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Surrey Tabernacle Pulpit.

PLACES OF HONOUR.

A SERMON

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, 29TH NOVEMBER, 1868,

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AT THE NEW SURREY TABERNACLE, WANSLEY STREET.

“They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”—Revelation xx. 4.

I WILL make a few observations, just by way of explanation, before I enter upon the text. In the first place, it is said of the others, that are not born again, that “they lived not again until the thousand years were finished;” that is, until the end of time, when they shall be raised from the dead. The others, that are not interested in the first resurrection, lived not again; they died in the first Adam, but they are not born again, therefore do not live again, and will not until they are called out of their graves to that judgment that awaiteth them, for all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation, they that have done good, to the resurrection of eternal life. But those who are regenerated, who are raised from the dead spiritually, and partakers of the first resurrection, “blessed and holy” are such, for “on them the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years;” not the same persons, but a succession of generations shall continue on the earth to reign with Christ as long as he shall reign on the earth; as will be manifest when we come this morning to that part of our subject.

Our text, you will perceive, divides itself into three parts. Here is first, *the life*,—“they lived with Christ;” here is secondly, *the dominion*,—“and reigned;” here is thirdly, *the period*,—“a thousand years.”

First, *the life*;—they lived with Christ. This of course means by regenerating grace; and I shall try as carefully as I can to describe what this life is, and hereby to distinguish those of you that are born of God, from those that are not. Let me say then of this life with Christ that it is a holy life. But how is this a holy life? Why, by that delightful truth we are never weary of repeating, and it is a truth upon which we can found an universal challenge—namely, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the end of sin; and the challenge we can found upon that is this—that the end of sin can be found nowhere else, nor by any other means whatever. There is no human merit, there is no human work, there is no anything, that can contribute one iota towards the end of sin but Christ Jesus the Lord; and for the simple reason that the law of God is the strength of sin; and therefore the only way of taking away sin was to

maintain the majesty of that law, to bring an obedience to it that should have in it something divine and eternal; so that the sin of the people being once put away, it is put away for ever. There is no other name under heaven given among men whereby sin can be ended. And there is not any one Bible truth more clear than this, that the Lord Jesus Christ hath finished transgression by his atoning death; there it is ended; there it lost its life and its legal power; there it is terminated, so that it never again can return; it is done to all eternity, never, never for one spot or blemish to come upon, or to be laid to the account of the people for whom he died. He hath finished transgression; he hath made an end of sins; he has made reconciliation for iniquity; he has brought in everlasting righteousness. Here then is the end of sin. Do not those scriptures that bear upon this realise a beautiful and an infinitely blessed realization in Christ Jesus? Hence he is represented as washing us from our sins in his own blood; and the people in heaven, the answer to the question there was, "These are they that have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;" and that there is "a fountain opened for sin and for separation," it should be rendered, "to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem;" and again, "Come, let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Here then is the gospel that was to be preached, east, west, north, and south, for the salvation of sinners. When a sinner is convinced of sin, and tries by his morality, and formality, his prayer sayings, and by his various doings, to get rid of his sin, such an one finds out in time that none of these things can bring pardon, life, remission; that none of these things can be a way of escape from the wrath to come; that none of these things can give him access to God, or can please God, for "Cursed is he that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them;" and "he that offendeth in one point is guilty of the whole." And oh! how great the surprise, the wonder, the delight, the joy, the exultation, when the sinner finds out that it is all done, that Jesus hath done it all. If we have a grain of faith to receive him as the end of sin, in receiving him we receive everything. Here is the end of sin. "Little children, I write unto you because your sins are forgiven you, for his name's sake." "For mine own sake," the Lord saith, when embodying in that declaration the Eternal Three,— "For mine own sake I have blotted out thy transgressions, and will not remember thy sins." Ah, this is the way in which we have life. Now we begin to live in a way of hope in God; here we see a great Deliverer, delivering us from so great a death; here we see a great salvation; here we see a great victory; here we see everything that we can need. And not only is the adaptability of it attractive, but there is something else attractive, and that is this—that the Lord Jesus Christ was actually and divinely, from all eternity, appointed to achieve these ends; yea, that he himself came into the world for the very purpose, he having entered into covenant engagements. "Ought not" oh, what words! they are words we should read reverentially, and repeat reverentially; for the more familiar the words are, the more careful we should be in repeating his beautiful and wonderful words. He said, "Ought not Christ to have suffered?"—why, the words seem to grate, in one sense, upon one's feelings; it seems a condescension too low for the Saviour so to speak;—"Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?" On what ground could the "ought," the right stand, but on the ground of his own wonderful love, condescension, and compassion, to undertake the cause of hopeless, helpless, hell-deserving sinners? Those words command the deepest reverence, and the most intense affection of every sinner that feels his need of this great salvation. I am sure the soul goes readily, voluntarily, intensely, with the following words,— "And to enter into his glory?" Ah, yes, Lord—

“ Blessings more than we can give,
Be, Lord, for ever thine.”

