

For the convenience of friends in the country, three copies will be sent, post free, on receipt of three stamps, to be forwarded to Mr. E. Butt, 123, Camberwell Road, S.; or friends wishing them sent weekly will please direct as above.

Surrey Tabernacle Pulpit.

RIGHT DOING.

A SERMON

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, 31st MAY, 1868,

BY MR. JAMES WELLS,

AT THE NEW SURREY TABERNACLE, WANSEY STREET.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."—MATTHEW vii. 21.

HERE you will observe the Saviour draws, what the Scriptures very commonly draw, a line of distinction between mere profession and real possession. The doctrine contained in the text is that of doing the will of God; and the first thing to understand is what is the will of God as here expressed. For there is a kind of fourfold revelation in the Bible of the will of God. First, there is the will of God as a Legislator. He gave a law, and man hath sinned; and the sinner under that law certainly cannot do the legislative will of God, for in order to do so man must be as holy as he was when he was created. And therefore it is declared concerning God's legislative will, or the law which is expressive of his legislative will, that "the law is spiritual, and we are carnal, sold under sin." This law the Saviour was capable of meeting, and did meet; he has not made it void or set it aside, but hath established, fulfilled, and magnified it, and he is the end thereof for righteousness. Then, secondly, there was the will of God in relation to the Jews—his old covenant will,—and that will has run out; it has answered its purpose. It remained only to the coming of Christ. That will was a will that was limited by the coming of the Saviour, and that will is passed away. That, therefore, is not the will spoken of in our text. Then, thirdly, there is the will of God's moral government. It is the duty of all men as his creatures to act according to the light which they have. I should have no objection to admit this to be included, of course, in the language of our text. Still, that is not the will, specifically speaking, which is here intended. What, then, is the will? "He that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven," he is the man that shall enter into heaven; that man is a citizen of heaven; that man is born of God; for if he were not born of God he could not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Now the truth of it is this—that God hath willed his people to do what no other people can do; so that if we are doers of that which God hath willed his people to do, we shall thereby prove ourselves to be his people. The will here spoken of is nothing else but his testamentary will in Christ Jesus, which will the dear Saviour

found it to be his meat to do. "It is my meat to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." As God had a special will as to what Christ was to do on our behalf and towards us, so this will is a revelation also of what his people shall do—that they shall do what no other people can do; and thereby they shall do the will of God, and evidence by their doing that they are heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him.

I shall therefore point out this morning *two orders of doings which the people of God do, and which none others can do*; and then there is a *third order of things included in God's will, which others may do, and do do, equal to and sometimes surpassing the people of God.*

First, then, God's will is that all he has given to the Lord Jesus Christ should receive Jesus Christ. Perhaps we can get at this best by just observing that God hath willed that all that he has given to Christ shall come to Christ. Jesus Christ having received them in the counsels of eternity, and at Calvary's cross with all their sins, and put their sins away,—having thus twice received them, it is not likely that he would reject these same persons when by the Holy Spirit they are brought to him; and God has willed that these same people shall receive the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us then see how the people of God have received Jesus Christ. We will therefore take up the subject under a threefold form. First, the reception of Christ. Secondly, the things that accompany that reception. Thirdly, the practice which they are to follow.

