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Surrey Tabernacle Pulpit.

INCREASED IN VALUE.

A SERMON

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, 10th JANUARY, 1869,

By MR. JAMES WELLS,

AT THE NEW SURREY TABERNACLE, WANSBY STREET.

"Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." — Matthew x. 31.

THE Saviour setting before his disciples the defenceless way in which they were to go into an ungodly world to preach the great mystery of godliness, the defenceless way in which they were to meet Satan and all his agents, by the blessed truths of the gospel, to the salvation of many: that they were to go forth as lambs among wolves, and should suffer many things; they therefore clearly saw that the Lord alone could be their strength and their defence. And so the Lord gives them all the gracious assurances that should encourage them, and enable them to see that whatever opposition they met with from earth, heaven was on their side; however much the creature might persecute them, the Creator was their friend; and however much Satan might oppose them, he who had bruised the serpent's head gave them the sweet promise that he would be with them even to the end of the world. But of course we shall notice the text as it applies to ourselves. The troubles which the apostles and Christians underwent in that day include all our troubles; but our troubles do not include all their troubles. They had the same common troubles that we have, but we have not their uncommon troubles, and therefore I suppose have not that uncommon power with God that they had; but, bless the Lord, even this also we must set down to the sovereign pleasure of the blessed God. Do not let us complain, but let us bless the Lord that we have any hope at all, that we are citizens of the same Jerusalem, and that we have in a measure appointed us the same Spirit, the same grace, and the same everlasting consolation.

Our text lies before us in a twofold form. First, *the value of man*; secondly, *the kind exhortation founded thereon*,—"Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows."

First, *the value of man*. I will take a fivefold view of this part of our subject, after just saying a word or two upon man as he is in himself—the value of man as contrasted with the irrational creation. In the 12th of Matthew, when they found fault with the Saviour for working a cure on the Sabbath day, he turned round to them and very justly said, "What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it

fall into a pit on the Sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep?" Now there two things that make a man infinitely more valuable than the irrational creation. The first is the capabilities of man or his mighty reasoning power. There perhaps is no creature in existence capable of suffering or enjoying so much as the human subject. We have a soul within us, and that soul has within it almost perhaps unbounded powers. We know not what powers the soul has in it. It knows no plethora; and the more the mind is expanded the more it is prepared to expand still further; so that the amount of pleasure, delight, and joy, that the soul and the body are capable of taking in perhaps we cannot very well understand. Then, on the other hand, the suffering which a man is capable of, while "the spirit of a man," that spirit that has liveliness and courage, "will sustain his infirmity," yet "a wounded spirit who can bear?" So that the agonies of the soul when visited by the wrath of God, the curse of heaven, perhaps we cannot comprehend in our present infantine state—the extent of suffering that the soul and body will be capable of taking in and enduring when thrown into the winepress of the wrath of Almighty God. The second thing that makes man so valuable as contrasted with the irrational creation, is his immortality; for there shall be a resurrection of the just and of the unjust, this is God's word. The fall of man (including the death of the body) is the first death, consisting in alienation from the life of God; the second death is not a cessation of being, but banishment from God, from all help and from all hope. The Saviour saith, "All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment," as the word there may be rendered. So that you are here with immense capabilities, and you have before you under the sun just a few days, and then called into that world whence there is no return. You have eternity before you, cease to be you cannot; die you cannot; go out of existence you cannot. I will not discuss the question of the immortality of the soul metaphysically, for it matters but very little whether the soul is immortal innately so in itself, or whether it is immortal by a divine decree; it is enough for us to know that it must live for ever and ever. Oh, how tremendous was the charge which the Saviour took in hand when he took in hand the deliverance of a number that no man can number, from that wrath to which as sinners we stand exposed! And what a solemn position is that occupied by every minister of the gospel, whether he be, as it were, a captain over tens, hundreds, or thousands. He has to watch for—

"Souls for whom the Lord did heavenly bliss forego,
Souls which must for ever live in rapture or in woe."

God increase the earnestness of all his servants and people upon these tremendous matters; for whether we feel it or not, there is nothing that so really concerns us. Even our reason, if enlightened at all by the grace of God, tells us that there is not anything that so concerns us as our eternal destiny. Oh, then, what a valuable creature is man! Yet what natural man respects his precious soul, or is really concerned for it? Here he is, an immortal being, and all his cares, anxieties, labours, toils, are for the poor dying body. And the rich man would have spoken with much more propriety if he had appealed to his body instead of his soul, when he said, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up." Why, man, that's a mistake; your soul has nothing laid up. You have not cried out for the salvation of your soul, for the pardon of the sin of your soul: you have not sought the Saviour of souls; your soul has nothing at all laid up. "Eat, drink, take thine ease." Ah, but, man, it is the body that will eat, drink, and take its ease; the soul will be kept asleep, and thus thou wilt dream that thou hast much goods laid up, till the voice comes, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee, then whose

shall these things be?" We must not, therefore, trifle with ourselves, and we must not trifle with one another, much less must we trifle with eternal things.

