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Surrey Tabernacle Pulpit.

RIGHT CONVERSION.

A SERMON

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, 19TH JULY, 1868,

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AT THE NEW SURREY TABERNACLE, WANSEY STREET.

"They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."—ISAIAH xi. 9.

THE theme of this chapter is two-fold—the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the infinitely and eternally happy, glorious, and delightful effects thereof. We must therefore understand the chapter in its details in accordance with its theme, in accordance with its main drift; so that the figures, the metaphors, the tropes, and similes that are used in this chapter must be taken in their proper and figurative sense. To take them literally would be like taking the Levitical priesthood for the priesthood of Christ; whereas the priesthood of Levi was intended only to represent the priesthood of Christ. And to take these metaphors literally, to view them not as metaphors, but taking them as the things intended, would be like taking the typical temple for God himself. The typical temple was an earthly, material building; the antitypical temple is God himself—God and the Lamb the temple thereof. It would be like taking the earthly for the heavenly Jerusalem; the earthly Canaan, which has passed away, for that inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Hence in that day "there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse." Here the rod stands as the symbol of the ruling and governing power of Christ; as in the 110th Psalm,—“The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion; rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.” “And a Branch shall grow out of his roots;” here is the Saviour in his fruitfulness. “And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him;” and if you trace the matter out in his life, you will find that the Holy Spirit rested upon him precisely as here by the prophet

described; the spirit of Jehovah; that conveys the idea of eternity. So the spirit of eternity, or of God in his eternity, rested upon Christ. He came not to work out a temporal, but an eternal righteousness; he came not to work a temporal redemption, like that from Egypt, but to obtain eternal redemption; he came not to bring us to eat of that manna and to drink of that water that belonged only to the body, but he came to bring us the meat that endureth to everlasting life, and to open that river of eternal life which shall be in the people as a well of water springing up to everlasting life. "The spirit of wisdom;" and so it is that you read in the 2nd of Luke, that "the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God," that is, the favour of God, "was upon him." "And understanding;" so in the same chapter of Luke, when he was twelve years old, we find the rulers were astonished at his understanding. "And the spirit of counsel;" and we find he was never at a loss to give counsel; he was not obliged to do as we are obliged very often to do, and as our lawyers do—take time to consider;—he never did that; he was always ready. Whatever the emergency of the case was; he always had counsel at command to give that exactly suited the circumstance. "And of might;" and so whatever he put his hand to he succeeded in. "And the spirit of knowledge;" and so he well knew what he came into the world for; and he so well knew man that he committed not himself unto man, for he knew what was in man. "And the spirit of the fear of the Lord;" and so there was in him the fear of the Lord in perfection. And then the prophet goes on to compare men, to whom this ministry was sent, to whom this gospel was sent, to beasts of the earth. We are by the fall of man so distorted and degraded that we are compared to wild beasts, and birds of prey, fowls of the air, and these were to undergo such a transition, to be brought into such a state, as to realise the fulfilment of our text,—“They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain.” This chapter, therefore, must be understood spiritually; it has nothing whatever to do with any earthly millenium, or anything of the kind, but it must be understood, as I think the Scriptures we shall presently have to deal with will shew, spiritually. And then, as a mountain is an elevation locally, and to be on a mountain is to be raised up and exalted locally and literally, so that state of exaltation before God which true conversion brings us to is compared to being thus on a mountain, because this conversion to God brings us out of our low condition, elevates us, lifts us up, by that holiness we have in Christ. You will observe that the mountain is called a holy mountain;—“They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain.” In the 31st of Jeremiah it is described thus:—“The Lord bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness;” called the habitation of justice because the Mediator is here, and by him God is just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus; and called the mountain of holiness because Jesus Christ is the entire, the final end of sin; and as you are led to receive him, you stand by that reception of him before a heart-searching God sinless, reckoned so in him, by oneness with him, even as he is sinless; righteous before God, even as Christ is righteous; and some fault must be found in

him before anything can be laid to the charge of the happy inhabitants of this holy mountain; called there a mountain because by this faith in Jesus Christ they are thus raised up to the highest possible dignity; called a holy mountain because Jesus Christ is the end of sin, and there the people stand free from sin, supplied with every plenty; they shall come and sing with delight in the height of Zion, and flow together to the goodness of the Lord; for here, in this exalted state, is the goodness of the Lord, and by faith in Christ they shall thus flow together; for the Lord has so ordered it to gather together all things in Christ;—"they shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd; and their soul shall be as a watered garden, and they shall not sorrow any more at all." "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain."

