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Surrey Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE TRUE BLESSING.

A SERMON.

PREACHED ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, 15TH MAY, 1867,

BY MR. JAMES WELLS,

AT THE NEW SURREY TABERNACLE, WANSEY STREET.

"For thou hast made Him most blessed for ever; thou hast made Him exceeding glad with thy countenance."—Psalm xxi. 6.

OUR text divides itself into two parts. Here is, in the first place, *the blessedness of the Lord Jesus Christ*. He is "most blessed." "Thou hast made him most blessed." Here is, secondly, *the consequence of that blessedness*; "Thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance."

We have, then, in the first place, *the blessedness of the Lord Jesus Christ*. He is, you will observe, in this Psalm represented as a king. It therefore refers to the prosperity of his reign; that he is enthroned, and that he is to reign by a certain plan of things. He is to reign by the counsel of God, and the great end of that reign is to save much people alive; the great end of that reign is to gather up a number that no man can number of lost sinners, and turn them into citizens of Zion, turn them into kings and priests to God. But I will divide this first head of our discourse into two parts; first, the nature of the blessing, and secondly, the degree of the blessing; it stands here in the superlative degree; "Thou hast made him *most* blessed." We will notice, then, first the nature of this blessing, and of this I will take a fivefold view. It appears, indeed, in more than that; but I confine myself to the fivefold form, lest I should confuse both myself and you too. Now, the first part of the blessing is a sufficiency of strength. "The king shall joy in thy strength." You will ever observe that what the Saviour did while on earth he did in the strength and by the authority of the most high God. The power that attended his doctrines was the power of God; the power that attended his miracles was the power of God; the power that attended all he did was the power of God. He did nothing by armies, by earthly might, or by magisterial power. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." Micah gives us a beautiful representation of this, and I will try and work out that representation which he gives—that Jesus Christ did everything in God's strength. Now, though Jesus Christ was God, he was at the same time man, and he came in the name and strength of the Father. Micah seems very highly favoured with a divine revelation of this blessed-

ness. And the blessedness lies here—that if God was his strength, then Jesus Christ himself is our strength; and if Jesus Christ be our strength, then see what a confidence we may have in him as the reigning king; for he must reign till he has put all enemies under his feet. Now Micah says, “He shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.” The word “feed” there, as the margin renders it, means of course “rule.” Let us take it that way; “He shall stand and *rule* in the strength of the Lord; in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.” Let us look at this as it pertains to ourselves. The next clause saith, “Now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.” Now shall they abide; that is to say, sinners are gathered in to the knowledge of the omnipotency and eternity of the strength of Christ; that there is (and the very thought of it does my soul good) an omnipotency and eternity of strength in the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. I hear one and another say, What a wretched, what a sinful, what a miserable creature I am in and of myself. Surely, can there be worse? But mark, as he stands in the strength of the Lord, and as there is in his atonement an omnipotency and eternity of power, “they shall abide.” Why should you go away? Why should you despair? If you were ten times worse than you are, and if you were a thousand times worse than you are, is there anything too hard for him? It is the strength of God, Almighty strength. Now shall they abide, seeing that the eternal power of God is brought in, seeing there is the power of God in Christ’s atonement; seeing there is all the excellency of omnipotency in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. “Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.” Now take that purely and strictly in the gospel sense; not a declaration merely of the omnipotence and eternity of his power, but take that as referring to Jesus Christ, who hath in himself everlasting strength. Here, then, the Lord is our strength; here is the nature of the blessing; so that whatever our necessities or circumstances are, all we want is confidence in the omnipotency of Jesus Christ, in his atonement and righteousness, confidence in the omnipotency and eternity of the power of our God. Now shall they abide. Let us go away when the gospel ceases to be the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; when the gospel ceases to be this, then we may go away; then we may think little of the Bible, and little of Jesus Christ, little of his mercy and of his salvation. But I am well aware, while I thus speak, that we live in a day when among the majority of professors this is all superfluous. They would rather hear a lecture or a sermon upon anything than upon the all-sufficiency of the Lord Jesus Christ. Whereas the convinced, the wounded, the humbled, the empty, the stripped, he feels there is nothing else in the world. These and other things may amuse him, and he may retire and say, “Very interesting, very striking, very pretty, very intelligent, very informing, very intellectual, very elevating.” All this they may do, to feed the vanity of the mind. But if you are a burdened man, made to feel from time to time what a poor, weak, sinful creature you are, and that that weakness arises from the unbelief and hardness, carnality and sin you have within you, then I know what you will do; you will prize precious faith, that believes in Jesus Christ; and that confidence in his atonement and his righteousness gives you strength of hope, gives you strength to come before God, gives you strength of prayer, strength of decision, strength of resolution. Now shall they abide. And then it goes on to where I must not follow; it would occupy too much of my time. “For now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth;” to them that are driven to the end of all earthly confidences, he shall be great. This then is the nature of the blessing. Now take away this strength of Christ’s mediation, take away this strength of the blessed God, take away this omnipotency and eternity of power—why, it would have been better for us if we had never been born.