But I have this morning to dwell chiefly upon another kind of value. I will now pass on to notice the relative value of man, or the value of the people of God with God himself. The people of God have a value with God that no others have. Let us trace out what the things are that make man valuable to God. The first thing that makes man infinitely and eternally valuable to God is God's love to him. Our God hath loved us with his whole heart and his whole soul. Has he not demonstrated this in sending such a Saviour, in accomplishing such a salvation? has he not demonstrated this in every possible way? "God, who is rich in mercy, and for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and in sins." And if you that are parents feel your children to be more valuable to you than any others, simply because they are yours, and from the love you have to them, what shall we say of God? I am at a loss how to illustrate this beautiful point,—that God taking you up in his love, values you according to the love he has to you, and that love is infinite and everlasting. As to his parting with you, why, he never thought of such a thing. His love has made you too valuable in his estimation ever to part with you. Do you think our God speaks deceptively where he says—and what he saith to one of his people he saith unto all,—"I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee"? Now this principle of their being made valuable to God by his love is a principle you can so easily understand. It is the love which the miser has to his gold that makes the gold so valuable in his estimation; it is the love which the voluptuary, the worldly man has to the pleasures of the world that so heightens those pleasures in his estimation. And so of a thousand other things. It is the love which some people have of tyranny over others that seems to endear to them so much the idea of dominion and tyranny. In a word, whatever the affection is set upon, it stamps that object with a value that no other object has. So our God: he has thus loved the people, as saith Moses, "Yea, he loved the people;" therefore they are as valuable to him as his love could make them. And as this love is always the same, they are always of the same value. I dare to say some, perhaps all of you, have read the last chapter of Leviticus with some degree of interest upon this very subject. You find there that when persons devoted themselves to the Lord they were of various value. The child, for instance, was of less value than the man, and the woman only about half the value of the man; the man was sixty shekels of silver, and the woman thirty; and when they arrived at old age—sixty or so—then they began to lose their value, and to be valued perhaps at about thirty or twenty shekels; so that they rose and fell in value according to what they were in themselves. But it is not so in God's love: there the new born soul is of the same value as the man that is grown up and established in the truth. There, when we get to old age, we are of the same value as we were when we were first born of God, and when the Lord brought us out into the liberty of the gospel. Therefore the Lord saith, "Even to old age I am he, and to hoar hairs will I carry you." You are all of the same value; there is not anything that can alter your value. You are sinful, and degraded, and deserve the lowest hell: I know all that. The Lord knew what he loved when he loved us; he knew very well, in order to win our hearts to him, he would have to commend his love to us in that while we were yet sinners Christ should die for us. He rests in his love. His people, before the Adam fall, in the Adam fall; before called by grace, when called by grace; when young, and when old; when in trouble, when out of trouble; when on their dying bed, when in the grave; when raised at the last day, and to all eternity, they

will be of the same value ; because "his love no variation knows." "Fear ye not therefore ; ye are of more value than many sparrows." See what an infinity and eternity of value the love of God stamps upon his people. What is it that makes the truth of God so valuable to us ? Well, say you, we are brought to see the value of it, we love it, and feel we could not part with it ; we love our Jesus Christ, and feel we could not part with him ; we love our dear covenant God, in a covenant ordered in all things and sure ; we do not know how dear he is going to make himself to the hearts of some of us before we die ; for the more we contemplate this blessed God in this everlasting covenant, and the more we experience from time to time of the manifestations of his loving kindness to us, his considerations of us, his mindfulness of us, his interpositions for us, we seem ready to say : How much more, Lord ? How much further art thou going ? If thou goest much further, thou wilt reveal more of thyself than a poor weak creature like me can bear. I love thee now with mind, and heart, and soul ; and if thou goest on much further, I feel I shall want to leave the body in order that my soul may expand in all its powers, and in all that love to thy dear name which I feel pent up, as it were, in my soul. "Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion." What a wonderful thing then is this love. "We love him because he first loved us."

" 'Tis his love that never falters,
Always to its object true."

It is his love that never rises higher, because it is impossible ; and never ebbs or sinks lower, that also is impossible, for "God is love." John would sum up the whole of it by shewing that every form in which the Lord stands related to his people is a form of love ; therefore he saith, "God is love."

