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MR. WELLS not being able to preach on Lord's day, July 18th, this sermon is intended to supply the place thereof, having never yet been printed.

Surrey Tabernacle Pulpit.

FREEDOM AND PLENTY.

A SERMON

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, 31ST DECEMBER, 1865,

By MR. JAMES WELLS,

AT THE NEW SURREY TABERNACLE, WANSEY STREET.

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."—
Revelation xxi. 7.

WE have, in addition to what we advanced last Lord's day morning upon these words, to notice *some more things which the people of God shall inherit*; and, secondly, *the glory of the relationship here declared*. "I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

First, then, here are three things more I wish this morning to say—a few words upon, included in the "all things" that he who by faith in Christ overcomes all adverse powers shall inherit. As I have before said, of course the "all things" here mean all new things, all new covenant things, all gospel things, all the things that belong to our eternal welfare. There is this amongst other great differences between spiritual and temporal things, each Christian will inherit everything without one depriving the other. Now it is not so in material things; in material things, if there be a limited amount, then the more there is possessed by one the less there is left for the other. But it is not so in spiritual things. Just as we have the sun in the firmament each, as it were, to himself, as though there was not another person in the world upon whom that sun is shining, such is the character of eternal things. And perhaps that is one reason why our text stands in the solitary, individual form:—"He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." I am fully aware that some have applied these words to the Lord Jesus Christ; that he overcame, and that God is his God, and he is his Son. This is true; but then you will find the Saviour is the speaker here, and therefore I think we may continue to speak of it in the same manner we have done. There are three things more, then, I notice. First, the glorious liberty of the gospel; second, the completeness of this new creation; and, third, the welcome which every poor sinner that feels his need hath to the blessings of the gospel. First, then, just a word upon the glorious liberty of the gospel. It is said of it, that "there shall be no more death." Now, we know that there is no man

who would not like to be where there is no death. There is only one way in which there is no death. Hence the dear Saviour said to Martha, "He that believeth on me shall never die. Believest thou this?" There, therefore, shall be no more death; Jesus Christ hath taken the sting of death away. Now what is there to sting you in your conscience when you come to die? Say you, My sin, will not that sting me then? How can that be? It is said that "the sting of death is sin;" but then Jesus Christ hath put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; and faith in him, this is your shield while you live, and it will be your shield when you die. So that death will be to us all but a mere shadow, as saith one, "To die is gain." Thus, then, there shall be no more death; Jesus Christ hath swallowed up that death in eternal victory. And then there will be "no more crying." Now this crying, of course, means anything that is burdensome, or alarming, or distressing. Hence Jehoshaphat, for instance, when he went into affinity with Ahab—very unwisely so; we are best, depend upon it, with the truth of God, and those that are one with the truth have no other affinities—nevertheless, Jehoshaphat thought perhaps he was doing right; and when the enemy was pressing him, he thought he should lose his life; he cried out, and the Lord moved the enemy to depart from Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat was got into a wrong position; yet he cried out, and the Lord heard his cry. So I would just say here, remember the atonement of Jesus Christ; remember the righteousness of Jesus Christ; remember the victory that he has wrought; and therefore, whatever your position may be, whatever you may be drawn into or driven into, whatever may be your position, never mind, still cry out; cry to God to show his mercy, and to interpose for you. He will not say thee nay; as he will not answer thee on the ground of anything meritorious in thee on the one hand, he will not deny thee on the ground of anything wrong in thee on the other hand—no. The Lord looketh at our faith, and he looketh at our prayers. Hence those words upon this subject we so often notice, words which are very delightful, which I could not but contemplate this morning with great pleasure—namely, where the angel said to Cornelius, "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial." Oh, what an order of things is this! that Jesus Christ should so swallow up death in victory, and so put away sin, that the Lord doth not remember us by any one of our sins, but that he remembers us simply by that cry which he puts into the soul for mercy and forgiveness. I may perhaps here give way for a moment to trace out the manner of his remembrances. He remembers us first, in his love, as objects of his love; he then remembers us as objects of his choice; he then remembers us as objects of his promise; he then remembers us as objects of his purpose—"called according to his purpose;" he then remembers us as constituted complete in his dear Son; he then remembers us, not in our unbelief, but in our faith; not in our enmity, but in our love; not in our pride, but in our humility. "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God." Thus, then, there shall be no more crying. It is true there is crying in the present, and will be as long as we live; but in Christ Jesus there is no crying; there it is terminated. You find it so now. Let the Saviour's name be by the Holy Spirit made to you as ointment poured forth; what does that do? Why, it wipes away all tears from your eyes, all tears of grief and distress, and causes you to rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of your salvation. So again, there shall be "no sorrow." Everything is mingled with sorrow out of Christ, but in Christ there is no sorrow. You have sorrow in yourself, and you have sorrow in the world, and sorrow in a variety of ways; but there is no sorrow in Christ. Hence the apostle when speaking of this saith, "Thanks be to God, that always causeth us to triumph in Christ." Here there is no sorrow; here it is that the blessing of the Lord maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow.

