

Surrey Tabernacle Pulpit.

A SOLEMN TESTIMONY.

A SERMON

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, 1st AUGUST, 1869,

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AT THE NEW SURREY TABERNACLE, WANSLEY STREET.

“Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.”—Rom. xi. 22.

It appears that there were some already among these Roman Christians that had begun to assign false reasons for the rejection of the Jews, and for the reception of the Gentiles; and so, after having professed to begin in the spirit, they got so far wrong as to begin to boast that they were something better than the Jews, and that on that ground the Lord rejected the Jews and received the Gentiles. The apostle therefore would encounter and did encounter these delusions, and gave them to understand that the branch bare not the root, but the root the branch; therefore they were not to boast, but to remember that they stood by faith; therefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he also fall. The apostle thus very naturally suspected the reality of the religion of some of them; and that made him speak in this solemn way, after informing them of the reason why the Jews were broken off, they were broken off because of their disbelief of God's truth;—they cut off God's truth, and they cut off God's Son, and they cut off, as far as they could, God's servants and his saints; and acting under this disbelief of God's truth, they nevertheless still called God their Father, and still thought that God was their God; but they having cut off his truth, and remaining in that state, he cut them off. And the apostle saw among the Romans some steps taken by some that would, if they went on, bring them to the same end—namely, to get rid of God's truth and of vital godliness, and substitute something of poor mortal man into the place of the settlements, provisions, and testimonies of the immortal and the ever blessed God. He addresses them, then, in this solemn language, and a solemn text it is every way; the Lord enable me to enter this morning into its several departments in that way that shall be profitable to our souls.

We may, then, notice the text under a threefold form. Here is, first, *the goodness of God*. Here is, secondly, *the severity of God*. Here is, thirdly, *the discriminating promise of God*,—“towards thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness.”

Here is, then, first, *the goodness of God*. The first thing we have here to notice is, what is that aspect of the Lord's goodness here intended? You see the text is emphatic,—“Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God.” Look into the matter and pray that you may under-

stand it; for it will create, on the one hand, a sweet hope, on the other hand a very reasonable and a very profitable feeling in your minds, that you may not trifle with these eternal things. Now the chief aspect of the goodness of God as here intended is that of the ingathering of the Gentiles; in other words, the ingathering of souls to a saving knowledge of the blessed God. That is the aspect in which the goodness of God here appears. It will be for me, therefore, to trace out what this ingathering is, which I will do as carefully as I possibly can. First, then, it is an ingathering to knowledge. It is to make a sinner acquainted with what and where he is as a sinner according to God's holy law,—that we are, according to that law, under that double and terrible declaration; for all the testimonies of God's judgments that are recorded in the Bible are the voice of the law, and will all meet at last in the soul and upon the head of the lost; for as all our sins, and all the penalties due thereto, met upon Christ, so those that are lost, all their sins and all the penalties of God's law, when in hell, will meet in their souls and upon their heads. Hence that dreadful 59th verse of the 28th of Deuteronomy, where the Lord saith, and that is the voice of the law, "Then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance." Now when a sinner's attention is by the power of God called to this, he sees that he is in an evil case; he saith to himself,—Death will certainly come; but death is no more certain than the judgment that shall follow after. Now this knowledge of our condition, and of the fiery indignation to which we stand exposed will make it impossible, where this knowledge is possessed by the regenerating power of God, for such to rest unconcerned any longer about their eternal welfare. But where there is not this conviction, such will rest contented with something short of God's truth. It was so with the Jews,—that is, those of them that were not thus stopped; they rested contented with their own ceremonies and doings. Hence the apostle saith, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved;" but they cannot be saved in the way in which they are now seeking to be saved. "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." And we all that know the Lord, understand the righteousness of God there to mean the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the apostle saith that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness. Ah! what a wonderful testimony is that in the estimation of the sinner that knows himself. This conviction of our state, what a sacred and essential thing it is. Some people think there is not much to do to bring a sinner under a conviction of what he is. Ah! my hearer, stop; study just for a moment, and see what there is in the man, and then see if anything but almighty power can bring the man truly to his senses, and make him see the infinite and eternal blessedness of Christ's being the end of God's fiery and terrible law for righteousness. Here is the sinner, his heart, spiritually, figuratively speaking, is as unfeeling towards God and his truth as an adamant stone. The natural man, you may rouse up his natural feelings, but he still remains unfeeling towards his own soul and towards God, especially towards God's truth containing the remedy, because the man does not know his need. Therefore, unless God by his almighty power take away this heart of stone, and give a heart of flesh, there is no abiding feeling after God. And in addition to this state of the man, he is also dead in trespasses and in sins;—not only must the stony heart be taken away, but there is a death which we died in the first Adam in the soul,—dead in trespasses and in sins; and none but the Almighty spirit of God can so bring the word of life into that soul as to destroy that death, and implant in the soul when quickened, supplication and of faith, and indeed all those elements that shall demonstrate ere long what the man is. But in addition to this

