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Surrey Tabernacle Pulpit.

CHRISTIAN KINDNESS.

A SERMON

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, 28TH APRIL, 1867, BY

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AT THE NEW SURREY TABERNACLE, WANSEY STREET.

"If any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."—Col. iii. 13.

THERE are two things pretty clear to every Christian. The one is that the word of God lays great stress upon brotherly love. We find this all through the Scriptures. The twofold command contained in the Old Testament is repeated in the New,—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself.” Everywhere in the Bible we see this great principle of brotherly love laid down. And no wonder. There seem to be several reasons why it should be so. First, because it is that in which we are all especially prone to fail, and, indeed, do very much fail. It is pretty clear to every Christian that brotherly love, practically speaking, is sadly deficient among the ministers, and churches, and Christians at large, of the present day. Nevertheless, we are not quite, through the Lord’s mercy, destitute thereof. And also the Lord well knew that many disputations, or, as our text has it, quarrels, would arise among Christians in their progress through this world. Joseph was aware of this constant tendency to disagree, and therefore he said to his brethren, “See that ye fall not out by the way.”

I shall avail myself of the language of our text to set forth the settlement of the one great quarrel between God and man. “If any man have a quarrel against any.” Alas; alas! the worst quarrel is that great quarrel between God and man.

First, then, I notice *the settlement of the great quarrel between God and man*. You will observe that the state of enmity we are all in by nature is called a quarrel. Hence you find in Leviticus xxvi. 25,—“I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant.” Now these words belong especially to the professing world. And I think it will do us no harm, just to notice this quarrel. “I will bring a sword.” Of course this takes us back to the fall of man. When man substituted the serpent into the place of God, and substituted the doctrine—shall I call it—of the serpent—namely, Satan—into the place of God’s order

of things, there man separated himself from God's truth, and for the Lord to come over to that would be to make himself one with Satan; and if the Lord take one downward step in submission to Satan's falsehood, he may take another, until the Lord himself get, if such a thing were possible, beneath Satan himself, and then Satan and his plans and policy must reign. But our God never did, and he never will, give way; and one of the reasons that he will not give way is not only because of his own natural, native, internal, and eternal perfection and infallibility, but also on behalf of his people. We know very well he must and will stand by his own natural, integrity, and by his own counsels; but the welfare of his people is one of the motives that enters into that question. Now when the fall took place, there was a sword placed at the east of the Garden of Eden that turned every way; that made the getting back again into that which man had lost utterly hopeless. There was no possibility of it. The sword drove out the man, and there was no way of getting back again. So that Adam was then brought to entire despair, and saw and felt that there was no way in which he could do anything towards recovering his standing. Here, then, the sword avenged the quarrel so far. Then we come to the old covenant; that beautiful covenant that the Lord gave to the Jews, wherein he engaged to keep them in health, in plenty, in peace, in liberty, and in happiness,—yea, that they were to eat in plenty, and to be satisfied, and to praise the name of the Lord their God. But they went away from this covenant. Hence saith one, "They have forsaken thy covenant,"—the substance of it being that he, and he only, was to be their God,—“and they have thrown down thine altars,”—that would be the natural consequence of forsaking his covenant,—“and they have slain thy prophets with the sword,”—the sword avenged this on the Jews, and cut them off. The sword of justice will avenge the quarrel of the Christian covenant. This is God's covenant, and it stands thus:—that “I will send them a deliverer, and he shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. This is my covenant,”—to send them this Saviour,—“when I shall take away their sins.” Here is the entire abolition of sin. God avenged the first covenant, he avenged the second covenant, and he will avenge the third; that is, if we, professing to be Christians, are not brought into God's order of things, when we die we shall be found not friends but enemies to that everlasting covenant that is ordered in all things and sure. And you will find almost everywhere among men that there is a great care to exclude as much as possible the great truths of the gospel that are expressive of the way in which we are saved. It is no use to come to me and talk to me about Jesus Christ; you may talk to me about a Jesus Christ, and about a Saviour, and about a Mediator, and about a Shepherd; you may go on, and talk and tell me that I may come to Jesus Christ, and believe in Jesus Christ, and I need not trouble myself about anything else. But I want to know what is meant by Jesus Christ. If Jesus Christ died for sinners, I want to know what is meant by that death; and if Jesus Christ be a Mediator, I want to know how he is a Mediator; and if Jesus Christ hath atoned for sin, I want to know how he hath atoned for sin; and if Jesus Christ hath appeared in the world, I want to know on what terms