This, then, is the way of life. Can we say that we do see and feel our need of this life, of this Christ of God? If so, then fulfilled in us are his beautiful words when he saith, “ I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.” When a sinner is thus taught of God, he finds out, amidst other things, the solemn importance of this matter, and of a right experience of it. Religion without experience is no religion at all. To hold the doctrines without experience is to hold them floating in an intellectual sort of uncertainty. If I am merely reasoned into the doctrines, then I may be reasoned out of them again. If I am reasoned into any of the mysteries of the kingdom of God, I may be reasoned out of them again. But if necessity bring me down trembling to the Saviour’s feet, if necessity bring me down low enough to sigh for mercy, if absolute necessity thus compel me to acknowledge my need of Christ, if I have this Christian experience, then I am driven to the rock for shelter, I am driven to God’s truth; the necessity of it becomes as clear as my existence. Then there is another thing that will seize the minds of the seekers, and that is this—there are false experiences, and I read that “ Many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” What if I should be one of them? And consequently there will be for the divisions of Reuben great searchings of heart. I myself do not understand that divine life in the soul where there is no sighing, no darkness, no bondage, no trembling, no fearing, no wretchedness, no casting down, no mourning—everything quiet, smooth, confident, daringly full of assurance, and thus the man is going smoothly on; Satan keeps the palace, the goods are in peace; the man makes an easy profession, and down he settles, and there he lies; and his religion is destitute of those heart-searchings described in the word of God, of which the people of God in all ages have been more or less the subjects. My hearer, a greater man than there is within this place amidst you all; there is not one of you—forgive me for saying it, I know you will—that has had so great an experience of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven and the things of eternity as David; hundreds of you have the same kind, but not to the same extent;—hear him, “ Bring my soul out of prison, and I will praise thy name.” “ How long, O Lord, wilt thou forget me? For ever?” “ I cried unto thee out of the low dungeon.” What soul trouble, what conflict he was the subject of. So, wherever there is this life with Christ in the soul, there will be a struggle between the old Adam nature and the new nature; for in this new nature—being regenerated—Christ becomes our perfect life. The qualities of our old nature—unbelief, carnality, enmity, worldly mindedness, fretfulness, rebelliousness, a thousand things will work hard to gain the mastery; so that it will be with us as in the finishing of the temple of old;—some wept, and some rejoiced, and they could hardly distinguish the voice of weeping from the voice of rejoicing. And so the Christian. Are you happy? Well, he says, I hardly know, my cup seems filled with gall; yet there is something secret sweetens all; there is a mixture of sweet and of bitter, of darkness and of light. So that in this divine life there is indeed this struggle between the qualities of the old Adam and the graces of the Holy Spirit uniting us to Christ. Now then, to live with Christ is to be driven out of the law, and to be driven out of the world; for “ we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God;” there must be no confidence in self, “ we have the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves.” Christ must become everything. It is by Him God the Father hath loved us, chosen us, and blessed us; by him he accepts and approves us; by him he gives us eternal life; for “ the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life.” Thus, then, to live with Christ is to be made sensible of our need of his atonement. I hardly know how to speak upon it, for by some mysterious experience or another it