First, the reception of Christ. They are to receive the Lord Jesus Christ in what he is; and none others ever did or ever can receive him in what he is as the people of God do. Let us see, then, how this has been done. Abraham received the Lord Jesus Christ as the great Melchisedec; he received him in the eternity of his priesthood. But how came Abraham to do this? Why, he was so enlightened as to see and feel that he was in such a lost and ruined condition that nothing but this coming, antitypical Melchisedec, by the eternal perfection of his priesthood, based upon the love and immutability of the blessed God, could be any use to him. He received Christ, then, in this character. Then, again, Isaac received Jesus Christ in his substitutional character. Isaac was bound hand and foot, and laid upon the altar, and the knife was raised to destroy his life; but the Lord made a provision, and in came a substitute, a sacrifice, by which Isaac was freed, and this sacrifice was offered. Isaac feared that he should be offered, or that he should be destroyed, but he was not. Now when a sinner is convinced of his condition he sees that death awaits him, as it then appeared to await Isaac. He trembles, and feels as though he had no hope. By and by the Scripture brings in the substitution of the Lord Jesus Christ, that our sins were upon him, and therefore are not to be upon us, that the curse was upon him, and therefore not to be upon us; and that the wrath was endured by him, and therefore there is no wrath for us; that he was cut off, but not for himself, but for us. And thus the soul receives the Saviour as Abraham did, and as Isaac did. And had the Jews been acquainted with Abraham's spiritual character, how readily would they have received Jesus Christ when he came into the world; had they been acquainted with the substitution of the Saviour, as was Isaac, how willingly would they have received him! Jacob also received him as the way to heaven. The mystic ladder showed to Jacob that the Lord Jesus Christ was the way, in which God in exceeding great and precious promises came to man, and by which man was brought into friendship with God. Jacob saw that all the promises there of the love and care of God came by that mystic ladder, by the Lord Jesus Christ. They thus received Jesus Christ; and it is God's will, therefore, that his people should receive Jesus Christ in his eternal priesthood and substitution, and should receive him as the way, the truth, and the life.

But let us look at the blessedness into which this reception of Christ brings us. How clear Moses is in Deuteronomy xxxiii. upon this reception of the Saviour! None of us doubt that the whole of that beautiful scripture has a spiritual meaning. "Let Asher"—the word "Asher," as you are aware, signifying happiness or prosperity; and where is happiness but in Christ, and where can be prosperity but by faith in Christ?—"the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands." "Let Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil." "Let him be acceptable to his brethren;" let us take this mystically, and take Asher here ultimately to mean the Lord Jesus Christ, who is to be acceptable to his brethren. Come, then, before I enter into that paragraph, how many in this assembly can lay their hands upon their hearts, and say that they can solemnly and honestly join with the apostle when he saith, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners"? Let Asher be thus accepted, and "let him dip his foot in oil." There are two things meant by dipping his foot in oil. The one is, that Christ's feet were, as it were, anointed to walk with God, that Christ's walk was a walk of consecration to God. "For their sakes I sanctify myself." Jesus Christ walked with God in God's love, in God's choice, in God's will, as to what he, Jesus Christ, was to do. He walked with God in another sense; there is not the least sign or shadow of a difference between our God and the Son of God. "I and my Father are one" was a phrase he frequently used. Dipping his foot in oil, then, means not only that Jesus Christ should thus be anointed, and walk a consecrated walk to God, but the people also should dip, as it were, their feet in this holy oil, and should live a life, should walk a walk of consecration to God. And how do they do that? Why, by receiving the Lord Jesus Christ, his blood cleansing them from all sin. By him the hindrance that was in the way is taken out of the way, and his righteousness justifies from all things, and lifts them up into the light of God's countenance. They thus walk with God by faith. Hence it is the Christian sees how absurd the notion would be to suppose that he can walk with God, have access to God, or communion with God in any way but by the Lord Jesus Christ. Now we will suppose that we are thus brought to walk this walk of faith in God, for we walk by faith, receiving his dear Son, and by him having from time to time access to God; and we shall have an access and a nearness to him in a future world that we are comparatively strangers to while we are in the body, for "absent from the body present with the Lord," and while at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. Let us follow up the consequence of thus receiving Jesus Christ. All that is said throughout that paragraph as surely belongs to such persons as that they exist. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." What a sweet promise is this! It is the Lord that saith this, but he does not say this until after he represents the people as receiving Jesus Christ, and being brought into this consecrated walk with God. Take notice of that, or else you will miss the beauty of it. You see, first Asher is acceptable to his brethren; the people dip their feet in oil, in the sense there intended,—that is, they are brought into a consecrated walk with God; they walk with God by faith; thus they are brought to walk where the promises are; then comes the promise to such,—"As thy days, so shall thy strength be." It is a self-existent God that saith this, it is an almighty God that saith this, it is a God of eternal omnipotence that saith this, it is a God infinite in all his perfections that saith this. Earthly friends may promise to do a great many things for us, but a great many uncertainties intervene between the promise and the performance. Not so with our God. "As thy days so shall thy strength be;" that is, he will give you strength to hold fast his truth; he will give you strength to abide by him as an evidence that he is abiding by you. He himself will not be seen, but the happy effects of his presence