hard heart, in addition to this death, there is something else; there is Satan. What an awful scripture that is,—“The strong man keepeth the palace, and the goods are in peace;” those of you that can hear the word from time to time, remain unconcerned, that do not know your lost condition, have never seen anything of the judgments of God so as to tremble at their prospect, it is because the great deceiver has possession of the soul; he keepeth the palace, and the goods are in peace. Who but Almighty God can cast the enemy out, and free the soul from this impenitent heart, from this direful death, from the great deceiver of immortal souls? God alone can do this. As we have recently said, when John the Baptist said, “God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham,” it shows that the true conversion of a soul to God is as great a miracle of Divine power as it would be to turn a stone of the field into a living creature. Now, when a sinner is thus awakened he begins to see the fearful judgments of God to which he stands exposed, and knows well that there is no way of escape by anything he can do. The flaming sword at Eden turned every way; go which way you may, there is no way of access to the tree of life. But when Jesus comes in, and meets that sword, then there is an end of the sword, and Christ himself becomes the way. Now Christ is the end of the law for righteousness. Once more let me remind you that the word “law” means not merely the ten commandments, but it means all the threatenings of the Bible. You very often find in the New Testament quotations made from what the apostle calls the law, and those quotations he makes are not contained in the ten commandments. “Cursed is he that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law.” Those words are not found in the ten commandments;—and “He that offendeth in one point is guilty of the whole.” In order to understand, therefore, what is meant by the law, we must take all the threatenings of the Bible, all declarative of the wrath of God revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Now Christ is the end of all this; so that by his obedient life and atoning death there is not a threatening left. He hath blotted out this handwriting that stood against us, that was contrary to us, and has taken it out of the way, nailing it to his cross. Now what I am aiming at is to show that the Lord Jesus Christ, having obeyed God’s law, and brought in everlasting righteousness; having borne our sins in his own body on the tree, having finished transgression, and made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness,—that the Lord Jesus Christ in this matter is of infinite value;—he is the end of the law for righteousness—hence the many scriptures on the side of those who are brought to receive and believe in him,—to every one that believeth. Can anything be more suited? Now this is the way that a sinner is gathered savingly into the garner; this is the way in which a sinner is gathered savingly to God. Hence the Saviour himself saith, “Every one that has heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me.” Behold, then, the goodness of God, in convincing you, while you are in the land of the living; of what and where you are as a sinner; behold the goodness of God in revealing Jesus Christ to you, in giving you to understand that he that believeth in him shall not be condemned; that he that believeth in him as the end of the law for righteousness shall not come into condemnation, that he that believeth in him and that receiveth him hath everlasting life, and Christ will raise him up at the last day. Here, then, while there is something simple about this matter, there is something of infinite importance. Why, friends, do you think the apostle Peter hath no meaning when he saith, “Unto you, therefore, which believe he is precious.” But how can that be precious you never saw and felt your need of, and do not see the use of? But if you see the infinite necessity, adaptability, and use of this mediatorial work of Christ, how gladly will you believe in it. It is one of

the sweetest things under the heavens to be enabled by the Holy Ghost to receive Jesus Christ thus as the end of the law for righteousness. Hence the apostle saith, "The Lord fill you with all joy and peace in believing." And one of the features, as you are aware, of the Spirit of Christ was that of earnestness. Oh, what a high value he himself put upon his own mission. He knew he came into this world for an object of infinite and of endless importance, and therefore was correspondingly earnest with God, earnest with men, earnest in his work, and he remains the same. And I am sure, friends, if our hope be a true hope, it hath in it an earnest expectation. "The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." This is one step, then, towards being ingathered,—to know our need of Christ, and to receive him as the end of the law for righteousness. Always remember it has been the aim of the adversary in all ages to make as little as possible of the mediation of Christ. Hence the thousands of paltry and fanciful mediators that have been set up, or things that have been set up as mediators between God and man; and I cannot find language to describe how infinitely offensive it must be in the sight of God to set up anything as the way to him but Christ; to set up any righteousness as the way of justification but the righteousness of Christ; to set up anything as the price of the redemption of the soul but the atonement of Christ is strong delusion with a vengeance. "No man can redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him, that he should still live for ever, and not see corruption." The redemption of the soul is precious, and therefore can be obtained only by the precious blood of Christ. Ah, "ye are not redeemed," as men would tell you, "with corruptible things, as silver and gold; or something done by the creature, "but with the precious blood of Christ." Now those of us that are gathered in thus far, do we not here see the goodness of God? We see what he is doing to the Egyptians,—leaving them to go on in their own way, and destruction must be the end; and that he hath been pleased to bear us as on eagles' wings and bring us to himself.