“Neither shall there be any more pain.” I think I have said in times past, perhaps that is one of the most significant words that we have, the word “pain.” We apply it in a great variety of ways, to body and to mind, and therefore it is a very sweeping negative—“There shall be no more pain.” Not one painful thought, not one painful reflection, not one painful feeling; all these are gone, for the former things are passed away. And how beautifully does this set forth the dear Saviour in what he has done. He hath taken our death, and destroyed that death; he hath taken our crying, shall I say? our distress, and hath destroyed it; he hath taken our sorrows, and put an end to those sorrows; he has taken our pain;—I must be careful upon this point, when I say he hath taken our pain. He hath taken pains we have never felt, and never shall. The pains of hell were demerited ours; the Saviour took those pains; the pains of hell, which we had demerited, got hold upon him, the sorrows of death compassed him about; nevertheless, these waters could not quench his love, nor could the floods drown it. Now to hold fast this testimony of what Christ has done is an essential part of the victory, because if you hold fast this testimony there is no death, no crying, that is, not in the distressing sense of the word; and no pain, and no sorrow; so that in Christ you overcome all that stands opposed to you. The second thing I notice that we are to inherit is the completeness of the new creation; I speak of the new heavens and the new earth. The Saviour saith, in the fifth verse of this chapter, “Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done.” Let us linger just a moment upon that. Now that which is not yet done is as certain as though it was done. Hence election is a matter that is final; redemption is a matter that is final; regeneration is final; once born of God you are born to die no more; the resurrection of the body at the last day is final, it dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over it. “It is done.” Now to shew the certainty of its remaining settled in that order, to shew that while other things have been undone, as in the fall of angels, the fall of Adam, and the dispersion of the Jews, and the apostacy of others; here is something done that cannot be undone. Now how does the Lord shew the certainty of its remaining? Let us see if we can understand it. He shews the certainty of these things remaining, which is nothing else, of course, but a demonstration of his immutability. How, think you, doth he shew the certainty of these things remaining undisturbed? He reveals this delightful truth to us in such a form that it is easy to the last degree. There is not a Christian under the heavens that does not receive such a testimony with pleasure, and the more clearly you understand it the more you will admire it. “It is done.” Then, to shew, I say, that it cannot be disturbed, the Saviour saith, “I am Alpha and Omega;” then, to explain that, he says, “the beginning and the end.” The idea is this: it began with Jesus Christ, and therefore there will be no necessity for ever altering it; and it is finished by Jesus Christ, and therefore there is no necessity for ever altering it. This is the declaration; now let us see if we can explain this as clear as, a b c. First, is the Lord’s love a settled love? Where is the assurance of it? He loved you in Christ, mark that—he loved you in Christ. “Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me, and thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.” Yes, if he hath loved you in Christ—I say it with reverence—he must find some reason in Christ to withdraw his love from him before it can be withdrawn from you. Therefore, beginning to love you in Christ, there will be no alteration take place there. There is no necessity for it; nothing can arise to cause a necessity. No sin can come there; Christ did no sin, in him is no sin, and the people are free from sin there; he hath put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. He is the beginning; so it is safe there. So with election; where did that begin? The Lord began to choose you