shall be seen. Hence Moses goes on, "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun." The word "Jeshurun" signifies "upright," and so those who receive Christ Jesus receive him in sincerity, in the uprightness of their hearts; they would not give up the Saviour, or any testimony concerning him. Therefore there is none like the God of these upright ones, upright in the faith, "Who rideth upon the heavens in thy help, and in his excellency in the sky." He is above all thine entanglements. If thou art in the wilderness, without a drop of water, he is above that difficulty, and he brings water out of the rock. If thou hast nothing wherewith to sustain life, he is above that difficulty, and will bring the daily manna. And so I might go on to show how, while he himself keeps in his invisibility, we are all present before him, and the objects of his wonderful care. "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." The Lord Jesus Christ is your refuge from the wrath to come, from Satan, from hell. You may go down very low, but still his arms are there. Jonah may go down to the bottom of the sea, but still the everlasting arms are underneath, and will bring him up again. You read of some that go down to the depths, that do business in great waters, but the Lord will bring them up again. "And he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee." There is the adversary at Joshua's right hand, and there the adversary stays until the Lord steps in and treads Satan down under Joshua's feet. "Israel then shall dwell in safety alope; the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine." There is no coming to want there; "the Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." We cannot tell what pinchings we may have in this world before we die, but we shall have no more than the Lord sees good. If the Lord is pleased so to bring me down as to give me only one meal a day instead of three or four—or five, as some people have,—he will make that sufficient for me. And if I have nothing to eat but pulse, and nothing to drink but water—which, of course, would be no privation to me,—the Lord can give a vitality to that that will make me do better upon that than the rich man can upon his luxuries. Bless the Lord, when we get to the end we shall see that we have not had one trouble too many. He is pleased very often to dry up the river Euphrates, the things of this world, to make us prize more the provisions that are in Christ. "Also his heavens," the heavenly truths of the gospel, "shall drop down dew. Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee?"—as there is no god like the God of the people, so there is no people like the people of God,—“O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee,”—or if you prefer the marginal reading there, "thine enemies shall be subdued unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places." So, then, not a sin, not a trouble, not an adversary, no, not death itself, shall be left unsubdued, for Christ must reign until all his enemies are made his footstool. So it is "not every one that saith, Lord, Lord," but at the same time does not receive and appreciate his will, his substitution, this mystic ladder, this way in which God in mercy comes to man, and brings man to himself, that does not appreciate God in his eternity as our refuge. Nine-tenths of our pulpits every Sunday are eternally resounding about creature doings, and the soul that is thirsting for God may thirst long enough for aught their systems can bring, whereas the Bible says concerning the people of God that they shall declare his mighty acts, and shall abundantly utter the memory of his great goodness. Without this reception of Christ our profession is mere sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. Let us hear what the Lord saith in the New Testament. You know what the doctrines and testimonies of the apostles were. Christ saith, "He that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me; and he that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's