becomes increasingly dear to my heart, and increasingly deep in its mysteries, and increasingly wonderful. I have never yet been able to preach a sermon upon the subject of the atonement of Christ that has at all satisfied my mind. I believe what little I have said is the truth; but it is a very small part of the truth compared with what there is yet to be learnt in the unfathomable depths, the wonderful achievements of the atonement of Jesus Christ. Here it is that life and immortality are brought to light; here it is that our souls leap out of prison, out of the law, and shall by and by leap out of the body. And if it can be said now of a soul somewhat realising that liberty that is in Christ that it is a hind let loose, giving goodly words in a way of testimony of what the Lord has done, what will it be when the soul leaves the body? but above all and beyond all, when the body itself will personally be brought into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, never again to return to corruption? With what emphasis the words may then be uttered and realised of every Christian, that he is indeed as a hind set eternally free, and will have nothing to receive from God to all eternity but good words, and consequently cannot give in a way of testimony in reply anything but good words. What know we then, friends, of this conviction of our state? What know we of being driven to the rock for shelter? What know we of every other hope being swept completely away, and we left desolate, destitute, and feeling, as sure as we do of our existence, that if Jesus Christ in the perfection of his atonement be not the end of sin, there is no other way in which hell can be escaped, heaven attained, God glorified, or our souls saved. "They lived," it is a life of holiness, a blessed life, without sin. John saith of this life that such an one "abideth, and the wicked one toucheth him not." John saith in one place, "That"—he first takes the principle, and then shows that the person possessing that principle will be judged by that principle,—"That which is born of God sinneth not;" the new nature sinneth not. Then, to show that the person will be judged by this new principle, he saith, "He which is born of God sinneth not" Why, "There is not a just man upon the earth that doeth good, and sinneth not." But John takes them by the new principle,—their oneness with Christ; there they are judged without sin. Well might James in a very kind sort of way say, "So speak and so do as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty." Oh, look at it! judged by the law of liberty. Why shall they be judged by that law? Because they are prisoners of hope; they are made conscious of what and where they are as sinners; they are looking the right way for liberty; they lean upon the right foundation for liberty; for Jesus hath said, "If the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed." And so they are favoured to stand fast in the testimony of the liberty that is in Christ, "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free." "So speak," that is, speak of what the Lord has done for you; "and so do,"—abide firmly by this atonement of Christ in the new covenant order of it, in the infinite value and perfection of it; and in abiding by it you prove that you are a part of the people that shall be judged by the law of liberty, which must give judgment entirely in your favour, notwithstanding all your sins; because you may sing with the poet concerning Christ,—

"For me He pleads the atoning blood,
For me the righteousness of God."

This life is also a life of righteousness. Jesus Christ's wonderful righteousness places our foot in an even place. I hope you will never get weary of your humble servant repeating from time to time this blessed truth—namely, the imputation without works unto you of the divine, eternal righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ; so that you are reckoned as standing just where he stands. He stands by his own righteousness upon equitable grounds, and you by that righteousness stand upon equitable ground.

Nothing more is demanded of you, not in a legal way; it is done. Therefore it is that David saith; "My foot standeth in an even place." And David gives us to understand that his foot stood in an even place for time and for eternity too; for he immediately adds, "In the congregations," not the singular, congregation, but "in the congregations will I bless the Lord;" that is, I will bless the Lord while I live, in the congregation militant; then, when I am called to join the congregation triumphant in another world, I will still bless the Lord; for he hath blessed us, and constituted us eternally righteous. None of your faults since you have known the Lord have at all altered your standing in him; they have made way for more of his grace like Paul's thorn in the flesh. He besought that the thorn might be taken away: he did not like this messenger of Satan, for this messenger of Satan stirred up a great deal of something that was very much like Satan himself in the apostle Paul; and his judgment, his idea, was that he would be better without this thorn. But the Lord's answer was, "My grace is sufficient for thee." The apostle was designed to preach to great sinners, and unless the Lord had made him feel—more and more too—that he was a great sinner, he would not have been qualified to preach to great sinners, for he would not have preached grace great enough, nor a salvation great enough, nor a Saviour great enough, nor mercy great enough. The apostle was made to feel that there was no man under heaven that needed mercy more than he did. Even now that he was an apostle he did not say, "I *was* the chief of sinners," but, "I *am* the chief of sinners." He needed the mercy now. This made him so bold as to say, "Now to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." That is the man that lives righteously with God, because he lives with God by the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a life, then, of holiness and righteousness. But it is a life also of light. What a wonderful light does this mediatorial work of Christ throw upon everything. I do not think you can name a single thing upon which the mediatorial work of Christ does not throw a light. What else can explain the predictions of the Old Testament? What else can explain the meaning of all the types of the Old Testament? What else can show up the majesty of the law of God, as does the mediatorial work of Christ? I do not think I shall have either you or the scriptures to contradict me when I say that while by the law is the knowledge of sin, by the Saviour is a very much greater knowledge of sin. We learn more of sin at Calvary than we do anywhere. And then what a light it throws upon the love and counsels of God, and upon the people of God. Why, it throws such a light upon them that when the church is spoken of in her corporate capacity under the figure of a woman, she is said to be clothed with the sun, and the moon, the gospel under her feet, that is, to walk by the word of God; and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. It throws such a light upon her that the Saviour himself would almost be astonished at what he had himself done; he would be almost surprised at the happy consequences of his own work. When he looks at the church, he says, "Who is this that looketh forth as the morning." Why, just now you were dark as midnight, under the power of darkness, the night of sin, the night of hell,—thick, gross darkness upon you. Whence this change. "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." It is a light, by which we know what we worship, we know the God we adore. As you have been singing this morning,—

"Jesus, my God, I know his name."