I may just observe that we shall not get through this text this morning. Our subject this morning will be simply *what it is to be brought experimentally into this holy mountain*; and if we are come there, then we shall get to heaven. We must not take up the idea that we are not come to this holy mountain till we get to heaven; we must not dream of the idea that we are not there by precious faith until we are there actually. The apostle Paul will be down upon us if we hold such a doctrine as that. He said to true Christians of his day, "Ye are come to Mount Zion; ye are standing there now by faith, by understanding; ye are come to Mount Zion, unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." That will be my subject this morning.

Now, in connection with our text, you read here of the wolf dwelling with the lamb; leopards, wild beasts, all of them tamed, and "they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain." The apostle Peter divides them into four classes, and I shall follow his classification; and then I think that will show pretty plainly that what is here said of the wild beasts becoming tame must be understood not literally, as some millenarians advocate, but must be understood spiritually. Now the apostle Peter takes up the subject in a way that shows us that the similes here used must be spiritually understood. In the 10th and 11th of Acts he classifies them into four classes; he calls them four-footed beasts—that will mean the tame part; and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. I will try if I can find a scripture for each of these classes, and just see how each scripture takes up each class, and how it deals with them.

First we will take the tame, because he mentions the tame first—namely four-footed beasts; alluding to us as sheep and oxen. And so there is this difference between men; some are more moral, and more thoughtful, and more civilized, and more refined, and more conscientious, and more admirable than others. This is a truth self-evident. But these are all of them more or less Pharisees; and if they belong to the Lord the Lord will find them out. Now I will go to the 144th Psalm for a definition of this branch of our subject. "That our garners may be full, affording all manner of store; that our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets." Was not this the case in the apostolic age? Did not the Saviour in those days gather thousands of his sheep? Did they not hear his voice? And what is said in this Psalm you will find beautifully confirmed by the Scriptures in relation to the people as sheep. "That our oxen may be strong to labour." Here are the tame; that is, those who have not gone so far wrong outwardly as others; so I should take it; for while we are all alike by nature, we are not all alike by practice or by circumstance. Now if you compare this with some other Scriptures you will see that these sheep are converted to the doctrine of certainty and of safety. A Wesleyan is not converted to the doctrine either of certainty or of safety; but the Lord converts his people to the

doctrine of certainty and of safety. Mark the language of the Psalmist :— “that there be no breaking in.” Ah, saith the man born of God, there is no breaking into Christ’s fold; there is but one way into his fold, and that is by regeneration, he himself being the door. “I am the door;” he that entereth in in any other way must be counted an offender and a transgressor; there is no breaking in; there is no coming in but by regeneration. That regeneration brings us to see that Jesus Christ is the door. “By me if any man enter in he shall be saved.” “That there be no breaking in nor going out.” Not a lamb was ever lost; not a sheep was ever lost;—no going out; not one soul was ever born of God and yet lost; not one soul was ever united to the Good Shepherd, and was afterwards lost. Is not the Saviour’s language in entire accordance with this: “My sheep shall never perish”? The Pope’s sheep may perish; the sheep of the parish parson may perish; the sheep that men reckon sheep may perish; the sheep that are constituted so by sprinkling a little water on the forehead of the infant—these sheep may be lost, and certainly will be lost if they die in the state they are then in; but “*my* sheep shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand;” they are thus brought into the doctrine of certainty. There is no breaking in; no thief can come into where they are spiritually. No wolf shall be there; no lion shall be there; no ravenous beast shall be there; the ransomed, and they alone, shall be there; they shall abide in this hidden life, in this mystic fold; there they are safe—no breaking in; there we and all we have are safe. In this world everything is uncertain; but in Christ everything is certain. There shall be no breaking in, no going out; “happy is the people that is in such a case; yea, happy is the people whose God is the Lord.” Here then is one class that is brought to God’s holy mountain; and they shall not hurt nor destroy. Is there one of the bulwarks of Zion that this people would wish to weaken? They read with joy that which is written in the 26th of Isaiah:—“In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.” And David saith, “He hath shewed me his marvellous kindness in a strong city.” So, then, that which in our text is called a holy mountain is in another place called a strong city. And, indeed, I have already given, though it might not have struck your mind as I passed along, a sample of this:—“Ye are come unto Mount Zion, the city of the living God.” Observe there, that while in the one clause it is called Mount Zion, the next clause calls the same place the city of the living God; just showing that it is a variety of representation to increase our acquaintance with our God in the great things he has done for us. Let us stop at each class as we go along, and ask, How is it with us? Can we truly say that the blessed truths which set forth the eternal security of the sheep are dear to us? Are we brought to know our need of the Lord’s mercy? If so, and we have been brought to the Good Shepherd, then the blessed truth of eternal certainty and safety will be dear to us. All other gospels will appear contemptible in comparison with the decisive, the infallible testimony of the eternal God. Here, then, they are converted thus to the blessed truth of certainty and of safety. “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain.”

