelings, how little are you enabled to appreciate the glory to be revealed; how little you are enabled to appreciate the eternity of glory that awaits you; how little you are enabled to appreciate the great end. Moses seems there particularly favoured; hence here comes in a very great difference between the Saviour and ourselves. He could at all times appreciate the glory, he could at all times appreciate the recompense of the reward. But we are such poor, weak creatures, that we are apt to appreciate some advantage we have to-day more than advantages that are eternal, and that through the sin and perversion of our nature. Not so with the Saviour. "For the joy set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God." Thus, then, if we are severed from the world, if we are made decided for God's truth, and willing to suffer any consequences of that decision, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and say all manner of evil against you for my name's sake; rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven." And then, thirdly, if we are favoured to have respect unto the recompense of the reward, everything else will appear very little in comparison of the ultimate end we have in view in thus seeking the Lord.

Then the next step was his deliverance from the fear of man. "He forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king." Ah, there is many a convinced sinner has been detained for a time through the fear of man. I do not say in profligacy, but still more or less in the world. Perhaps got into erroneous systems of religion; he sees they are erroneous, he wants something better, but there are private associations and reasons which influence him, and he sees if he come out and unite with the sect everywhere spoken against it may be very detrimental to his worldly interests. Now that is the fear of man. But such an one will get over

it after a time; he will say, Well, let the consequence be what it may, out I will come; and the Lord hath said that the wrath of man shall praise him, and the remainder of that wrath will he restrain. So, then, "Moses forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king." How you may be placed some of you I know not; the Lord give you wisdom and grace and strength to embrace your own privileges, and to judge for yourselves in matters so solemn as these that pertain to your eternal welfare. The next step is that Moses kept the passover. So will you. Not only severed from the world; not only taught to live righteously, soberly, and godly; not only thus rising above the fear of man, and appreciating the ultimate reward; but then comes the passover, and upon that I must not trust myself to say much. The passover, the way in which we are exempted from that, exemption from which must of necessity exempt us from everything else that is against us; for if we are by the blood of Christ exempted from wrath, then what can harm us? If justified by the blood of Christ, if made eternally free by the blood of Christ, "As for thee, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein there is no water." And does my conscience tell me of the daily sins that my heart commits? Does my conscience tell me that I have my faults in a variety of ways, that I am compassed with infirmities, and that my best services are mingled with many drawbacks, many things I have to deplore? Where is the remedy? The blood of Christ. Under the ceremonial law, when anything was wrong an offering was brought to meet that wrong, and so there were the daily offerings; and so now every day we need to plead before a holy and a righteous God the all sufficiency of atoning blood, the excellency of the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now perhaps I had better not go further with the character of Moses. First, then, are we severed from the world? What is the world? Friendship with the world is enmity with God, and if we are severed from the world we are severed from that enmity, and united to God. Secondly, are we consecrated to God? Can we say, notwithstanding our daily infirmities, that godliness, sobriety, righteousness, fellowship with God, are our delights? Can we pray over the following words, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness"—substitutional righteousness, the righteousness of his mercy by Jesus Christ, and judgment, ordering matters for you to your best,—“in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord”? Can we, on our bended knees before God, say, O God, give me grace, that I may know thee, and glory in thy righteousness, and in thy wise decisions, and in thy loving kindness, and in thy mercies; for if thou delightest in these incorruptibles, in these, shall I say, infallibles, in these eternal wonders, make my poor, weak, benighted soul delighted in the same things, then I shall be in that path that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” Now, that is the man to whom the Lord saith, “As I was with Moses”

—Moses was thus one of mine—“so I will be with thee; I will not fail thee nor forsake thee.”

Now let us see, passing by many circumstances, how the Lord is with Moses. There is one feature in the character of Moses—we are still going on with character—to show how the Lord was with him. Moses was kept scrupulously and constantly, and, as we shall presently see, to the end in God's truth. How faithful he was in the case of the tabernacle. “See,” saith the Lord, “that thou make it according to the pattern shown thee in the mount.” I am aware this is only the ceremonial department, but still it has a further meaning, and I must therefore notice it. See how careful he was; every curtain, every tack, every loop in its place; and when the great God came to survey it he approved it, and the tabernacle was filled with his glory. And so, if thou art kept spiritually decided for his blessed truth, according to the pattern of a covenant ordered in all things and sure, he will by-and-bye come, and by manifesting his approbation fill thy soul with immortal glory. We shall presently see more particularly what doctrines Moses was kept in, how he was kept in the truth all through the wilderness, though his sufferings were very great. Ah, he said, happy man am I! He at first thought he was; but by-and-bye his brethren spake of stoning him, and a great many times during the journey his professed brethren sought his life. He did not wonder at the Egyptians being against him, or the Amalekites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, Midianites, and Moabites; but his own brethren—from them had he trouble from time to time. And what was the ground of it? His decision for God's truth and his success as God's servant; these two things gave the offence. He would have no golden calf, nor would he lower or lessen the authority of the priesthood. Hence, then, they were offended with him because of his decision, and also because he would not lower the priesthood. Hence the people around him said, “Moses and Aaron, ye take too much upon you,” which is just the charge that is very often brought by men now. But Moses could say, if he had touched upon this subject, just what the apostle Paul said, “None of these things move me,” and so he abode firmly in the truth. And I must not here dwell upon the many, many wonderful familiar times of communion he had with God, seeing God face to face; he had much communion with God. And so you and I—I do not say that we shall be favoured to the extent that Moses was, but if we are kept in this spirit of decision for God's holy and blessed truth it shall be well with us.