The second thing that makes them valuable is their costliness. They cost a price that no other people cost. I have often been struck with the idea of the materials of which the temple was built. You read of costly stones ; and you have in the 4th verse of the 6th of Ezra a kind of key to this part of the subject. The decree of Cyrus said that in building the temple there were to be three rows of great stones, and also a row of new timber ; "and let the expenses be given out of the king's house." Now the costliness of these stones would lie in the labour which it took to hew them out of the quarry, to bring them to their place, to square them, and fit them in the temple. Whenever I read that verse, I think—Great stones. Ah, we are great sinners ; our sin is great, our guilt is great ; we are great sinners. I have thought it might refer to that : and nevertheless they are costly. And then there is to be a row of new timber. I ask myself, what is the old timber ? Why, I say, the old timber is the old covenant : and that is waxed old and passed away ; the building is come down, the temple is gone. But here it is to be new timber ; and when I think of the new timber, I cannot for the life of me keep the apostle Paul off from me ; he will come in, and say, "Whom he did foreknow, them he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son ; and whom he did predestinate, them he also called ; and whom he called, them he also justified ; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." I examine these timbers, and I cannot find any one that will ever wax old. I cannot see that God's foreknowledge will ever wear out ; I cannot see that his decree will ever wear out ; I cannot see that regeneration will ever wear out ; I cannot see that justification or glorification will ever wear out ; this then is the bond timber, the row of *New* timber. "And let the expenses be given out of the king's house." Ah, our God has been at the expense of our eternal redemption ; he is at the expense of the building from first to last. But I said the costliness chiefly laid in the labour. What a wonderful scene of things this one thought brings before us. How it brings before us all the labours of the Saviour's life. How hard he laboured night and day all his lifetime ; and when he came

to the latter part of the labour, to lift us out of the pit—"Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the pit whence ye are digged;"—he laboured, and in that tremendous labour sweat great drops of blood. Who shall undertake to describe the travail, the labour of his soul? Can we read that scripture in the 104th Psalm without being reminded of the Saviour, "Man goeth forth unto his work." What man ever went forth to such a work as that which the Saviour went forth to? What man ever did or could undertake such a work as Christ undertook? "And to his labour until the evening." The very collocation of the words in that verse is worthy of your attention. First it is *work*, and afterwards it is *labour*. Now the word *labour* certainly conveys an idea of something harder than work. The Saviour worked all his days, but when he came to the last he had to labour under the burden of all our sins. I like the words of the poet understood in a proper sense,—

"He sank beneath our heavy woes,
To raise us to his throne."

Here was the mighty labour. It required the omnipotency of his arm to achieve the victory, bruise the serpents head, slay the monster sin, swallow up death in victory, and to bring the far apart, the infinitely distant perfections of God together. Mercy and truth stood at an infinite distance from each other. Truth saith, not a jot nor tittle of that law shall fail; and there truth stood at an infinite distance from mercy. Mercy saith, I want those miserable objects. Truth says, you shall not have them until every jot and tittle of that holy and eternal law shall be established. Righteousness and peace were at an infinite distance. God come to us—as though he should say, Are you righteous? If you are, you shall have peace. What is the testimony of the great God? "There is none righteous, no not one; there is none that doeth good, no not one." Ah, thou wondrous Labourer! thou wondrous burden Bearer! Jesus comes in, and by his holy life, magnifies God's law, brings in a righteousness, he himself is righteous, enters into peace; his righteousness is for the poor, unrighteous sinner, "Now to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Here righteousness and peace meet together; here mercy and truth meet together; the penalty is endured, the curse is gone, holiness is honoured, all is settled. Here is the costliness, then—costing his life, costing his precious blood. The apostle might well say, "Ye are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold." You may redeem your fellow man's body from slavery by silver and gold; you may redeem your brother from prison by silver and gold; you may redeem your poor brother, as to his body, from adverse circumstances by silver and gold; but this redemption from hell, from death, from the curse of the law, is not by perishable things; for you are immortal, and you need a redemption that shall answer to your immortality. "Ye are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." "Let the expenses be given out of the king's house." I am prepared this morning, and I trust you are prepared, to testify that the salvation of your souls from first to last was given out of the king's house; it came from the great king, it came from God, from heaven. It has not cost you a farthing, nor half a farthing. Have you eternal life, eternal redemption? It is God's gift. The expense is given out of the king's house, and yet his riches are not diminished; he has just the same now that he ever had. All these things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ. I am sure if our friends the Wesleyans understood Christ's redemption, they would give up the notion of a person being lost for whom Christ died. But then they say, "they wont come." But the Saviour saith, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring." So if they wont come, I must bring them; that is how the matter stands. It does