The next class is that of wild beasts. Where shall we go to find them and the Lord’s dealings with them? I could go to a great many Scriptures, but I should perhaps confuse myself and you too by doing so; let us therefore creep along gradually. In the 22nd Psalm we get another representation of the character of man; and yet some of these were the brethren of the Lord Jesus Christ. “Many bulls have compassed me; strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.” Now a bull, especially a wild bull, is perhaps one of the most furious and ferocious animals upon

the face of the earth; and the persecutors of Christ are there compared to those animals. A little further on in the same Psalm they are compared to dogs. "Dogs have compassed me; the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me. Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion's mouth; for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns." Now, how is it that these persecutors of Christ are so represented? Not merely because they were persecutors, but because of the great power with which they were armed. His personal persecutors were armed with a fourfold power. Just look at it;—there was Christ, speaking after the manner of men, as a solitary man, bearing all that they inflicted upon him. Look at the fourfold power they had. First, ecclesiastical power; and that, you know, when it is well organized, is a very great power, which has shed torrents of blood of the saints. Second, political power, of which Pilate was the representative. Third, military power, of which Herod was the representative; who with his soldiers set the Saviour at nought and mocked him. Fourth, mob power; and that is a terrific power, as you are aware, when it gets hold of the whole mob. The sentiments of the rulers ran like electricity through the mob, and they all cried out—the general mob,—"Away with him, crucify him;" and they rushed in a mob to take and put him to death. May they not then well be called bulls—strong bulls of Bashan; and like an army of mastiff dogs, like roaring lions, like the unicorn—the one-horned, but mighty and powerful beast? Yet some of these men were the brethren of the Lord Jesus Christ. Saul of Tarsus was not at Jerusalem at the time—he was at college, being fitted to be a parson; and a pretty demon of a parson he was when he did become one, thinking he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus. But still he said, I will do what I can, and so he minded the clothes of them that stoned Stephen. I will have something to do with it. What was Saul of Tarsus? He was as a bull of Bashan, infuriated; he was as a barking, yelping dog; he was as a roaring lion; he was as an unicorn. Ah, can such ever be saved? Wonder, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth,—“Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel, beginning at Jerusalem”—“beginning at Jerusalem.” I mean to turn these bulls of Bashan into broken-hearted sinners; I mean to turn these dogs into sheep; I mean to turn these lion-like characters into little children; I mean to turn these mighty unicorns into broken-hearted sinners. Ah, is it possible? Not only was it possible, but thousands among them were thus brought to know the Lord. And what does the Saviour say in the 22nd Psalm, after thus representing them? “I will declare thy name unto my brethren.” But, blessed Lord, suppose that Saul of Tarsus were one of thy brethren? I will declare God's name to him. But suppose these infuriated men that have employed this ecclesiastical, political, military, and mob power against thee—suppose that some of these should be thy brethren? Then from the deeps of my sufferings, from the deeps of mine agonies, from the depths of my groans, shall rise to God's eternal throne, “Father, forgive them;”—thou knowest, Father, who I mean; I mean those among them that are my brethren;—Father, forgive them; let the blood now flowing from my veins wash their guilt away;—“Father, forgive them; they know not what they do.” And in a few days down came the Eternal Spirit, in rolled the tide of pardoning mercy, and these same ferocious lions and dogs came into the faith as it is in Jesus, were as little children, glad to be nothing, that the great God might be everything. Well might the apostle say that his mission was to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. “I will declare thy name unto my brethren.” Then in the same Psalm it is said, “The meek;”—why, just now they were like the infuriated bulls of Bashan; just now they were gaping at the Saviour with all the fierceness possible, as ravening and roaring lions; just now they were tearing and