in Christ, and we are told this was before the world was, and Christ remains the same now that he was then; and we cannot dream for one moment of a change in the blessed God; he is the same, and Jesus Christ remains. If your election were direct, and the advantages of that election were to be maintained on the ground of something done by you, as was the case with the Jews, it would be liable to change. They were chosen to a certain position direct, and they had certain stipulations and conditions to perform, and on the performance of these, that chosen people were to have the advantages of their temporal election; but failing in these conditions they were to lose those temporal advantages, and be subjected to penalties. But here, in Christ Jesus, the election is final, because it is in him; it is done; chosen in him; and we shall never listen to a doctrine that would for one moment insinuate the possibility of Christ being rejected. Then again, where did our salvation begin? Why it began at Bethlehem; it began in Christ. Where did our justification begin? It began in Christ; he began to work out everlasting righteousness. Where did our redemption begin? It began in Christ; he hath said "I will redeem them from death; I will ransom them from the power of the grave. O grave, I will be thy plague! O death, I will be thy destruction! repentance shall be hid from mine eyes." Then again, where did regeneration begin? In Christ. He saith, "I am the resurrection"; and "the Son quickeneth whom he will." I suppose none of us can tell the moment—I am sure I cannot; I can look back to the time when a concern for my soul came into my mind by means of affliction, and that concern increased, until I was sunk in great depths of soul trouble; this remained till the Lord delivered me; but I cannot recollect, I cannot know, the moment in which the Lord ministered life to my soul. But this I do know, that the life ministered to the soul is nothing else but Jesus Christ himself, as the life taking possession of the soul; he is the resurrection of the soul. Is it any wonder, then, if it be Christ in you your life, if it be Christ in you the hope of glory, if it be Christ in you the root of the matter; that he is the root, it must indeed be an incorruptible root, that "ye are born again of an incorruptible seed, that liveth and abideth for ever." And as to our perseverance, where does that lie? Why, it lies entirely with Christ, for he is the Author and also the Finisher of our faith. Then again, the resurrection of the body, where was that begun? Why, in Jesus Christ. And where are all these things completed? Why, the love of God is complete in Christ: election is complete in Christ; or, to put it into another form, which will be the same thing, ye are loved, ye are complete in the love of God in Christ; ye are chosen completely in Christ; ye are ordained to eternal life completely in Christ, and ye are justified completely in Christ, and ye are saved and sanctified completely in Christ; regenerated completely in Christ, preserved completely in Christ, dying complete in Christ, rising complete in Christ, and glorified to eternity complete in Christ. I make no hesitation in saying, that if there were any one department in which the creature had to put its hand to it, that creature doing would so ill sort with Divine doing that it would be like the iron and the clay—they would not remain together. But, bless the Lord, the whole work is of him from first to last; and it is one of the deepest lessons for us to learn that we are nothing, and to be brought to nothing, and become as little children, and to receive the testimony of what the Saviour has done. The Old Testament church rejoiced in this: "We have not made ourselves; it is he that hath made us; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." And the New Testament hath it, "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God ordained, that we should walk in them." Here, then, is a glorious liberty, and here is a settled state of things. "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven." Has it ever been a comfort to you when you have felt unsettled in your mind to think that God's word is not unsettled? When you have been unsettled