The second step in this ingathering, or rather the second representation, is very expressive. There is no ceremony about it. The Lord saith that he will finish the work, and cut it short; "for a short work will the Lord make upon the earth." I will now remind you of the words which will explain the meaning of the Lord finishing the work, and cutting it short, and making a short work upon the earth. The explanation is given in the previous chapter, in these beautiful words!—It runneth, saith the apostle, on this wise, the word of faith, that "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus;"—ah, it does not take long to do that,—and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. The apostle here presents the resurrection of Christ, leaving out for the present the antecedents of that resurrection, and the subsequentials of that resurrection, which every one taught of God will be constrained sooner or later, for the enlargement of his acquaintance with God, to trace out. Now, "If thou shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead." Let us pause here for a moment, and almost recognise, I was going to say, the visible presence of God;—if the Lord were to come and ask this assembly this morning, not that he needs to ask, because he knows,—How many of you do with all your hearts and souls, without any drawback, without any mere pretension, believe in his resurrection as having in it your eternal all; for if Christ be not risen, your faith is vain, you are yet in your sins; and that you do with all your heart and soul believe that he was not only brought again from the dead, but that he was brought again from the dead by the blood of the everlasting covenant, that he was brought again from the dead as the resurrection of others; that you do with all your soul believe that Scripture in the 26th of Isaiah,—"Thy dead men shall live,

together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." Now this is the short work. Look on the day of Pentecost; one five minutes all are dead in sins; the next five minutes they are quickened, brought to receive Christ, and to feel sure of his resurrection, for the apostles with great power bore testimony of his resurrection, and great grace was upon them all. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus,"—not ashamed to own him,—“and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead,” because his work was finished, and raised him from the dead as the resurrection of others,—there stands God's truth, “thou shalt be saved.” I trust we have got thus far most of us. “Thou shalt be saved.” This is the short work. Ah, whenever the Lord does anything great for us, he is not long about it,—I mean in a way of deliverance; one word,—“Loose him and let him go.” Just a sentence,—“Thy faith hath made thee whole.” Just a few words,—“Son, thy sins are forgiven thee.” Just a little, a very little speaking,—“Her sins, which are many, are all forgiven.” “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Now if we are gathered in aright, that is, if we are gathered in to God savingly; it will be thus by the knowledge of ourselves, and by the knowledge of Christ, of his righteousness, and of his resurrection. And then mark, it goes on,—“For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth in him shall not be ashamed.” There is nothing to be ashamed of,—

“Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
While through thy blood absolved I am
From sin's tremendous curse and shame”

If we are rightly gathered in we shall know something of the gatherer;—Jesus alone could thus be the way of our being gathered in. I feel more and more the importance of this matter, that we should review, review, and review again our own experience, the way in which we have come and whereabouts we are, for it is a very profitable employment for our spirits thus to make diligent search, and to test ourselves from time to time whether we be in the faith; and when we are favoured by the power of God to come to the conclusion we are in the faith, ah, then, none so happy as we, so blest as we, so delighted as we. Godliness,—why, everything else is a toy when set by the side of the wonders we have by the eternal salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are not only gathered in thus to a knowledge of ourselves, and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus to be free from shame, but we are also gathered in to the spirit of prayer. “There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek,”—that is, between Jew and Gentile; “for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him,”—that is, rich in grace, that where sin hath abounded grace hath much more abounded,—“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Thus you see they are brought into the knowledge of the truth, brought into the belief of it, brought somewhat into the freedom of it, and brought into the spirit of prayer. Oh, it is a good thing to be brought into the spirit of prayer. One of old said, “I will call upon the Lord as long as I live;” and I know what one of my prayers is,—not only that I may have grace to call upon the Lord as long as I live, but I have another prayer in connection with that, and that is, that the Lord will in mercy call upon me as long as I live: for when he does not call to see me, when he does not come to me, and when he does not speak to me and comfort me, nothing can be a substitute; “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon the earth that I desire besides thee.” Behold, therefore, the goodness of God in thus shewing us the way of

escape from the tremendous wrath to come, and for bringing us into the way of eternal glory.