not lie with them, for the Father does not make the sheep responsible for the shepherd, but he makes the shepherd responsible for the sheep. And therefore I must bring them. I do not dare appear without them at the last; I do not dare bring them with their sins, because I am their surety that put their sins away; and I must present them at the last day, that tremendous day, sound and whole. You know what Jacob did—as well as he could,—he said to Laban, “that which was stolen I bare the loss of;” but then the Saviour will not come with that lame tale, “and that which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee;” but the Saviour will not come with that lame tale; no, he will come with, “Here am I, and all thou hast given me.” This is the second thing, then, that makes us so valuable;—“Ye are bought with a price,”

“Redeemed, with Jesu's blood redeemed;
His beauties called to trace;
All Israel must to glory go,
As trophies of his grace.”

The third thing that makes the Lord's people valuable is regeneration. Now we come back to personal value. You know in ancient times, modern times too, when a caravan traverses the desert, there is a variety of earthen vessels, food put in one, something else in another; but all those vessels in which they put silver, or gold, or precious stones, are always taken care of. Before they get to the end of their journey, some with which they set out are lost, some broken to pieces, some thrown away; but every one in which there is valuable treasure they take great care shall not be broken, or lost, or stolen, or thrown away. Just so through this world. There are some professors that are lost, broken to pieces, make shipwreck of faith, and are cast away. They cast away God's truth, then God's truth casts them away; they are left behind; left to perish. But those in whom this treasure is, they are thereby too valuable to be lost. Saith the apostle, “We have this treasure in earthen vessels.” Let us hear what this treasure is. “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” Being thus regenerated, man has a treasure in him; he has something in his soul that is of infinite and eternal value; though in and of himself, apart from grace, he sees he is but a poor earthen vessel, and as it were a broken vessel. I am sure no sensible man or woman will be offended if I apply in this part the words of David, who takes that humble view of himself that he saith, “I am like a bottle in the smoke.” That of course refers to a skin bottle hung up in a smoky tent, and the bottle became as black as blackness itself. That is very humble; it is very distant from pharisaism. “I am like a bottle in the smoke;” a poor worthless thing. And yet if I have the wine of the truth within me, if I have this precious treasure of grace within me, and am thus born of God, then I may fear not; for God will respect such. “He that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.” “Fear not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.”

Fourthly, they are of great value also as heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. Now you cannot feel to fathers-in-law, and mothers-in-law, and sons-in-law, and daughters-in-law, and brothers-in-law, as you do to your natural relations. Now in this joint heirship with Christ there is a vitality; let me trace it out. It stands thus:—“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,” to that inheritance to which the joint heirship of these people with Christ shall bring them, by the almighty power of God. Here is a vitality of value. So they are not law sons, or sons-in-law, but they are gospel sons and Gospel daughters. “It is the Spirit that quickeneth;” here is a vitality again. “The Son quickeneth whom he will;” here is a vitality. So that the regeneration of the soul is the joint work of the Eternal Three; it is the work of our covenant God. And

if I may go so far, I would say that the Father feels the same vitality of relation to the people as he does to his own Son; for he saith, "Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me, and thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." And whatever is said of Christ as a Son in this respect will apply to them. If he be loved, and there be a vital existence of a vital principle there, so there is here. Here is joint heirship, then, with Christ. And the Saviour would give us to understand how close this relationship is, indicative of their great value; for he saith, " whatsoever is done unto them is done unto me." "Saul, why persecutest thou me;" and "Inasmuch as ye did it unto my brethren, or did it not, ye did nor did it not unto me." "In all their afflictions he was afflicted;" and "as a father pitieth his children, so doth the Lord pity them that fear him," and see the value put upon them in their eternal glorification.