in your circumstances, is it not a comfort to remember that the work of Christ and the word of the Lord remain settled? You have been unsettled perhaps from affliction, or from association, or situation—hardly know which way to go; you think within yourself, What a number of uncertainties seem to float around me. But when I come to God, there is certainty; when I come to Christ, there is completeness. “It is done, I am Alpha and Omega; the beginning and the end.” So I say to you, Christian, you will never rightly begin in your religion until you have nothing to begin with but Jesus Christ; and you have never rightly gone on in your religion until you have learnt that you have nothing to go on with but God, but Jesus Christ; and you will not end right with your religion if you do not anticipate that termination being entirely by Jesus Christ, for without faith it is impossible to please God. I do not wish to say anything unkind; I only know this, nothing is of any use to me where Jesus Christ is not the Alpha and the Omega; nothing is of any use to me where he is not everything. I believe Christ is everything with God the Father; I believe he is everything with the Holy Spirit, and I believe he is everything with glorified spirits; and I believe he is everything to every one that is far enough taught in the things of God to know that in the flesh dwelleth no good thing, but in Christ dwelleth no evil thing; every thing in us is bad after the flesh; every thing in Christ is good. Thus, then, “it is done;” here is a gospel liberty to inherit, and here is the settlement of things; “it is done.” These are the reasons that it cannot be undone. If we, by our rebellions, and our unbelief, and our ingratitude, the evils we feel, our lukewarmness, our neglect of our own privileges, our carelessness about eternal things—if it were possible for them to be unsettled, I am sure they would have been unsettled long ago. Yet the Lord will not suffer any of our faults to provoke him to a change of mind, an alteration of will, the withdrawing of one promise. No; the dear Saviour is the propitiation set forth, and that propitiation always has proved sufficient and always will; we shall never need another Saviour. Now he, then, that holds fast this blessed testimony, overcoming every thing contrary thereto, he shall inherit this gospel freedom, he shall inherit this gospel certainty, Certainty! “It seemed good to me to write unto thee, most excellent Theophilus.” What did he call Theophilus “most excellent” for? Why, because every Christian is a Theophilus. Theophilus is a name made up of two Greek words, signifying “Friend of God;” and so he that believeth, Abraham, called the friend of God. And so he writes, “Most excellent Theophilus;” most excellent friend of God; Christians are the excellent ones of the earth; “I write unto thee that thou mightest know the certainty of these things;” the certainty of them. Ah, says one, he has sustained me hitherto, he has appeared for me in his providence, but I fear he won’t again; I have been so unthankful for former mercies, I think he will give me no more. Oh, very well; then you think because you are so unthankful to-day the sun won’t rise to-morrow morning; and if you should be rebellious to-morrow, the sun will not rise on Tuesday morning; and if you should be very rebellious that day, the sun will not rise the next morning; so that we shall have a dark time of it next week. Well, now, I think the sun will rise next week; and I think I am right in speaking thus, for the Lord saith, “If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season, then will I cast off the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the Lord.” Ah,

“All is settled,
And my soul approves it well.”

But, thirdly, not only this liberty, and certainty of truth, but here is a divine welcome:—“I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of

the water of life freely." Now that, I think, means not only unconditionally requiring neither price nor pay, but that it means lovingly, bountifully, abundantly, readily. Suppose we take a four-fold view just for a moment of this water of life; you know a little pure water wont hurt anybody; I'm not going to give you anything to hurt you—wouldn't do that. What does this water of life do? First, it saves from death. See that poor man—his knees feeble, his hands weak, his heart trembling, his eyes dim, his ears deaf, and he is lame, and there he is in the sultry desert, nearly dead—dying with thirst. Dr. Kitto, in a very excellent note on the 35th of Isaiah, says that the description there given of the feebleness of the knees, and the weakness of the hands, the fearfulness of the heart, the blindness, the deafness, the lameness, and the dumbness—Kitto says that he has travelled in those parts, and that those are the effects produced upon the man that is dying with thirst in the desert. I give you my authority, you see, and I must be a little more careful in future in giving my authorities where I have them to give; as our opponents are so sharp upon us I must mind what I am about, that's all.

"Trust not yourself, but your defects to know,
Make use of every friend and every foe."