And I make no hesitation in saying that there is not a man under the heavens that professes that religion, who, if he knew his own heart, would be able to be a Wesleyan five minutes longer; and there is not a man under the heavens that, if he knew what it was for the wrath of God to press hard upon him, if he knew what it was for the arrows of the Almighty to stick fast in him, if he knew what it was to be shut up in his own guilt, and to be made for a little time a *Magor-Missabib*, a terror to himself, and as unable to get out as *Jonah* was unable to get out of the whale's belly;—why, that man would not have a vestige of duty, faith, or of fleshly pretension about him half an hour. For if I am to be saved by believing as a duty, then my salvation is as much of myself as though I were to be saved by works. If a man comes and says, "Now, you are to be saved by works;" well, of course, I know that to be false. Another comes and says, "No, you are not to be saved by works, but it is your duty to receive Christ, and to fall flat on Christ, and to take Christ, and if you do that you will be saved." But to the man that knows his own weakness and his own state, the one is just as impossible as the other. In fact, though the language of the two seems very different, they are in reality one. One is to be saved by an effort of works, the other is to be saved by an effort of believing. They differ a little in form, but they are both of the same spirit. What then is there to lead us to rejoice in God's strength all the time we have some of our own? But when brought where *Saul of Tarsus* was, as described in the 7th of *Romans*, then we see all the blessedness lies here,—that "all power belongeth unto God," that there is, as I have said, an omnipotency and an eternity of strength in Christ. So saith the apostle, "Therefore will I glory in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Now, this is one part of the blessing, "Thou hast made him most blessed." And if I say no more, even this is worth assembling to look at—the all-sufficiency of the Lord Jesus Christ. How is it with us? I know how it is with you that are taught of God. There is nothing superfluous in this; there is nothing redundant in this; there is nothing in this more than you will feel your need of.

The next part of the blessing is that of salvation. "The king shall joy in Thy strength;" that is to say, this kingdom shall stand in the eternal power of God, as witnesseth the apostle, "That your faith should stand, not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." "The King shall joy in thy strength, O Lord; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!" And if the Saviour had not greatly, if he had not, shall I say, infinitely rejoiced in God's salvation, he never could have achieved it. See what he had to suffer; see what he had to go through, in order to accomplish salvation. But, then, He so delighted in it. "How greatly shall he rejoice in thy salvation!" Oh, he delighted infinitely to magnify God's law; he delighted infinitely to accomplish his own omnipotent power, eternal salvation. "How greatly shall he rejoice!" If he had not so greatly rejoiced, he could not have accomplished it; he would not have abode by us. But he did infallibly delight therein. "I delight to do thy will." Christ and his people are, in the counsels, the love, and the mercy of the Lord, put together. And shall we not pray also, with *David*, that the Lord would restore to us from time to time the joy of His salvation? How often have we to say with *David*, and it is a beautiful prayer, "I am poor and sorrowful; let Thy salvation, O God, set me up on high." What a sweet thought it is. If you are in prison, cast down, and feel as though your hope and strength were perished from the Lord, you are to pray that His salvation may lift you up. You are not to be lifted up by redoubling your diligence, by manufacturing some holiness and some righteousness of your own, and by making a number of promises and resolutions before the Lord. No: "Let Thy salvation, O God, set me up on high." How beautifully *David* and the *Apostle Paul*

accord with each other. "He hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Ah, doth the adversary ever say, What is the good of reading the Bible? Do you say, There is nothing there to lift you up? Don't say that; it is God's salvation that shall lift you up. What is the good of such a poor, cast down creature as I am going to hear the Word? There is nothing to bring me up. Don't say that, for it is written, "By the blood of Thy covenant have I sent for thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." This is another part of the blessing. Jesus Christ rejoiced in accomplishing this salvation, and His people shall rejoice in this accomplished salvation, in receiving this salvation, and in knowing that this salvation which hath saved them shall hold them fast all their journey through, and cause them to have an abundant entrance into the kingdom at the last. Is not this strength a blessing? Is not this salvation a blessing? And is it not a great privilege that we are favoured to pray in such a spirit? As the Lord liveth, on the one hand there are thousands of prayers for things that he has never promised; but if you pray the prayers there recorded, then you pray for what is promised. "Let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high." It did so with Simeon. He saw the nothingness of everything else in comparison of what this salvation could bring him to, and therefore said, "Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Come, then, here is strength, and here is salvation.