Now I come to a fifth respect in which the people of God are valuable, which will not be perhaps to some quite so pleasing, but it is equally true; and that is, they are valuable in their usefulness in the service and in the cause of God. There are some that hardly ever give this a thought. Let me have a word, then, in all solemnity this morning upon this. Do you ever ask the question, What use am I in the cause of God? What use am I to the poor of God's people? What do I do towards helping forward the cause of God? How far do I stand from that curse in the 5th of Judges.—"Curse ye Meroz, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." None of us should be content without being of some use. And I will just have a word here in relation to causes locally;—just have a word upon our own cause. There are many of you here that have voluntarily, freely, willingly, and with great pleasure, paid for your sittings as a kind Providence has enabled you for many years and helped in a hundred different ways. And the Lord intended that his cause should depend upon the voluntary services of his people; he hates forced work, he hates law work; he saith, "Freely ye have received, and freely give." In so doing you have kept the place open, have kept the minister free, and scores and scores, perhaps hundreds of strangers, even the little time we have been here, have come in and heard the truth. So that in this you have been useful. And yet there are some among you who would not pay for a sitting if you could get one without; and when you do pay for it—I speak to those who have it in their power—you do it with a slack hand, and stop till half the quarter is gone, or within a week or two of the next quarter; and if it should happen there are two quarters, you look as black and blue at it as possible, and think you will get a seat in a cheaper part, or something or another. Ah, the Lord does not do like this by his people; he does not give grudgingly. He did not serve us grudgingly. He was not out in the midnight air in prayer all night grudgingly; he did not deny himself where to lay his head grudgingly. All he did he did lovingly, ungrudgingly. Well, then, the people of God are of great value in their practical work in helping forward the cause of God and sympathizing with his people. Once more then I say, let us ask the question, what use am I in the cause of God? Why there are some men that I know who profess the same things that we do, they are rolling in money, and could do a great deal towards making chapel room, and towards helping the poor; but what little they do is in that niggardly sort of way, if they give a little sometimes, it is more in a way of mistake than anything else. I am afraid the giving of some people is like the man our poor friend (I call him poor because of his heavy affliction), Mr. Drawbridge told us of. There was a man at a collection, he said, who meant to give a penny, but having half-a-crown in his pocket, by mistake he gave the half-crown; he came back, and said to the man that had the plate, "I have made a mistake: I meant to have given a penny, but I have given you half-a-crown; let me have it back again." "No, friend, you will not

have your half-crown back again; but the Lord will not set down to you what you gave, but only what you meant to give; and as you meant to give a penny, you will have a penny set down to you, but we will have the half-crown." I am afraid that is the case with some. So then the Lord make every one of you willing to be useful. There is not one that may not be useful in helping forward the cause of God in some way or another. And is there anything like the cause of God? Why, I may refer to our New Year's eve midnight meeting. Now you found as you went home that the streets were almost like Sunday evening, and you found the people in the streets proper in their behaviour, courteous, sober, walking along comfortably. How was this? Why, because they had come from the different places of worship, from hearing the word of God. If as many thousands as came out of chapels at midnight, or rather morning, had come out of public houses, would the streets have been then what they were? Oh, how different! Ah, the midnight meeting was almost worth having even for such an exhibition as that. And therefore the ungodly themselves sometimes are glad to be with us, when they think there is any danger, and can escape the consequences of being with their own companions. Religion will show itself. It saith of the Saviour in one place, "he could not be hid."

I see I shall not be able to touch upon the "Fear not;" therefore, with one more thought, I must close. Now many of you are masters, and all of you that are masters of course are good masters. I should be very sorry to hear that any master attending the Surrey Tabernacle was not a good master; and I should be very sorry to hear that any servant attending the Surrey Tabernacle was not a good servant; and therefore I will not dream that there is such a thing as a bad one. Now you well know there are certain things required to make up a good servant. I will tell you what a good servant should be, and then apply it spiritually as we go on. The first thing you would require in a servant would be that he should be an honest, conscientious man. God makes his people honest, he makes them sincere and conscientious, so that they may serve him honestly. "That on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience." Secondly, if your work be pretty heavy, which I suppose it sometimes is, you say, Well, here is an honest man, but is he strong enough? Well, now, the Lord will give strength to his servants. Why, when we first opened this chapel, I almost wished we were not here, for with so many of you, and such a large place, altogether I thought I had better do half like Joshua—atop the other side of Jordan; for I should not be able to master it; we should not be able to keep fifty people together scarcely; the place was too large altogether. But the Lord has strengthened me, and we have still been enabled to go on. So then the Lord will make his servants strong; he will give you strength according to your day. Then the next thing you want is for your servant to be a little bit clever; so that he shall not require to be constantly looked after, to have some one always at his heels; for then he would be more plague than profit. So the angel said to Daniel, "I am come to give thee skill and understanding." How did he do that? By revealing to him what the Messiah should put away, and what he should put into its place. "He shall finish transgression, make an end of sin, and make reconciliation for iniquity;" that is what he shall put away; and "he shall bring in everlasting righteousness." That will make you skilful. If you get bungling about the complete work of Christ, and bring in some creature doing, you are a bungling sort of creature; we must send you off, you will not do at all. That man is skilful, then, that holds fast the truth. And then you want your servant to be industrious. There is nothing without industry, depend upon it. Some people like to be carried on other people's shoulders; but to be happy you must work.