he hath appeared, and I want to know also for what ends he hath appeared. Then if I come to the word of God, I shall find that his righteousness that he has wrought out is eternal; and I shall find out by the word of the Lord that his atonement that he hath made hath perfected for ever all them that are sanctified. Then I want to find out what is meant by being sanctified; and we are told what the meaning is,—“Sanctified of God the Father, preserved in Christ Jesus, and called.” The way that this quarrel is settled is by thus receiving the Jesus Christ of the Scriptures, the Christ of God; being brought to receive him in the completeness and eternity of his atonement. We must receive him there; if we do not receive him there, then we do not receive him in accordance with God’s covenant. We must be reconciled to God in a covenant ordered in all things and sure. We must be reconciled to God and be made to receive Jesus Christ according to that scripture in Isaiah lv.—“Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.” So that in order for this matter to be settled, we must receive Jesus Christ as the Mediator of this better covenant, established upon better promises. And you will at once see that this great truth of receiving Jesus Christ as the Mediator of the better covenant includes all the great doctrines of the everlasting gospel. What Christian would ever wish to die in a better state than David? What a wonderful scripture is that—“He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure. This is all my salvation and all my desire, though he make it not to grow”! People say,—Well, but many do not understand this. Then, if they are taught of God, they will seek the Lord till they do understand it; and when they do understand it they will see that all their salvation is in this sworn covenant; that everything that Christ did was to carry out this sworn covenant; and having carried it out, and brought us into reconciliation to himself, here the quarrel is settled; here we have nothing against God, and God has nothing against us; here is a peace established that passeth all understanding.

This clears the way for me to enter upon the second part of my subject,—namely, *the analogy between the way or principles upon which the Saviour forgives and the principles upon which we are to forgive one another*. “If any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.” I will notice a fourfold analogy between the way in which the Saviour forgives and the way in which Christians are to forgive one another. Now what is the first principle upon which the Saviour forgives? The first principle is relationship. The people are chosen and constituted eternally one with the Lord Jesus Christ. “He passed by the nature of angels, and took upon him the seed of Abraham,” that he might make reconciliation for the sins of the people. And these people being constituted eternally one with him, he feels, with a feeling that I cannot describe and you cannot comprehend, that they are his brethren; that they are his flesh, his blood, his bone,—that they are part of himself. He feels that so near and dear is the relation that he could not condemn them. What, condemn one of my brethren! What, condemn my own flesh and

blood! What, condemn those that my Father hath made closely, indissolubly, and eternally one with himself! "Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren:" he is not ashamed to own the relationship, he owns it because God has done it; God the Father has taken them into his vital, intense, and everlasting love, and given them to his dear son. Here is a vital oneness, so that in all their affliction he is afflicted; he is touched, as it were, with the feeling of our infirmities. All the nearest ties of nature are made use of to illustrate the closeness of this relationship; and on the ground of their belonging to him, being one with him, he takes their sins and forgives them. If the nearness of relationship between the prodigal son and his father produced the forgiveness and acceptance there stated, so here. This, then, is one ground of forgiveness. They are—

"One with Jesus,
By eternal union one."

We have but little idea of the intense pity of God our Father in this oneness with us by his dear Son. We have but little idea, and I am afraid our best thoughts are but mean concerning the infinite sympathy of the Saviour with us in this relationship. He thus passed by the nature of angels, and took upon him the seed of Abraham. Ah, then, because believers are his brethren, because they are spoken of as flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone, they shall not be lost, they shall not be condemned, they shall not be left in any woe, in any trouble. "I will never leave thee; I will never forsake thee." He is the Brother that loveth at all times. This relationship is what we want in order to forgive one another. Whatever quarrel you may have against any man or any woman—I speak now to the real Christian—let it be manifest to you that they belong to God; let them give such a testimony of their experience, and let their seeking of the Lord and their decision for the truth make them so manifest to you that you feel that that man is a child of God, one of the brethren of Christ, a living, practical lover of God's blessed truth,—why, in that case you must forgive. You will say to yourself, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Ah, then, if God my Father gave me to Christ, and constituted me one with him, and if Christ hath, in pursuance of this great purpose, of this relationship, forgiven me my innumerable sins, should I not forgive my brother? Should I not forgive my sister? Should I not readily pass by the offence of one that I feel convinced is a Christian, a lover of the truth? But then, if this is not manifest, you cannot feel that spirit of forgiveness. If this is not manifest I will tell you what you should do. You should forgive with the spirit of severation; but you cannot forgive with the spirit of reconciliation. I have forgiven some people in my time with the forgiveness of severation. I have said, "Yes, I will forgive you; but it is clear to me you are an enemy to God's truth, so I will have no more to do with you. I will forgive you; but it is clear to me you do not know your need of God's mercy, of God's Christ, of God's salvation; you are not of my spirit. I forgive you; but I am commanded to come out from you, for you have the form of godliness but not the power; you have not that power of godliness which hath brought you down or raised you up, and therefore I forgive you with the forgiveness of separation, but not with the forgiveness of reconciliation." Whereas, where there is this relationship there will be the forgiveness of reconciliation. Hence, when Joseph's brethren came to him, though they knew not him he knew them. Ah, he felt that they were sons of the same father; he felt that they were flesh of his flesh, bone of his bone. He now saw the fulfilment of his divine dreams, the wondrous hand of God. And what shall I now do? Shall I now take vengeance on them? Oh no, they are my brethren. He sent them away once in order to get Benjamin; and then Benjamin, being a son of the