Here therefore is a scripture in which the imagery is drawn from that which very frequently occurs, and the Holy Spirit takes hold of that to represent a sinner in black despair. Here is a sinner in black despair, scorched, as it were, by the fires of Sinai and his own conscience; a poor, feeble creature; he can neither walk, nor move, nor see that he is a child of God, nor hear the gospel, "for they listened not to Moses for anguish of spirit." He is a poor, helpless creature; there he is. By and bye the Holy Spirit comes to him, or makes the gospel to him the water of life; "for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert." The gospel is brought home with power; away goes his feebleness, and he can stand firm; away goes his weakness, and he can lay hold of eternal life; and away goes his fearfulness, and he can now stand bold, and rejoice that God is his God; and away goes his dimness of sight, and he can now see clearly the end of the desert, contemplate the rising mountains of the promised land, and in a moment seems to be there. Away goes his deafness, and the gospel is now to him a joyful sound; away goes his lameness, and he can leap as the hart; he can run through troops of troubles; he now can leap over whatever wall the devil may put to hinder his march, and his feet now are made like hind's feet; yea, he is like a hind let loose, and giveth goodly words. So then this water saves life, so this glorious gospel saves the soul. I look back at the time when I was just in the state spiritually that is there described in the 35th of Isaiah; and when that 8th verse, which I have named so many times, of the 54th of Isaiah rolled into my soul. Ah, the well of salvation then sprang up; I didn't say in words, at least I don't recollect that I did, but if I had I could have said it with propriety, "Spring up, O well, sing ye unto it." Oh, how it changes the scene! Now then he that overcometh, lays hold of Christ as his victory, shall inherit these things. The second thing this water of life does, this gospel, is that it not only saves life, but also sustains life. Hence, in that same 35th of Isaiah you find these same persons go on to everlasting glory. They are brought into the way of holiness, and Christ is that way of holiness, and they shall not err therein; they can now see so clearly, although fools in their own eyes and in the eyes of others, yet they shall not err as to the way of salvation. And they are brought into the way of safety, safe in Christ. "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon; but the redeemed shall walk there." The Lord says, "I will lead them in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble;" Christ is that straight way; he has made everything straight; "even by the springs of water will I lead them; for I am a father unto Israel, and

Ephraim is my first born." That's the gospel. How it sustains us. Ah when we get a little sip of the river of God's pleasure, it is wonderful how we can then lift up our heads, and see that our eternal redemption draweth nigh. The third use of water is that of consecration. Aaron and his sons were washed at the door of the tabernacle. And what an essential consecration it gives to human life. We ought highly to prize it. See how comfortable it makes us from time to time. Cleanliness is a great comfort; those that know the comfort of it do not like to be otherwise. And I am sure, friends, the gospel merely, as it were, sprinkled upon us from time to time keeps the conscience clean, keeps the soul clean, keeps the mind clean; and you say, Ah, I do prize it. Here is the fulfilment, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you;" and Ezekiel telleth us of a river that was risen, even waters to swim in. And when we are thus, as it were, sprinkled afresh, or immersed afresh, or brought near to the Lord afresh, how consecrative it is; oh, how it makes us love holiness, and righteousness, and peace, and Christ, and we realize the revivings of this sanctification, the revivings of this consecration unto God. Then the fourth use of this water of life is to make our inheritance fruitful. The news lately came in a letter, as I have heard, from one part of Australia, that they have had no rain there for two years; we can hardly imagine the condition they must be in—Adelaide: no rain for two years. If we had such a thing in our country, even with our abundant rivers (and we have had some little taste of it), we should very soon be in a very sad condition. Plenty of things to make us be humble before the Lord: plenty of ways in which he could withdraw his hand, and subject us to unheard of woes; but he continues to give us fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. And let us take this spiritually; this living water means that the christian shall inherit a fruitful land. And where's the christian's fruitful land? In the gospel. And is the Lord a dry land to his people? Is he not the fountain of living waters? Is Jesus Christ a dry land to his people? Is he not as rivers in a dry place? Is not our gospel land a fertile land? doth not the river flow to all eternity? Have we not on its very banks trees, precious promises, bearing fruit perennially, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations? Oh, it is a fertile land. "The Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water and of fountains and depths springing out of the valleys and out of the hills." This is that good land where there is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God. "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." Here then is gospel freedom, gospel certainty, and gospel plenty. What more shall I say? A great deal more I could say upon this matter. "Unto him that is athirst;" just look at it. You must if you can lose sight of everything else. If as a sinner you are blacker than the devil himself, if it be possible; if you are worse than Manasseh, or worse than Saul of Tarsus, if thou hast the thirst, Jesus Christ declares he will give thee the water of life freely. Was there ever such a friend? was there ever such a gospel? Where else shall we find mercy so free? Where else shall we find poor wretches deserving the lowest hell so welcome as at this fountain of living waters? "Unto him that is athirst." Bless the Lord for the thirst. I hope we came this morning, all of us more or less, with a thirst for God; I hope I did, and I hope you did; and if you did you will not be altogether disappointed; and if the Lord does not favour you this morning to drink in the consolations of the gospel, this is one consolation, you know it is in the gospel, and you can say, Amen to it, and you have a desire to it, and you at times have been refreshed. We are, of course, in his hands; "times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."