We live in a very peculiar day; we live in a day when by far the majority of ministers' sympathies are with the world, their prejudices and enmities against the real people of God. We live in a day when men are going preaching and striving with all their might to make the world think well of them. Alas, alas, for such a state of things as this! We are having now from month to month intense sympathy shown and expressed towards the king of Jericho's messengers and deadly enmity against Rahab. What spirit is this? Why, the same spirit that said, “Not this man, but Barabbas. Now, Barabbas was a robber,” and “for certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.” We

would rather have him than have the man of God's choice. That was the spirit of that day, and that seems to be the spirit of the present day. I do not much wonder at it. There are many causes, none of which will I trouble you with this morning. Suffice it to say, then, it is a great mercy to be kept fast in the truth. Stand fast in electing grace; stand fast in divine predestination; stand fast in the completeness that is in Christ; stand fast in the certainty of the gospel; stand fast in the new covenant, for it is after this order of things that the promise stands, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee; I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."

Thus, then, Moses was brought, as I trust most of you are, into reconciliation with God; secondly, amidst all his troubles and afflictions and trials he abode fast by the truth; he never gave up one iota of that. He had his faults in other respects; he rebelled, as we see, when he was tried, and there never was but One that could bear much affliction without, more or less, sooner or later, rebelling under that affliction. But nevertheless, there is such a scripture as this, that Jesus Christ "hath led captivity captive;" that "he hath ascended up on high;" and that "he hath received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them." So, if we do not rebel against his truth, that truth we hold contains the remedy for all our rebellions in other respects. We rejoice that there is a sin which the Christian cannot commit, and though he has his infirmities and faults, he holds fast that that contains the remedy for all. Hence it is, then, that with all his faults the Christian cannot make light of, nor set aside the great remedy for all—the sacrificial perfection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus was the Lord with Moses, keeping him in the truth. Let us see the end. What kind of a creed,—I am not fond of the term,—in other words, what kind of a gospel was Moses at the end of his journey a believer in? and what were the last words that we have on record that the Lord spake unto him? Now what were the truths in which we find him at the last? And can, I wonder, all of us here this morning,—a mercy for us if we can,—breathe in our souls a prayer to be found at the last, in that spiritual sense of the word, just were Moses was? And there is no difficulty about the matter. Remember he was a hundred and twenty years old when we find him in these blessed truths. See the 32nd of Deuteronomy, just at the end of his journey, see what he there tells us of the name of the Lord;—that "he is the Rock; his work is perfect." Here he is, here he is, in sweet fellowship with the perfection of the work of Christ. "All his ways are judgment," his arrangements of decision were all for the good of his people; "a God of truth and without iniquity." "Without iniquity,"—why did Moses say he was without iniquity? Why, because he was then charged with iniquity. Point out to me if you can (and I say it to the shame of ten thousand professors of Christianity) point out an age if you can, not excepting the present age, wherein God has not been charged with iniquity. Not direct; no, Satan knows that would not do; no. There are thousands that charge the doctrine of election with wicked tendencies; that charge the perfection of Christ and the yea

and amen promises with wicked tendencies—thousands. What is that but charging God with iniquity? Was there ever a person upon the face of the earth more charged with iniquity than the Saviour was? See the charges against him. What was the Saviour's answer—an answer that finds a living response in the bosom of every one of his brethren. "Wisdom," saith Jesus, in face of these infamous allegations against God's truth, "Wisdom is justified of all her children." Ah, blessed Jesus, if thou art the wisdom, our souls can justify thee; we know that with thee there was no sin, except our sins upon thee; we know that thy truth is holy from the first jot and tittle unto the last. We know that he is just, and that he died for the unjust, to bring us by his precious blood to God; we know he is without iniquity. Men call Rahab's practical love to the people of God "lies;"—God honoured those lies, then. Ah, and the learned editor of the *Standard* assures us that James the apostle passes by Rahab's, what this gentleman is pleased to call, "lies." But James the apostle does not pass by them. James does not tell us that Rahab hid the spies at all, and are we to conclude that they were not hid because James does not say so? No. James includes everything that took place. "She received them," aye, "and sent them out another way." Why, I would ask common sense how, if she had not retained them, how could she have sent them out another way? And how did she retain them, sir? By those evasions which the eternal Spirit of God put into her mouth, and by which Satan was defeated, the spies hidden until the way was clear, and then divine wisdom granted her that kind of foresight, as we have said, that rightly directed them. I am more and more convinced that I am right.

Now then, Moses, I say, had a great deal to encounter from those that professed the same things; but he abode firm in the truth as it is in Jesus; and what the Holy Spirit justifies I dare not condemn. And we see at the last that Moses was in oneness with the name of the Lord, in oneness with the perfection of the Saviour, in oneness with the purity of the truth. "He is without iniquity." I would not be one of those men that accuse God's truth of iniquity for ten thousand worlds. See the position of Moses at the last. "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms; and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee, and shall say, Destroy them." This is the God that saith to Joshua, "As I was with Moses, so will I be with thee." As I was to the last in my eternity his refuge, as underneath him were the everlasting arms, as I thrust out the enemy from before him, and destroyed them; so I will be with thee. "And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died; his eye was not dim nor his natural force abated." Just so it shall be with the Christian spiritually. Our eyes literally may be dim, but our eyes spiritually shall not be dim; our natural force must be abated, but our spiritual force cannot be. No; every Christian shall die as he has lived,—in the strength of the Lord and in the faith of the gospel. "I will not fail thee nor forsake thee." What should some of us do? For my part I could not get through to-day were it not for such a scripture as this; "I will not fail thee," for I know what he says is true, "nor forsake thee." There is no conditionality,—"I will not fail thee." Whatever may fail, there is no failure in him.

Thus then, severed from the world, living unto God, brought to him by Jesus Christ.