The third part or feature of this blessing is that of prevenient blessing. "Thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness." The word "preventest" there does not apply nicely or clearly express the original. The idea intended is this—that everything is arranged beforehand; that the Lord foresaw what would take place here, what would take place there; what would take place to-day, what would take place to-morrow; and he made all his arrangements accordingly. So that the Lord has always been beforehand; and though he has brought in, in most instances, the blessing afterwards, yet the *afterwards* has always shown a preconcerted arrangement. And therefore by these prevenient blessings, these blessings beforehand, everything being settled, it takes the enemy aback, as it were; it takes the adversary by surprise. Hence it is, that when the adversary thinks he is gaining great ground, and enjoying almost uninterrupted success, and the people of God shall be cast down, and exclaim with one of old, "All these things are against me;" by and by the Lord steps in, in a way that shows that he had beforehand thought of it all, arranged it all, and settled it all. Hence how astonishing it was, after all the ecclesiastical, political, military, I may say regal, Satanic, and every other power that could be brought against Jesus Christ; they succeeded; and what did they do? Why, they did that subserviently that his counsel had determined to be done. So that after all, by this prearrangement, Jesus Christ lived just according to the Scriptures, as it was written of him; and he died according to the Scriptures; and after that there was no more that they could do, for he rose again according to the Scriptures. And so with us, friends; it is a good thing to look to this, that the Lord is beforehand with everything. He had prepared the fish to receive Jonah before Jonah knew it. And Jesus Christ was in the fiery furnace before the three worthies were there. He was there to receive them. The fire meant to receive them; but the Saviour had a better and a more righteous claim upon them than the fire; he would not let the fire receive them; he received them himself. And he was in the lions' den before Daniel was there, and he received him. And the Lord himself was in the ark before Noah went in, and so said, "Come thou, and all thine, into the ark." Therefore whatever trouble or affliction may fall to your lot, the Lord is there. You may be going

through the fire, and through the water, but you will come out at last into a wealthy place. I know it is very difficult to believe some of these things, but they are nevertheless very encouraging. It seems difficult to reconcile some things, but there stands the testimony, we must not set it aside,—“He led them forth by a right way, that they might come to a city of habitation.” Here are then the prevenient blessings:—“He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, even before the world was.” When the Israelites came out into the wilderness, if they had believed in this truth—that the Lord had beforehand made every provision—they would not have rebelled as they did. Why, they said, we do not see any water. Well, but is that a proof that there is none? We do not see how we are to live; there is nothing to sustain us. This Moses has brought us out here to kill us. No, it is the Lord that has brought you out, and you should be quiet and trust in him; because your not seeing how you are to get along is no proof that you will not get along—no. The right-minded Israelite could say, Well, the Lord has brought me out by his great power; I cannot see how I shall be sustained; I cannot see where sustenance is to come from in this wilderness, but he says that he will sustain us; he has undertaken to bring us into the promised land; it is for us, then, the Lord enabling us, to believe in his word. He is beforehand. So by and by it rises up to view; and the right-minded Israelite could say, Well, I am right you see; the Lord by the water from the rock, by the daily manna, says, “I am with thee; I will not fail thee, I will not leave thee nor forsake thee.” So then by Jesus Christ we have a sufficiency of strength; by Jesus Christ we have salvation; by Jesus Christ we have every blessing we can need.

“Thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head.” Now first the promised blessings are spoken of, and then the crown of pure gold. What can be the meaning of that? It strikes me there must be some reason why these promised blessings are followed up by this golden crown. Well, if I do not mistake or misunderstand it, the reason is this. Adam lost the blessings that were entrusted to him, and the Jewish nation lost the blessings which were entrusted to it. But Jesus Christ never lost one of the blessings which were entrusted to him. “This is the will of him that sent me, that of all he hath given me I should lose nothing.” He never made a false step, and never therefore invalidated one promise. He never lost a single blessing. And to denote that he successfully wrought the victory, confirmed the promises, swallowed up death in victory, ended sin, annihilated the curse, subdued the foe, brought life and immortality to light, therefore, being crowned with success, he thus stands represented as having a crown of pure gold upon his head. There are three reasons, then, why he is thus represented as crowned. First, because he succeeded in not losing a blessing; secondly, a golden crown, to denote the value and preciousness of those blessings; and third, pure gold, to denote the purity of the blessings; and so they are—they are all of them incorruptible blessings. Then we have to notice presently how all these blessings have in them eternity. “Thou hast made him most blessed.” And as he is most blessed, so his people are blessed with all spiritual blessings in him; therefore you find the elders, representing the whole church of God, with crowns of gold upon their heads. Well, here is sufficiency of strength, and that sufficiency of strength must have a great tendency to make life happy. One thing that makes our natural lives uncomfortable is the weakness we feel sometimes, and insufficiency for many of the burdens and labours of life. This sufficiency of strength, then, must have a tendency to make life happy. Then salvation, that is to say, safety, must have a tendency to make life happy. And then the certainty of the blessings, so that you cannot lose them—not one shall be lost,—that must have a tendency to make life happy. And then the blessings indicated by the crown of pure gold upon his head must also have a tendency to make