But mark, in the next place, the freeness of the Lord's goodness in this matter. The apostle saith, quoting the words of Isaiah, "I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me." See here, then, the freeness. "God, who is rich in mercy, and for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when dead in trespasses and in sins." "But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." Now there are those who tell us that that means that the Lord is stretching forth his hands to save sinners, and that those sinners that might be saved will not come. That is their interpretation. I am not convinced that such a doctrine as that is contained in the Bible. Well, but, say you, there are the words. Certainly, there are the words. I will take both the verses, and then give what I believe to be the meaning, leaving you to judge in such momentous matters for yourselves. "I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me." Now, every sinner called by grace acknowledges that he was called, if not in the same form, by the same kind of grace as was Saul of Tarsus. That is the language of the new covenant. But the old covenant saith, "All the day long I have stretched forth my hands" to Israel to conform to this covenant, to cast their idols away, and to keep with me, who exempted them in Egypt, by the paschal lamb, from death, brought them out of Egypt, led them through the wilderness to the promised land;—all day long have I stretched forth my hands, but they would none of my counsel, they despised all my reproof. And that covenant had in it no "I will and they shall;" oh, no; the old covenant could only entreat, but the new covenant is, "I will and they shall." As I said last Lord's Day morning, as to a sinner having any hand in his own salvation, God saves the man in spite of himself. "I will and they shall." "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." Those two verses, therefore, which close the 10th chapter of this Epistle represent the two covenants; the one safe with its objects, the other losing its objects; it was a covenant that was only temporal, and there is not one "I will and they shall" in it. But in the new covenant everything is settled, as David saith, and sure. And I am not speaking a fable or a light and fanciful matter, when I say that my experience tells me that if matters did not stand in this positive form, I could not preach any more, I could not pray any more, I could not look to God any more, I should have no more hope than as though I were in hell. If there is one thing more than another makes itself plain to me by experience, it is this, that if I get to heaven, it must be by the grace of God and that alone. Therefore, if I perish, I shall perish in a full belief that all that are saved are saved by grace, whether I am among them or not. My experience tells me that. Now, here is the ingathering, here is the freeness of the grace by which we are ingathered. If there are any here this morning not accustomed to hear eternal election spoken of, try and attend to me very soberly just a few minutes, while I have a word upon it in answering this question,—Hath eternal election any hand or anything to do with sinners being thus gathered in to God? When the Jews were cast away, some said, Well, God hath cast away his people, then. No, saith the apostle, God hath not cast away his people; and then mark these words—they are not the words of an uninspired man, they are the words of God;—he saith, "God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew." Let us follow this up;—which he took notice of in a way of mercy and blessing before the world began. "Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.

But what saith the answer of God unto him: I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal." And what does the apostle infer from this? He traces up that distinction, that preservation to electing grace. "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if it is of grace, then is it no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace, otherwise work is no more work." The meaning of the apostle there is that our eternal election of God cannot be at one and the same time conditional and unconditional; it must be either absolute or conditional; it is impossible in the nature of things to make a thing absolute and to make it at the same time conditional. Well, then, if it is of grace it is absolute. So if you are thus brought to know the Lord, you must trace up what the Lord has done for you to his own good pleasure. When did this choice take place? Why, before the world was;—so we could not have had any hand in it. And what did the Lord do when he chose the people? Why, he blessed them with all spiritual blessings. They will never need a blessing which he did not there and then provide for them. And where did he lodge those blessings? In heavenly places; and therefore whatever may take place on earth,—kingdoms and empires may rise and fall, but no earthly revolutions or events can touch the blessings that are in heavenly places. Where were they concentrated? In Christ Jesus, head over all. And what is the will of God in Christ Jesus? Why, that he should lose not anything the Father had given him. The Father gave him these blessings, and he has never lost one yet; and he gave the people to him, and he has never lost one yet. "Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life unto as many as thou hast given him." Thus then, "Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for,"—namely, justification before God by his own doings:—"but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded!" God opens up to his people what they are, breaks the neck of their pride, humbles them down, and brings them to feel that all their springs must be in God; he will dry every other spring, he will blast every other hope, and leave you nothing to have confidence in but the blessed God himself. What shall we say to the goodness of God in thus gathering us, in providing such a Saviour by whom we can be gathered in, and in thus blessing us before the world began, and in thus giving us to trace up our salvation to a very pure source? You know, if there is something wrong at the source of anything, that something wrong at the source will find its way into all the after parts. Now, as everything at the source is pure, originating with God, entirely with God, there is nothing in the origin of it that is weak or defective to come into any of the after parts. Therefore it is the mediation of Christ was firm, the work of the Holy Spirit is sure, the resurrection to eternal glory is firm. Satan could get into the first Paradise, but he cannot get into the second Paradise; Satan could spoil the Jewish heaven, but he cannot affect the Christian heaven; there he is cast down and overcome; and the Lord's people must go on from strength to strength, till they appear before God in Zion.