reward."! There is a sentiment in our day which I shudder at, and do not feel so able to point out in its malignity and deceptiveness as I could wish; the error is this,—If you love Jesus Christ, say they, never mind about doctrine; if you love God, never mind about doctrine. Now "he that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet." I will place myself among the ancients, and I will say, Noah, I love you, very much respect you; you are a very excellent man, I like you very much indeed; but as for the world being drowned, I never can hold that at all; and as to your having obtained grace and found grace, I do not hold with that at all; and as for your doctrine about an ark to be made, and of certain dimensions, and the irrational creatures to come into it from east, west, north, and south, I do not hold with that at all. I love you; but as for your doctrine, I do not like it. Your practice is better than your principles; I do not hold with your principles at all. But would that man get into the ark? Certainly not. "They could not enter in because of unbelief." Noah must be received by the testimony, by the plan that God had given. Again, Moses, I like you very much indeed; I think you are the meekest, humblest man I ever met with; but as for your doctrine, only look at its absurdity. You tell us that if we take a spotless lamb and slay it on a certain evening, after a certain manner, roast it with fire, and sprinkle the blood on the side posts and on the lintels, that will screen us from death. Now, Moses, we like you very much; but as for your doctrine, we cannot listen to that for a moment. What would be the consequence? Do you not see that by their professing to receive Moses, and yet despising his testimony, they would not have taken the paschal lamb, they would not have sprinkled the blood, consequently they would have been exposed to death, and death would have cut them off. Do you not here see that Christ must be received by his own testimony? Therefore, when men say, We love Christ, but never mind his testimony; why, that is a fatal error. It is that that lulls people to sleep. They well know that if the testimony of Christ were brought in, it would upset their systems, do away with the worldly praise which they obtain; for the truth of Christ ever has been and ever will be offensive to the carnal mind. Then Moses, again, said, "Stand still, and see the salvation of God; for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day ye shall see no more for ever." Well, Moses, we like you very much indeed, but we are not going to listen to that doctrine. Only it so happened that they were obliged to stop where they were: for they could not go backward, because the Egyptians were there; they could not go to the right or the left, because the natural barriers of the land hindered them; and they could not go forward, because of the sea: but they rebelled in the face of it all. Now they could do nothing of themselves. Just so the Lord brings his people to feel that salvation is entirely of himself. Again, the king of Babylon is about to destroy Jerusalem. Well, Jeremiah, we like you very much, but we do not like your doctrine. You say that your God saith there are some that are called good figs that the Lord will send away into the land of the Chaldeans for their good, and you say that the Lord will be a little sanctuary to them there. Now we do not believe it. We like you, you are a very nice man indeed, but we do not like that doctrine. And they would not act upon it, and consequently would not peacefully submit to Nebuchadnezzar; the result was that they, their families, and their property were all destroyed. And what shall I say when I come to the New Testament? Suppose, for instance, Nicodemus had gone away and said, Well, I have had an interview with that Jesus Christ; he is a very courteous, wise, kind-hearted man—the most so that ever lived, and I was very much interested; but his doctrine is so absurd that I could not receive it. What do you think he said? He said, "Except a man be born again." I asked him how that could be; I reasoned with him, but I could not reason him out of it; he still abode