life happy. Now then, saith the Saviour, having enough to make life happy, I should like this life to last for ever. And so, "He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for evermore." So then, however many drawbacks and thorns we have in our mortal life, in him we have strength, safety, blessings, dignity, and honour to make life happy. "He shall prolong his days, he shall see his seed, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand."

But let us look hastily at the superlative character of this. "Thou hast made him *most* blessed." This is very easily understood: In the first place, there is no strength like the strength of God. That does indeed stand in the superlative. If we read the 11th of Hebrews, and look into the "Book of Martyrs," a book well worth reading, what developments we have there of the strength of the blessed God—that there is no strength like his strength. We sometimes say, Oh dear, what shall I do when I come to die? Well, friends, the word of the Lord answers that. "When our heart and our flesh shall fail, he will be the strength of our hearts and our portion for ever." One of old included the same thing when he said, "I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." So, then, what other strength can reach on without diminution to eternity? What other safety can reach on without diminution to eternity? What other blessing can reach on to eternity? And what crown of life or glory is there elsewhere that can reach on to eternity? Jesus Christ may well, therefore, be said to be *most* blessed. And always remember, friends, that nothing can carry us savingly into eternity but that which is itself eternal.

But I notice now my last part—the *consequence of that blessedness*. "Thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance." It is perfectly wonderful what a book the Bible is; how very much it says in few words. Here is Jesus Christ travelling in the greatness of God's strength; here is God approving of him in that; here he is accomplishing salvation, God approves him there; here he is holding fast every blessing, God approves him there; and here he is obtaining glory, God approves him there. There are four things intended by the light of God's countenance. First, it means his approbation. Oh, that scripture is worth more than all the world;—"Approved in Christ." What a delusion to suppose we can be approved anywhere else. And is there anything more clear in the word of God than this, that Jesus Christ was infinitely and eternally approved by the blessed God? So, if we have his approbation, it must be by that that is like God. Christ is God; he is the image of God, and if we would have God's approbation, it must be by receiving Jesus Christ, for without receiving him it is impossible to please God. There it is, then, that we have his countenance, his approbation. And this the Saviour much delighted in. "I do always things that please him." He is the only person since the fall of man that could ever use such words as these. Second, God's countenance signifies also his presence. And the Saviour dwelt much upon this. "Ye shall leave me alone; yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me." He was conscious of this in all he said and in all he did. And how instructive are those words in the 10th of John, when he speaks of the safety of the people. Now some of you that do not perhaps yet know enough of your own hearts, nor enough of your condition, to make you know your need of the eternity of God's truth, by and by you will see a glory in the Father being with the Saviour in what he saith in the 10th of John that you do not see now. When, there speaking of the impossibility of his sheep perishing, he saith, "I and my Father are one;" that is, I have my Father's approbation and presence in this matter; that no man can any more pluck them out of my hands than out of my Father's hands; my Father is with me. So by Jesus Christ he is with us. What a nice thought is that, that he is with us! If you have cross providences and losses, he is with you in that. It may sound perhaps rather strange but so it, that he was as much with Job when