same mother, as well as of the same father, that seemed to stir up the inmost sympathies of his soul, and Joseph could contain himself no longer, commanded every Egyptian to go out; then comes forth the ministration of the forgiveness of reconciliation. "Fear not; I will nourish you. Ye would have killed me; I will keep you alive. Ye would have sent me to ruin; I will preserve you from ruin. Ye cared not what became of me; but I do care what becomes of you." The brethren were of a different spirit now; famine had broken them down; they were brought now to acknowledge the hand of the Lord. And see how entire, how complete the forgiveness was! Joseph had justly a quarrel against them, but he laid the quarrel aside on the ground of relationship. Joseph understood that eternal relationship subsisting between him and the Elder Brother, Christ Jesus, and therefore honoured that divine relationship by thus honouring the natural relationship between him and his brethren. And Joseph was as good as his word. He also preached a good sermon. He said, "Ye meant it unto evil, but God meant it unto good, to save much people alive, as at this day." And, as you are aware, after the death of Jacob, when they came to him and again sought his forgiveness, he was grieved that they should have any doubt, any suspicion of his good feeling towards them. He held out to the last, nourished them all his days, and they themselves realized all the advantages of this forgiveness. Here is relationship. Joseph did the Egyptians' good, but he did not feel towards them as he did to his brethren, nor can you feel towards those that do not stand manifest to you as real Christians as you can towards those that do. If a man stand manifest to me as a child of God, I feel I can forgive him anything, and that with the forgiveness of reconciliation; that is, provided he, on his part, is as tired of the quarrel as I am, and as willing to receive me as I am to receive him, thus to the glory of God, as Christ received us. You cannot resist it when this is manifest. Hence it is a sermon will sometimes, when attended with power, settle differences among the people of God. If you have had a quarrel with a Christian, you will get tired of it, and you will say, This is that which Satan likes; therefore, lest Satan should get an advantage, let us exercise that family affection and forgiveness that doth honour to us, and brings glory to the Lord our God. But there must be this relationship. When I meet with persons, and I cannot see by their testimony, or by their walk and conduct, especially towards the cause of God, that they are Christians, I cannot feel towards them as I do towards those of whom I feel no doubt whatever. You do no harm to any; but you cannot forgive with the forgiveness of reconciliation any except your own relations, your own spiritual relations. So, then, "If ye being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more your heavenly Father." Hence, sometimes, if a Christian man have a prodigal in his family, a trouble, Ah, says the unfeeling, the hard-hearted, the conceited, I would not have forgiven him, I would not have received him, I would not have done so-and-so; but if it were your own child you would talk very differently. You are like the people that hate children;—I hate children; I cannot bear the brats. But as soon as ever these child-haters have one of their own it is the dearest little darling ever known. Why, who would have thought that a baby was such a sweet little thing as it is? Oh, death, if not eternal condemnation, to any one who should say a word against my dear little baby! Well, but there is a spot here, and a spot there. Oh, bless you, it is essential to it; it would not be half so beautiful without it. Ah, what does relationship do! So this spiritual relationship is a wonderful thing. Why, some of us, if we can meet with a little babe in grace, and can see it is one, we love it, admire it, and bless God for it, and pray for it, and rejoice over it; for the angels rejoice at the spiritual birth of every immortal soul from its state of nature thus brought into the kingdom of the blessed God. Christ, then, forgives, on the ground of

relationship. So, then, those of you that have a quarrel against me (and I know some of you have, a little bit, and I know where it is too), if I do not stand manifest to your conscience as a spiritual relation, I know I shall come poorly off for forgiveness; but if I do stand so manifest, then you might as well forgive at once; you must come to it, and the longer you stop the worse it will be. Thus, then, we are to forgive one another on the ground of relationship.