by it; and repeated it, "Except a man be born again." I liked the man very much, but I could not hold his doctrine. Now we will suppose that such a thing could have been; could Nicodemus in that case have been saved? Certainly not. But he received Jesus Christ by Christ's testimony of regeneration. Just so in the 6th of John. Well, we like this Jesus Christ very much. Here were a few loaves and two fishes, and by some mysterious power or another he has so multiplied them that we all did eat, and were sufficed—never enjoyed a meal so much in our lives; and not only so, but there are twelve baskets full left. He is worth following, I can tell you. If he has multiplied the few loaves and fishes in this manner, there is no telling how he may multiply the twelve baskets full. This is the best religion we have ever had; we had better follow him and stick to him. He is something like a friend. We shall not have to work any more; we shall do now. And so they were after him immediately. But the Saviour, in order not to deceive them, began to preach doctrine. You are my followers? Oh yes, we have run after thee; some of us have come right round the head of the sea as hard as we could run. We shall have some more loaves and some more fishes. Well, he says, if you are my disciples, there is something a great way before the loaves and fishes, something very much more important. What is that? Why, "labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." Oh, that is good too; we won't be offended with that; we didn't know there was any meat lasted so long as that; why, we shall never die. But when he came to explain what it was—of course taken spiritually,—"The bread that I will give is my flesh," and "he that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life,"—Oh, as to that doctrine of giving us his flesh to eat and his blood to drink, we cannot receive that, so we will follow him no longer. We shall get to heaven all the same; never mind about doctrine. And so I might go on. Did not the Saviour himself mind about doctrine? Doth he not caution us to beware of the doctrine of the Pharisees, and of false prophets? And doth not the apostle likewise caution us against false doctrines and false apostles, and pronounce an anathema even upon an angel that should bring any other gospel? God hath willed that his people shall receive Christ, and that they shall receive him by his truth. "This is the covenant that I will make with them; I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Jesus Christ is to be received in what he is, and by his truth; you cannot separate the two. "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on his name, which were born, not of blood"—it was not their natural descent,—"nor of the will of the flesh"—not of their own free will. Now, you Wesleyans, look at that. We generally have a little sprinkle of Wesleyans here of a Sunday morning, and we are always glad to see you, and hope your heart is right though your head is not, and that God will give you eyes to see. "Born, not of blood"—bless God for Christian parents; but the children are not therefore necessarily Christians,—"nor of the will of the flesh"—nothing in the creature,—"nor of the will of man, but of God." And how came they to be born of God? Here is the answer: "God, who is rich in mercy, and for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when dead in sin, hath quickened us together with Christ, and raised us up to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." The people of God believe in a way that no other people do. There is no people under heaven believe as they do. They are convinced of the utter ruin and depravity of the creature; that God hath mercy upon whom he will have mercy, and that if God had not come towards them in the exercise of his indisputable sovereignty, and entered into an immutable covenant for their welfare, they could have no hope. This is their belief, for God reveals the immutability of his counsel to the

heirs of promise, because he intends them to know most deeply their need of the same. And the people of God also repent in a way that no other people repent. They repent of everything pertaining to the creature. Hence their repentance is stated to be "unto life," because it lies in changing over from all self-confidence into the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is said to be a repentance "unto salvation," because they receive him as that eternal Saviour, able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him. Their repentance is of God. Christ exalted a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance unto Israel, and that repentance he alone can give. If this be not my faith and my repentance, such faith and repentance as I have are only natural, and will leave me where they found me. But, again, such people pray as no other people pray. They are the only people that can honestly come before God and say, "Remember me with the favour thou bearest unto thy people; visit me with thy salvation." The language of the mere professor would be, I will remember thee; I will visit thee. It is all of the creature. But the destitution of the Lord's people blesses them, I was going to say the knowledge of it, with the spirit of prayer. Such prayer is real—the cry of necessity, the cry of the needy, the crying and sighing of the prisoner. "Remember me with the favour thou bearest unto thy people; O visit me with thy salvation, that I may see the good of thy chosen; that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance." You will generally find that mere professors will pray to be made smooth in the flesh—it is all about the flesh; but where there is real prayer, it will be for the presence of God, the power of God, the spirit of God, the revelation of the blessed God, to enable us not to be better in the flesh, for that is all nonsense, but to enable us to triumph over all, and—

"To sing, as we pass through this valley of tears,
The righteous shall hold on his way."

And the people of God also love as no other people love. They are the only people that love God in his everlasting covenant; they are the only people under heaven that love the Lord Jesus Christ in the true characters which he bears. This is doing the will of the Father. God has willed us to love him. All the blessings of eternal election are to bring about this end. He will bring us to love him in this eternal order of things wherein he has loved us.