Now we come to *the relationship*. These are the things we are to inherit; our fitness for the inheritance and other things concerning this inheritance we noticed last Lord's day morning. Now I have got an hour's work upon the latter part, and I must only occupy about five minutes. "I will be his God, and he shall be my son." Now this means a relationship that excludes every evil and includes every good; that excludes, which we have partly anticipated, all uncertainty. And as my time is nearly gone, I will just direct you to a scripture that, to my mind, and no doubt to yours, beautifully explains this part of our text; "I will be his God, and he shall be my son." When I first looked at these words, I thought, Lord, lead me to a scripture that will explain this relationship. I thought of Solomon's Song first; but I cannot go all through that, therefore I had better not touch it at all. So I wanted some shorter scripture that I as it were could manage to explain this matter. And I thought of the Philadelphian church in the 3rd of Revelation; I thought, there is the explanation, there he appears in this relationship. He appears there in holiness, "He that is holy," and he is our sanctification, and it is a holy relationship; sin excluded by his sacrifice. "He that is true;" so that it is a true relationship, real; there is a reality about it. And third, it is under his authority: "He that hath the key of David; he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth. I know thy works; behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." That open door is the way of salvation. Christ saith, "I am the door." He hath the key of David: what is the key of David? With that idea I suppose I must close, or else I meant to have gone to the last part, where, of each of these same people in this relationship, he saith, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God; and I will write upon him my new name;" a threefold description—the name of God, the name of the city, and the Saviour's new name, that name which he hath acquired, called his new name; his new name indicates the new creation, the new covenant; that new state of things in contrast to the old Adam state of things that has passed away. Now what is the key of David? Let us take the key of David temporally, and then we can understand the key of David in Christ's hands spiritually. Now the enemy had turned the key against the Israelites, and had shut them out from their inheritance, and they were brought into debt and distress, and were discontented; and so they came to David, supposing that he had the key, that he could unlock the door, and let them into their inheritance; and so he did. David, by the name of the Lord, unlocked the door, let the Israelites into their inheritance, drove the enemy out, shut the door, and the devil could not open the door all David's days to get in again. So the people, they did not go out after David shut them in; and the enemy could not come in after David shut them out. Only by and by David died, Solomon died, and after a time the enemy came in, and the Israelites were put out. Now this cannot happen with Jesus Christ; he hath brought his people in, and he hath shut the enemy out, and the enemy can never get in again. Satan is cast out, sin is cast out, death is cast out, all adversaries are cast out; the people are brought in, and they have no desire to go out, and the adversary cannot come in, any more than the Egyptians could get to the Israelites through the cloud; "the one came not near the other all night." The key of David, therefore, means the Lord Jesus Christ bringing his people in, shutting the enemy out; keeping his people in, and keeping the enemy out; all must be in accordance with the declaration of our text, "I will be his God, and he shall be my son." But time forbids my saying any more.