biting like dogs; but what a change is wrought! "The meek." Ah, as a general rule such become the meekest; they stand amazed at God's sparing, and saving, and pardoning mercy. "The meek shall eat and be satisfied! they shall praise the Lord that seek him; your heart shall live for ever." Then again, "A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation." And now mark what these people shall do that are thus converted. "They shall declare his righteousness." Ah, poor sinner, you may well declare his righteousness; you have got none of your own, I know; you have given pretty good proof of that. "They shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this." Here was I, a beast before thee, and now a lover of the Lord; here was I like a roaring lion, and thought that I could not do enough against God and godliness, against his cause and people; now I feel that I am ready, not only to be bound but to die for the Lord Jesus. Thus, then, here are the wild beasts brought to God's holy mountain. Is anything too hard for his blessed word? See how it does away with differences. Here is the poor wretch exalted into the knowledge of the truth: here is the highflying Pharisee, such a good creature, such an excellent creature; by and by the grace of God lays hold of him, and opens up to him his real condition; thus this brother of high degree is brought down, and the brother of low degree is brought up. And the brother of low degree says, I wonder that God should have mercy upon such a wretch as I am; and the other says, I wonder that the Lord should ever have shown his love to such a proud, haughty Pharisee as I have been. And each will feel that he has been the worst. The publican says, I have been ten times worse than you; and the Pharisee says, I have been the worst, because I have been trying to thrust my works into Christ's place; I have been trying to get to heaven without Christ, insulting him and the gospel all my days. Each thus will esteem the other better than himself, each saying,—

"I defy that you should owe
More praise than I;
For mine, of all the saved by grace,
Was the most dreadful, desperate case."

Let us now take the third class. The third is that which suits me very well, because I feel what a poor creature I am. The apostle Peter says, "and creeping things." Now where shall we go for the conversion of these creeping things? The 7th of Micah; there it is beautifully described, and there I find the testimony of these creeping things when they are brought to know the Lord. See what a beautiful and glorious testimony they bear. "The nations shall see and be confounded at all their might." And what shall they see? Why, they shall see themselves very devils; they shall see themselves worthless and wretched; they "shall see and be confounded at all their might." They thought themselves very mighty; all of us in a state of nature are very mighty men. Oh, I can come to God when I like; I can be a Christian when I like. But when your eyes are opened; when the law of God comes in and opens up the wickednesses of the heart, then you are confounded, then you feel what a poor weak creature you are. "They shall lay their hand upon their mouth." As the apostle saith, their mouth shall be stopped. What is the matter with you? Why, I cannot say anything more. I used to think that I had some goodness of my own, and I now find that I am altogether evil. God has opened up the hidden evils of my heart, and my mouth is stopped; I must lay my hand upon my mouth, and cry with the leper of old, "Unclean, unclean." "And their ears shall be deaf;" that is, they will not in future hear one word against the gospel of God and the people of God. I used to like to hear those high doctrine people spoken against, and the truth spoken against: now my ear is deaf to it; I can hear it no longer. "They shall lick the dust like a serpent." Ah, how descriptive