We will now come to *the third order of things*. The Saviour saith, "Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?" Yes, what have you prophesied? "And in thy name cast out devils?" No, you have not. "And in thy name done many wonderful works?" or, as most modern Greek scholars like to render those words, "in thy name have done many miracles." We have prophesied. Cardinal Wiseman has shown that one or two Popes prophesied who should be the next Pope; and they prophesied a great many things. "And have we not cast out devils?" You have cast my truth out, and you have cast my prophets and my people out; you have been drunken with the blood of the saints; but you have not cast out devils. You have received devils in. To cast out devils is to cast out lies, whereas you have prophesied lies, have loved and followed lies, and by those lies you have persecuted my people; shed the blood of the saints. You belong to the mystery of iniquity. "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity;" this great mystery of iniquity by which so many of the saints have been put to death, "and in thy name have done many wonderful works." The poor Roman Catholics, many of them, still think that their church has wrought miracles. "Depart from me, I never knew you." Oh, how different is the language of the saints! Did Jacob say, O Lord, I have done many wonderful works? No. "I have waited, O Lord, for thy salvation." Did David say, O Lord, I have prophesied in thy name, and in thy name done many wonder-

ful works? No;—"He hath made with me an everlasting covenant." Did Simeon say, Lord, I am an old man, and I have served thee a long time, and done many wonderful works? Not a word about it;—"I have seen thy salvation." Did Stephen speak of his works—he who had been favoured to preach to the salvation of many? Not a word;—"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." How does the great apostle Paul sum up the whole of his career? "I have kept the faith." Oh, how different the spirit of the friend from that of the enemy!

But again—the cause of God. It is the will of God that his cause should be dear to his people; that they should be his servants in carrying on his cause, in doing that which he by his providence has enabled them to do, and that he by his grace inclines them to do. I include in this their care of the poor, in which as a body I may praise you, as I have done before, and hope I shall ever have cause to do, you have not neglected the poor. You know "the Lord maketh rich, and the Lord maketh poor;" and it is said, "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses burst out with new wine." Now "the Lord maketh rich, and the Lord maketh poor." There are two men; to the one the Lord gives a good capacity for business, from the other he withholds that capacity. He gives to that same person a determination to be industrious; upon the other he does not bestow that quality—not in so powerful a measure. Thirdly, he moves in his providence in a way that shall bring things to that person's hand, and he shall get on well in the world. What for? First, that he may make reasonable provision for his family; and secondly, that he may give very bountifully to the poor of the Lord's people, and to his cause. "The poor shall never cease out of the land." Those that are rich would have been poor if the Lord had not given them capacity and industry. And sometimes, where he has given the capacity and the determination to be industrious, he will step in in a way that shows that even those blessings are no use in themselves unless he move for you. Perhaps Job had begun secretly to say, Well, I am a very clever man, a very industrious man; and other people might do as well if they liked. The Lord stepped in, and swept the whole away. Where is your ability now? Where is your industry now? Ah, I see now that it was all of the Lord. Now, Job, you shall have twice as much as you had before; but you shall not get it by your industry; you will get proud again if you do. And so all the capacity that Job required was the capacity to receive it;—and that is a bad capacity that cannot receive a gift when it does come. Now you see in different ages what good feelings good people have had towards the cause of God. I have read of a man that was in trouble; he had got plenty of money, and he thought he would seek the Lord, and see if he could get rid of this trouble. And so he gave fifty shekels of silver—about six pounds—the last chapter of 2nd Samuel, David gave fifty shekels of silver to buy the threshing-floor of Araunah—about six pounds. Well, David, I am ashamed of you—six pounds! You have got plenty of money; God hath given you abundantly, and you are in trouble; is that all you can give—six pounds? Well, if ever there were men on earth that loved the truth of God and the God of truth, David was one of those men; and David's nobler feelings began to rise, and he began to be uneasy. Well, I have given six pounds—six pounds. There is a sum! God has given me plenty—only six pounds! I am ashamed of it, that I am. And so he reflects, and comes down to Araunah, and says, I am quite ashamed of giving such a trifle as that, considering how bountifully the Lord has dealt with me; so instead of giving six pounds, I shall give six hundred shekels of gold—that is, twelve hundred pounds. Now that was a nice change—from six pounds to twelve hundred. You see what reflection will do, and what grace will do.