The second element or ground on which the Saviour forgives is that of love. Perhaps you will say that ought to be first. Well, be that as it may, that is one of the elements—love. Now, God hath said, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love;” and we must look to four things as the proof of it. First, to the gift of Jesus Christ; for he is a gift given, never to be recalled. Second, to the work which Jesus Christ has done, for it was love that contrived that. Thirdly, to the eternal glory which he hath in reserve. Fourth, to his calling us by his grace to a knowledge of the same. These are the four great standing proofs of the eternity of his love. If he had not loved us, he would not have given his dear Son; if he had not loved us with his everlasting love, there would not have been eternal salvation wrought for us; if he had not loved us, he would not have made the provision that he has. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” And if he had not loved us, he would not have opened our eyes, and turned our faces towards him, and revealed himself unto us in the deep and eternal counsels of his will. “Love covers the multitude of sins;” love covers all sin; it is a wonderful thing, is this Christian love. And some of us have lived to know that with real Christians nothing but the liberty of the gospel can keep this love up. Now, you that have been accustomed to the gospel in the sovereignty and certainty of it, put you under a legal minister, or a yea-and-nay minister, what would be the result? Why, the consequence would be that you would fret, and be miserable, and wretched, and would quarrel with what you heard, and with the minister who preached it. It could not produce love. But let us have the gospel, which is a gospel of love, and shows up the great truth that God is love, how this endears the Lord! And as Jesus Christ forgave us because he loved us, so shall we forgive each other because of this Christian love we have. Thus saith John:—“We know that we are passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.”

And then, the third principle upon which Christ forgave is a somewhat difficult one for us to practise. He forgave in the face of what he suffered by the faults which he forgave. He suffered from our sins, he suffered from the curse due to our sins; all he suffered was for our sins. Now, speaking after the manner of men, would not this, if such a thing had been possible, have provoked him not to forgive us at all? Is it not our language sometimes, “How much that man has injured me! how much he has wronged me! how much he has distressed me! I do not know what I have undergone in a way of loss through that man?” We are inclined to call him all the ugly names we can think of, and have the worst of thoughts of him. But the Lord Jesus Christ took our sins, and never murmured. “He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, he opened not his mouth.” Shall I forgive these? Yes, yes; notwithstanding all I suffer for them, I forgive them; yea, I hereby demonstrate the reality of my forgiveness, that “I, even I, am he that blotteth out their transgressions, and will not remember their sins.” Now it is easy to forgive a man’s fault when that fault has not in any way injured or distressed us, or done us any harm—very easy then to forgive. But the great point is when it has reached, and injured, or hindered us; it is very difficult to forgive then. Ah, see what a spirit upon this subject the Saviour displayed. Even when on the cross, in