that is. The devil is a serpent. Ah, saith one, what is the devil? A liar, that is what he is. Ah, saith such a one, I have been a liar against my own soul all my days; I have been telling my soul lies all my days; I have been telling my soul that if I did to others as I would they should do unto me that was all it needed. I have been telling lies to my soul all my days, so if ever there was a liar, I am one. And a murderer. What is a murderer? A murderer is an enemy to God's truth. Ah, he says, if the devil is a murderer, and by his servants crucified Christ, I am an enemy, I am a very serpent, a very devil by nature. "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation," that I may no longer be reckoned among the murderers of the Saviour, for now I am brought to love the habitation of thy house, the place where thine honour dwelleth; therefore now gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men; though I belong to them by what I am as a sinner, a very serpent, yet deliver me from "blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness." If I had a pair of stentorian lungs, my heart would fain dictate an expression which should be louder than a thousand thunders: "My tongue shall sing aloud of *thy* righteousness;" that is, the mediatorial work of thy dear Son, by which my murderous enmity is swallowed up, my serpentine character, my likeness to the old serpent, destroyed, until at the last I shall appear no longer a murderer, but in the likeness of thy dear son, for thou hast ordained thy people to be conformed to the image of thy son; and so I will sing aloud to all eternity of thy righteousness. "They shall lick the dust like a serpent;" that is an Orientalism for self-abusement. Ah, saith such an one, I cannot humble myself low enough, for a more hellish creature never lived than thou hast given me to see that I am. Where, then, is boasting? If there were a little more of such experience as this, our chapels where the truth is preached would be crowded, and the places where the shams of the day are preached would be nearly empty; but, alas! the reverse is the case. "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, and few there be that find it." But again, "They shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth." Ah! the gospel unearths a man. There is a man buried in his business, buried in worldly pleasures, the gospel unearths him; he cannot stop. Why, he says, my gold may go, it cannot redeem my soul; the world may go, it cannot redeem my soul; I cannot stop here any longer. What a poor, crawling wretch I am? "They shall be afraid of the Lord our God, and shall fear because of thee." "They shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth." You that have Bibles with marginal readings will find that that passage is rendered by our translators in the margin, "They shall move out of their holes like creeping things." I was much obliged to our translators for that, for that was just what I was looking for. Now, let us hear the testimony of such who are thus humbled down brought to see what poor creatures they are. They begin to see that all this is that they might be saved; and these creeping things, these poor creatures, become out and out high Calvinists, for they exclaim, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage. He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy." Now, we are happy. Ah! but you will have some darkness by and by. Well, if we have, "he will turn again; he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." Now, then, for your Calvinism. "Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old." Ah! says the Pharisee, I have generally noticed that those poor creatures do become high doctrine people. Yes, they have found out their degradation by nature, and they are very glad to have an exaltation by grace; after being down low so

long, they are glad to get on high, and the higher they can get the better. And neither the tame, nor the wild, nor the creeping, shall hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain. They are all one in Christ Jesus—Jew or Gentile, male or female, civilized or uncivilized, learned or unlearned—let them be what they may in their characters originally, they stand as one in the unity of the faith.

Fourthly, fowls of the air. In the 17th of Ezekiel there is the high cedar, that is the tribe of Judah; and there is the highest branch, that is the royal house of David; and the Lord saith, "I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one;" and I suppose you admit that that tender one is Jesus Christ. 53rd of Isaiah, "He shall grow up before him as a tender plant;" "and I will plant it upon an high mountain and eminent; in the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it; and it shall bring forth boughs." Blessed promises, these leaves will never wither, but are for the healing of the nations, "and be a goodly cedar; and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell." I dare to say some of them thought, I wish it was not so high—rather high doctrine. The poor little tom-tit says, It is rather high. It is all very well for that great eagle, but I should like it rather lower. And the poor little robin says, I don't know how I can get up there. Yes, you must. And the poor little lark says, Well, I like to rise to a moderate height; but when I have risen and sung my song, I like to come down again to the ground. Ah! you must stop up there. Well, but shall I be safe there? Of course you will; why, your defence will be the mountains of rocks; bread shall be given you, and water shall be sure. You need not be afraid. Don't you see Jesus Christ is there, God is there; there you shall be safe, and safe for ever. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain."

Now, here you read in this chapter of the wolf and the lamb, and the various beasts lying down together; and these Scriptures I have brought forward clearly shew that it all has a spiritual meaning. We shall have to continue this subject next Sunday morning. If you go to the 144th Psalm, there you get the tame brought into the doctrine of certainty and safety. Then, if you go to the 22nd Psalm, there you get the wild beasts, and they are brought into the brotherhood of Christ. "I will declare thy name unto my brethren;" "Father, here am I, and all those which thou hast given me." Then if you go to the last chapter of Micah, there you get the creeping things, poor worms of the earth, exalted to be kings and priests to God, bearing testimony of the certainty of his sworn truth. Then in the 17th of Ezekiel you get the high mountain and eminent. Just notice how suited is that centre of unity to which they are all gathered. First to that city, the new Jerusalem, where there is no breaking in and no going out; they are no more to be strangers and foreigners, but citizens of heaven for ever. See, as in 20th Psalm, how they are brought into the indissoluble brotherhood of Christ; see also, as in the 7th of Micah, how they are brought into the sworn promise and sure mercy of God; and, lastly, see how they are brought, as in Ezekiel 17th, into the Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, and they are to be as the mount to which they are brought, and can never be removed: from the sparrow to the eagle, from the least to the greatest, every one feels at home, under the shadow of the tree of life. May the Lord increase our acquaintance with these things, for his name's sake.