The Saviour said to the woman of Samaria concerning blind worship,—"Ye worship, ye know not what;" we know what we worship. So

then if we walk in the light—and Christ is that light—as God is in the light and God is in Christ, reconciling us to himself, then we have fellowship one with another. But the man that walks anywhere else is walking in darkness. He that walks in Christ walks in the light, and sees and knows everything. The Saviour says, “Whatsoever my Father hath revealed unto me, that I have declared unto you;” only with this infinite difference, that the Saviour was capable of understanding all that the Father revealed to him. I speak of the Saviour now as man; but his disciples were not. If he spoke a few things to them, one said to the other, —Can you understand that? No, I cannot. Can you understand that? No, I cannot. We cannot make it out. He had to say,—“Are ye yet without understanding?” And the apostle, when he would have enlarged more upon the great mysteries contained in the typical position and priesthood of Melchizedec, says,—“I have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.” But bless the Lord, the time will come when these infirmities and hindrances will be taken out of the way.” “Now we see through a glass darkly;” not that the Lord puts up a dark glass—the dark glass is our own poor old nature, our own infirmities, and we know therefore only in part, but then we shall know even as we are known. Well, then, let us bless the Lord for the little light, that we have, and pray for an increase of light. “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.” Every minister prays for his people to be brought more and more into the light, so that he may be able to say to himself,—Now here is rather a deep subject, rather difficult; but then I am among a people that are in the very centre of the sunlight of mediation, and that can look back to eternity, and forward to eternity. I cannot get out of their reach; they will catch the meaning in a minute; they will lay hold of it and profit by it. Hence, sometimes, if a minister—not myself, I am not capable of getting out of your depth,—but if some ministers get a little out of our depth, we start, and think: I cannot understand that; I would rather you would come down and describe my feelings; I can understand that; but if you go beyond that, I am somehow or another at sea. That just shows what babes we are; it just shows that we have need of milk, and not of strong meat; just shows what poor little things we are. I am not now making light of experience—God forbid, for as I have said, Religion without experience is no religion at all; but I do think that experience is to expand the mind, and enable us to answer in the affirmative the question, “Understandest thou what thou readest?” Well, the eunuch did not yet, but he came by and by into an understanding. So then, the way to learn is to dwell in Christ. He hath said, and beautiful the words are, “Learn of me;” as though the Lord should say, Look to me; everything you want to know you will find out by me, for in me are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. They are hidden from the world, but they are not hidden from you. “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.” In spiritual things, all you see you are to have; so the more you see, the more you are to have. I have never seen anything in Christ yet that was not mine, so that the more I see the more I get. You know what the Lord said to Joshua:—“Every place that thy foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto thee.” But if you are too lazy to go up that mountain, and too lazy to go through the length and breadth of the land, if you choose to walk a little way, and then, free will like, sit down and stop short, lest you should go too far, why, then you will occupy but a little corner, and bless yourself for the little corner you have, because you were too lazy to go any further. “Every place thy foot shall tread upon thou shalt possess.” I love to have a wide range in the holy scriptures; not to be shut up to one part or another, but to stretch my wings as an eagle, and have a wide range, see afar, and be happy when I am up

where my defence is the munitions of rocks, where bread is given, where waters are sure, and where the atmosphere is so pure that I am never so healthy and well as when my soul is carried up beyond the things of time and sense, and can range in the love, and presence, and sunshine of the sun of righteousness, under the firmament of the everlasting covenant, and see that I have innumerable treasures, yea, everlasting pleasures, glories, and dignities there. These seasons are short, but some of us have them; they do not last long: we come down again, our wretched state to feel; but bless the Lord for light enough to see anything at all in Christ. So then everything you discover here is yours. Whatever heaps of gold, whatever mines of silver, whatever new robes, whatever crowns, whatever fields, whatever inheritances—whatever you discover, it is all yours. Talk of explorings, talk of geographical travellings to find out new countries—why, there are none so highly favoured and so well placed for this business as those that are brought into the light of the everlasting gospel. Here is eternal life, here is equitable righteousness, and here is a wonderful light. The sun literally does not shine into one corner, you know, merely; it shines into your neighbour's window as well as yours. There are some people that don't like that, perhaps, and say, I wish the sun would not shine into my neighbour's house;—but it will. We read of "the morning spread upon the mountains." All human or artificial lights shine but a little way; but the sun throws its rays abroad. Just so with our God. This is that sun that is never to go down; for "the Lord shall be unto thee thine everlasting light, and thy God thy glory."