the midst of their mockeries,—“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” And see this spirit of forgiveness in Stephen towards his personal enemies, though there were some among them that became Christians afterwards,—“Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” Hence the apostle Paul, in order to set a kind of example, saith,—“I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, if he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account.” Here is religion. So, then, the Lord comes in in this relationship, swallows up our sin, gives us an unity of soul, and teacheth us to forgive each other. The Lord comes in, and shows the reality of his love in thus covering the multitude of sins, and teacheth us in love to forgive one another. The Lord cometh in in the face of all our sins against him, and in the face of all that Christ hath suffered, and freely forgiveth us, to teach us to forgive one another in a way that shall be expressive of our love to God, and decision for his blessed name. Yea, his atonement is one essential ground of forgiveness; this atonement makes forgiveness as righteous as it is merciful, and forgiving one another the people of God do hereby honour the Lord in and by this atonement. A man may come into a profession of religion, and his natural conscience awakened, and the word of God shall lay hold of him, and shall say,—“Pay me what thou owest.” And he shall pray, “Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.” Now he thus appears to receive pardon, but it is only in appearance; there is a want of reality. For that parable in the 18th of Matthew, to which I am now alluding, of the ten thousand talented debtor, is intended, I think, to set forth, not a real child of God, but a mere professor. This man professedly had received forgiveness of ten thousand talents—somewhere about two millions of money. Now is it real? Is this forgiveness real? Will you live in the practice of it? “Blessed are the merciful; they shall obtain mercy.” He meets with a fellow-servant, that owed him about three pounds, laid hands upon him, took him by the throat, cast him into prison till he should pay the debt. Well, some of the brethren could not understand that, so they went and told the lord of it; and the lord came to this man that professed to have received so much mercy—it was only profession—and he said, “O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee”—I knew what you were; I forgave it only in form—“O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldst thou not also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant?”—but when you met with him, if you had said to him, Brother, brother, my lord hath forgiven me ten thousand talents; how freely, with all my heart, with all my soul, as you have it not in your power to pay me what you owe, I will make it one of the means of expressing my love to God freely to forgive you; and I will never name it, tell nobody of it; let it die out;—what would the lord have said to that servant, then? He would have said, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant; I forgave thee that mighty debt; thou hast practically carried out the same spirit by forgiving thy brother.” But he did not do that; and he said, “O thou wicked servant—thou wicked servant”—great emphasis laid upon that. “And he delivered him to the tormentors till he should pay all that was due unto him;” and of course that would be never. Those tormentors must there mean evidently the torments of hell; for such a man will be assuredly damned that thus lives in enmity and hatred against the real people of God, while he himself professes to be a debtor to mercy. It is only a profession. “So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.” Ah, my hearers, I do think that there is more importance in this question of brotherly love than some of us are aware of. Before I go to the last point I need not remind you that the great day of days, that great day, in the presence of assembled worlds, will be summed up with this great subject of brotherly love,—“I was an hungred, and ye gave me

meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; come, ye blessed of my Father;" you have proved that you are my children; you have proved that as I have forgiven you, you have forgiven one another; you have practically sympathized with my brethren because they were my brethren, and because you loved them, and were conscious of what I had done for you. But as for the others, you have not done so; therefore, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

But the next ground, and the last I name, on which the Saviour forgives, is that of the good that is brought about thereby. Who will undertake—I will not—to measure, to weigh, to describe, to point out, the good that results from pardoned sin? See a number already that no man can number before the throne of God; see them there clothed with white robes, palms in their hands; see them there sounding out God's eternal salvation; see them there led to fountains of living waters; they shall hunger no more, they shall thirst no more. All the good that myriads upon myriads shall realize to eternity results from forgiveness of sins. And we ourselves do not profess to be a faultless people; we acknowledge we have our faults and our little drawbacks; but if there had not been this relationship felt among you, this Christian love, this grace to pass by unpleasantness, would this chapel have existed, and have been paid for as it is? No. I will therefore look upon its existence and its present state as one of the good results of brotherly love; that brotherly love, of course, founded upon the love of God. What is brotherly love but the reflex of the love of God? See the good that follows from this forgiveness; see the good that followed the poor prodigal when he felt he was forgiven. There is always sure to be good follow; I never yet knew any harm follow. There is that woman—hardly safe to forgive her, she is such an awful character. "I shall get a pretty name if I forgive her." Behold that woman at his feet; she is a sinner. Now the Saviour did not care for that; there was the existing relationship between her and him; there was the love. And her sins were many, but forgiven. A good consequence followed. "She washed his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head;" and did what somewhere about half a dozen of you, I think, would not do for all the world,—you would never get over it if you did, you would fret over it for years if you did it,—she anointed his feet with costly ointment. If you had been there,—about half a dozen of you,—you would have said, What a fool that woman is! I would have found a much better use for the money than that; to go and anoint his feet, what a fool she is! Well, the woman did not mind that; her question was, What will the Lord think of it? And she was there waiting to realise the Lord's mercy. And the Lord said to Simon, "I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss,"—the common salutation then,—“but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint,”—a pennyworth of oil, as much, I know, Simon, as you would like to spare:—“but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment,”—costly ointment. “Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many,”—I tell you that, Simon, that you may see I know all about it,—“are forgiven. And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace.” You may depend upon it she never laid out a sum of money in a way that so delighted her as that which she expended in anointing the dear Saviour's feet. Time would fail me to show the good that follows forgiveness.

So, then, see the great principles upon which the Saviour forgives. May the Lord lead us more and more into the same, for his name's sake!