I now notice, secondly, *the severity of God*. Here, we have the doctrine of retaliation, "Behold the severity of God." This may sound harsh, very harsh, but before I enter upon it I may once more remind you that there are three laws which the Saviour in relation to his people hath abolished, as you see in the 5th of Matthew. He hath abolished the law of oaths; because his immutable oath serves everything, therefore no oath is required on our side; our conversation is simply to be yea, yea, and nay, nay. He has abolished the law of retaliation in relation to his people. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you, that ye resist not evil." He

hath abolished the law of retaliation, because all that we deserved fell upon him, therefore there is nothing now to retaliate, and we have been delivered from the law of retaliation, and should be wicked people if we were to practise retaliation. He hath abolished the law of hatred. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." Ah, what a sweet spirit that will, when realised, bring us into; it does indeed make us more willing to be persecuted than to persecute, make us more willing to endure wrong than to inflict wrong; make us more willing to suffer reproach than to reproach others. But I will now come to the solemn doctrine of retaliation,—the severity of God. Wherein shall we prove the justice of this severity? I shall say but very little upon this part, though much might be said; and I enter upon it with anything but pleasure, for it is an awful subject to dwell upon. Did Cain shew any mercy to Abel? Was not Cain severe towards Abel, though his own brother? Ah, the deadly enmity of the carnal mind. You see the dearest relationships in life seem to be no security against the blind enmity of the carnal mind, against God and his truth. Did Cain shew Abel any mercy? Not any. In what way he murdered him we know not. Thereby, being severe, murderously so, towards Abel, Cain brought himself under the severity of the Most High. Did the ancient fathers shew any mercy to the prophets? Would not even that old painted beauty Jezebel, if she could have shed the blood of Elijah? Was mercy shewn? None at all. Oh how many thousands brought themselves under the law of retaliation. What shall I say to Rome Pagan? Did they shew any mercy to the saints? What shall I say to Rome Papal, and to others? What severity did they practise towards the saints? Theirs was but the severity of the creature, but now will come upon them, for they sinned against Infinity in so doing, the deepest ire of the Most High, for the wrath of God shall come to the uttermost. Behold then the severity of God; for he that has shewed no mercy shall have judgment without mercy; for mercy rejoiceth against judgment. But last, though certainly not least, the most awful instance is that of the Son of God himself. Ah, my hearer, my blood has run cold, perhaps I should not be going too far to say my hair has stood on end almost,—I have shuddered many times when I have been reading the latter part of the four evangelists, to see their treatment of the Lord Jesus Christ. Ah, he went about doing good, healing all manner of sicknesses, did no violence, was content not to have where to lay his head, and depended daily upon the providence of his Heavenly Father even for food, and had to work a miracle to feed those that were round about him. Did they shew him any mercy? Does it not make you shudder when you see them smite him on the face, and crown him with thorns, and when Herod dressed him in mock royalty, and with his men of war set him at nought? They did not know the full extent of their crime, but they knew they were doing wrong. Pilate knew that for envy they had delivered him unto him. And did they shew him any mercy? There was the Saviour agonising in public, handed over to public mockery and ridicule, and that between two thieves, and the great men set the example of mocking him. Did they shew him any mercy? And did they not intend to bury his sacred body in a felon's grave? only prediction had put him into another grave; for he made his grave with the wicked, in suffering himself thus to be crucified with the malefactors, but with the rich in his death. Joseph of Arimathea is stirred up, and goes boldly to Pilate, craves the body of Jesus, and lays it in his own new tomb, wherein man never lay.

(The remainder of this Discourse, for which there is not room, shall be given in a future Sermon.)