The soul, when brought into this life of righteousness and light, lives a life of perfect love to Christ; perfect in kind, not yet perfect in degree. It is a very pleasant life to live. And I feel amazingly annoyed and indignant when I hear this divine life at all legalized or turned into a duty affair. It is never the religion of the real Christian. Saith the apostle, "The love of Christ constraineth us;" and "the life that I now live is by the faith of the Son of God, that loved me and gave himself for me." "Let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might." "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love him." It is a life of love to God, a life of love to the truth, a life of love to his ways. "I have loved the habitation of thy house, the place where thine honour dwelleth. It is a very pleasant life. I have in this respect had for many years a very pleasant life of it. I can go to sleep every night with the assurance that I do love God's testimonies; but though I can go to rest with that assurance, I cannot always at the same time feel assured that I am interested savingly in it;—and I can wake in the morning with an assurance that I do love his truth; that is to say, I love him as represented by his blessed truth. I can walk abroad, I can stay at home, in the pulpit and out of the pulpit, in all places and at all times I can say that I love his new covenant, yea and amen truth. The Lord said to the Pharisees, "Ye have not heard his voice;" that is, the voice of his truth; "ye have not seen his shape;" that is, his new covenant shape, form, or order. But we have heard the voice of his truth; and we have seen his shape, his form, his order, in which he appears; and John sums it up thus:—"God is love;" that is, in this shape, this covenant form. "Before me there was no God formed," the Lord saith;—no Elohim formed, no Sworn One come into such a position as to save your soul. So then we have heard the voice of his truth; we have seen his shape, his form, or order, and all that is embodied in the mission of Christ; he is the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person; and if Jesus Christ be God, which he is, and the image of God, how can we but love him? If there be any respect in which we do not love him, it is only for want of understanding. Hence said the Saviour,

“ If ye loved me ye would rejoice because I said, “ I go to my Father ; ” but they did not yet understand what he there meant. In after days, when brought to understand what he there meant, it let in upon their souls an increase of love to their covenant God.

I suppose I had better pass over the middle part of my text—the *dominion* ;—“ they reigned with Christ.” Lastly, *the period* ;—“ and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” “ I saw the souls of them that were beheaded.” It does not mean the martyrs only, and unless you are a martyr in spirit, your religion is not worth having. It applies to all ages. When the Saviour comes to the climax of discipleship, he says, “ Yea, and his own life also.” If your mortal life is more to you than Jesus Christ and God’s truth, and you would rather part with his truth than with your mortal life, then you do not belong to the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus. “ And which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands ; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” I take this thousand years to represent the whole of the gospel dispensation. And when we advocate a principle, if that principle will not stand good in all its details, that is a proof that we are wrong in the premises. Take, as a specimen of this, the doctrine of universal redemption. There are many who hold that Jesus Christ died for the whole human race ; that is the principle they advocate. But when we come to test this principle, we find it will not stand, it will not hold good ; because they themselves admit that some are lost for whom Christ died. But then the Old Testament saith that “ the redeemed shall return, and come to Zion.” That overthrows the idea, you see, of Christ redeeming all. And the New Testament saith that Christ laid down his life for his sheep, and that his sheep shall never perish. So that when the principle of universal redemption is tested by the word of God, it will not stand good. Now I hold this thousand years not to mean a thousand years literally, but to mean the whole gospel dispensation, the duration of which is known only to the Lord ; that is the principle I hold ; and if it will not stand good in all its details, that will be a proof that the principle is wrong. Now the main parts of this Book are taken from the Old Testament ; and if I can find some Old Testament scriptures that distinguish between the time reign and the eternal reign of Christ, that will help us out with this idea. In the 72nd Psalm you have the reign of Christ, and that Psalm distinguishes between the time reign of Christ and his eternal reign. There is more in this than may at first sight appear ; because in the dark ages the adversary hoped that he had got rid of the gospel out of the world altogether ; and therefore, it is not enough for us to know that Christ will reign to eternity, but we want to know whether he will continue the gospel and the gospel ministry on earth ; whether we may hope for our children, our grandchildren, and future generations. Here it is : “ They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations.” That shows that as long as time shall be there shall be a godfearing people upon the earth. Bless God for that ! that our world will never be left desolate. God encourage us to go on and pray for an increase of numbers. “ In his days shall the righteous flourish ; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.” So then, while time shall last, the great peace that passeth all understanding shall be preached, shall be realized, precious souls shall escape Satan’s fangs, be brought into reconciliation with God by the blood of the Lamb ; shall follow after us when we are gone, and shall come to aid the song, to cast their crowns at the same Redeemer’s feet, and glorify the same God. Again, “ His name shall be continued as long as the sun.” That explains the thousand years, to my mind. So then not only is it clear that Christ shall reign for ever ; but on earth also unto the end of time.