the destruction of Job's property was going on as he was with him afterwards, when Job had twice as much as he had before. He was as much with Job when Satan was smiting him with sore boils as he was with him in healing him. We are apt to think the Lord is with us when we are comfortable, and everything goes as we could wish; but he is with us also in affliction; we may not see it, but so it is. Then, thirdly, God's countenance means his help. The Saviour saith, in prediction, in 50th of Isaiah, "The Lord God will help me." And so the Lord is our help, and we need his help. You may depend upon it he will so deal with you spiritually, that you will say, "Without his help I can do nothing," and he will so deal with you providentially as to make you seek his help, and your rejoicing will be that your help cometh from the Lord, that made heaven and earth. Then, lastly, it will imply final acceptance with God. And this is a subject on which I love to dwell. I do love the Lord; my soul cleaves to the Lord more and more. I do adore his blessed name more and more for this blessed book, the Bible. I can look into it, there I can find a new covenant that delivers me from the old covenant; there I can find a gospel that delivers me from the law; there I can find a salvation that delivers me from all evil; there I can find promises that are yea and amen. And I am not dependent upon men. No, if I go to hear nine-tenths of the ministers of the present day, they talk of duty, duty, duty, till I am disgusted and sick of the whole of it. I do believe we live in a day when there is little else, comparatively, but delusion going on. Instead of preaching sinners down into a knowledge of themselves, the general systems of the day confirm them in their notion that it is their duty to be saved, and that it lies with themselves. Ministers come and tell them so, and what is this but doing the devil's work? as contrary to God's truth as light to darkness. No, my hearer, the work of God is to cut the sinner up, as Jeremiah hath it, to root him up, to pull down and to destroy, and then to move the man from his original position, to build and to plant. Now, "thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance," will mean, I say, final acceptance. I turn to the 37th of Ezekiel, and I find these words,—“Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions; but I will save them out of all their dwelling places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them; so shall they be my people, and I will be their God.” Now of all the faults and failings there spoken of I feel myself to be the subject. Well, then, saith one, do you reckon yourself a Christian, and yet confess you are the subject in your heart of these evils? Yes. Then how do you get over it? Well, I manage it in this way, and say to myself, Was Jesus Christ ever defiled by an idol? No. Was he ever defiled by a transgression? No. Was he ever defiled by any detestable thing? No. Was there any place in which he ever dwelt in which he sinned? No. We have sinned in all our dwelling-places, he did not sin in one dwelling-place. Did the leprosy ever touch him? No. Well, say you, what of all this? Just what he is that I, by faith, am to be. Sin is mixed with all I do; I feel what a poor infirm creature I am; but sin was not mixed with anything he ever did, and therefore precious faith lays hold of him; there I am free. So that by the substitution of the Saviour there is the final acceptance. He is accepted never to be rejected, and his people are accepted in him. Well, I have been in the ministry now forty years, and would you believe it that during all that time I have never once preached a good sermon upon faith? I generally mix up some sort of legality, or something of the sort with it. Why, if I were to preach a real sermon upon faith, I should offend the pious folks almost as much as my sermon upon Rahab did. I happen to be a very great believer in faith myself. I believe faith is everything. I believe whatsoever is not of faith is sin. "Without faith it is impossible to please God," and if I have true faith it is impossible to

be offensive to God. Faith, then, brings in the great remedy,—the substitutional perfection of the dear Saviour. And, to use our old familiar phrase, it is one of the features of faith, bringing in Jesus Christ as our representative, that looking at all the difficulties that lie in the way, it can indeed “laugh at impossibilities, and say, ‘It shall be done,’” because virtually it is done.

Thus, “Thou hast made him exceeding glad,” with thine approbation, thy presence, thine help, and we have final acceptance. And thus, while the Saviour is a lamb *to* his people, he is a lion *for* them, and both in his reconciliation and exaltation how beautifully does he fulfil the fourth verse of 31st of Isaiah,—“Like as the lion and the young lion roaring on his prey, when a multitude of shepherds is called forth against him, he will not be afraid of their voice, nor abase himself for the noise of them: so shall the Lord of hosts come down to fight for mount Zion, and for the hill thereof.” In his humiliation nothing could damp him; he sets his face like a flint. What multitudes of mighty enemies were called forth against him! But he feared them not, nor abased himself one jot, so that he neither failed nor could even be discouraged, but was immoveable. He abode without exception by the new, the true mount Zion, and reached in safety the hill of eternal glory. He knew that all things were given into his hands; that he came from God and went to God. All the territories of the enemy were given into his hands, and he conquered the whole. A wondrous work was given into his hands, and he finished the same; the sheep were given into his hands, and not one can be lost (Judas never was a sheep). The joy he now possesses was set before him; a joy surpassing all other joys. The same joy into which he will bring all his servants. Joy unspeakable, and will last for ever. If, then, we are spiritually minded, here is everything to encourage us, and to make us remain in Zion; which the Lord loves; which he hath chosen, and where he dwells, and where there is the blessing, even life for evermore. Here are the highest, the greatest, and most lasting blessings that eternity itself contains, and all summed up in the gift by his dear Son, in whom all the people are complete and most blessed, and a covenant keeping God most glorified for evermore.