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Surrey Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE WORD OF TRUTH.

A SERMON

PREACHED

By MR. JAMES WELLS,

ON SUNDAY EVENING, 25TH JULY, 1869,

AT THE NEW SURREY TABERNACLE, WANSEY STREET.

"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."—Revelation xii. 11.

THE first clause of this verse, "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb," was our text on Lord's Day morning, the 11th of this month; and as the sermon this evening is to be printed in due course with the others, I felt a desire that my remarks upon the second clause, "and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death," should go with my discourse upon the first clause.

When it is said, "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb," that refers to Satan as an accuser; and Satan is not only a false accuser, but he knows how to be a true accuser; that is, he knows how to bring the sins of the people of God, and to surround them with them, to work upon their minds, and to persuade them that if they were the children of God they would not be the subjects of these faults and these sins; and thereby to sink them if possible into despair. And then, when the Holy Spirit is pleased to reveal to them what the dear Saviour is in his atonement, then, pleading that precious blood, and the Holy Spirit bringing home some word with power, that brings peace into the soul and enables it to realise a little of what is said in the 32nd Psalm:—"Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." So that in this way also they overcome Satan as an accuser; "they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb." In the second clause of our text you will perceive that Satan is met as a liar "by the word of their testimony;" that is, they overcame Satan's lies by God's truth. But if a man does not know God's truth, how can he then overcome Satanic and destructive lies, if he does not know what God's truth is? You will therefore perceive that we have before us, though I will be as concise as possible, some vital and important matters; for it is not only needful that we should know something about Jesus Christ, but also that we should understand what is said concerning him; that we may not receive false doctrines concerning him, though those doctrines may be drawn from God's word,—that is, delusive inferences drawn from God's own word; if they are false doctrines, they will be reckoned, though manufactured out of God's word, the doctrines

of men, and there stands the declaration, "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." We are here, then, reminded of the importance, not only of knowing Christ as the Mediator, but of knowing God's truth, and what is said concerning it.

I will, then, in the first place, notice *the testimony*; secondly, *the pre-eminence of the grace of God in the Christian*,—"they loved not their lives unto the death;" and then, thirdly, as far as time shall permit, *some of the things that await these conquering, these happy people*.

First, then, *the testimony*. Now, friends, all religion that can take us to heaven must come from heaven. I shall therefore be as clear as possible upon this testimony, and I will take a three-fold view of the same. Now, the testimony of the Old Testament saints was the testimony of faith,—it was the testimony which God gave to them, and they spoke of God by that testimony which he bore to them concerning himself. And in the 4th of Romans all the testimonies of the Old Testament saints are thus summed up:—There it is said, "It is of faith that it might be by grace, to the end "the promise might be sure to all the seed." But let us go to that that concerns us all. Now Abel by faith offered an excellent sacrifice to God, by which Abel obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and, by that sacrifice, he being dead yet speaketh. Let us be careful here. Here is a sacrifice, and that sacrifice typifies Jesus Christ. Now I want to know, even in the name,—I had almost said, of common sense, what view was Abel to take of that sacrifice, if he had no information from God as to what it meant? Now, hath God told us what the sacrifice of Christ means, or hath he not? For there is, as you are aware, in the religious world, a great variety of so-called interpretations given of the sacrifice of Christ, and I should be wasting time were I to notice them. Let us, then, first remember that Abel was, by faith in that sacrifice, righteous, that is to say, that sin was ended, that transgression was finished, and that Jesus Christ, by his sacrifice, hath made reconciliation for iniquity. It is a Bible truth that his sacrifice hath put away all sin; and as we said last Lord's Day morning week, upon the first clause of this text, the Saviour being God as well as man, therefore it is that he could compass, and did, as it were, compass infinity, and has put away all sin. If, therefore, you are taught what you are as a lost sinner, you will see what God saith concerning the sacrifice of Christ, that his blood cleanseth from all sin, and that he hath perfected for ever all them that are sanctified. It is a great thing to feel and know your need of this sacrifice, to see yourself a sinner under sin, under the law, under the wrath of God, under the curse of God, and that nothing can release you from the curse but the sacrifice of Christ, but the atonement of Christ; or rather, I here include his whole mediatorial humiliation work, that has destroyed sin, that has swallowed up death in victory. And then you will observe something else,—that, not only has the sacrifice of Christ done this, and this is a testimony that the saints have borne in all ages, it has been their authority for what they have stood out for; but there is something else, concerning his sacrifice, and that is that he, as a Mediator, belongs to the new covenant. I need not enlarge here;—yet, perhaps I am speaking this evening to some that have some concern about their state, but have not the slightest idea of what is meant by the new covenant. And perhaps you will say, Well, we can get to heaven without any acquaintance with that covenant. Well, friends, all the Old Testament saints were made acquainted with that covenant, and the New Testament saints were made acquainted with that covenant; and one scripture speaketh concerning it thus, that "the secret of the Lord"—that is, the counsel of the Lord, what the Lord means to do,—*"is with them that fear him."* The sinner's eyes are opened to see the judgments to come,—that is one part of the secret into which the righteous, the man that is a believer in Christ, will be let. He says, I

know the fulfilment of the threatening will come; I know that hell will come; I know that nothing, no, nothing but oneness with this Mediator, that was made sin representatively, and a curse representatively, can deliver me. I know the curse will come. The Christian lives in the full assurance of that secret. The natural man does not believe it, not really so, and he does not see it, he is not concerned about it. And the other secret that is with the righteous is this,—that all the sheep of Christ shall have eternal life, and that the resurrection to glory will come, that glorification will come, that Jesus Christ will come, and all his saints with him, and that the people shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, and shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end. Now, “the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant,”—that this mediatorial work of Christ is a work wrought in pursuance of an immutable covenant, as described, for instance, in the 110th Psalm,—“The Lord has sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.” Now get hold of these two things,—namely, the perfection of Christ’s work and the immutability of God’s counsel as revealed by that, for he is abundantly willing to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel;—get hold of these two things, then you have got the testimony of God. This is not the testimony of man. Ah, could you in your senses trust your soul with yourself? Could you trust it with any fellow-creature? Why, friends, look at it. I want some one to take up the welfare of my soul that can bring pardon for all my sins, that can bring a righteousness that shall lift me to heaven; I want some one to undertake the welfare of my soul that can take care of it every moment, night and day; I want one that has absolute dominion over the world, and over Satan, and over death, and over all circumstances; I can trust my soul nowhere else. Art thou then prepared from thine own experience to bear testimony that if you are saved you are saved thus by faith in the perfect work of Christ; for his work is perfect. “Warning every man,” every believing man, cautioning him against every other confidence; “teaching every man in all wisdom,” the wisdom that is in Christ,—“that we may present every man perfect in Christ.” Can you bear testimony that if you get to heaven it must be by that truth declared,—“Ye are complete in him who is the head of all principality and power;” secondly, that if you get to heaven it must be by the immutability of the counsel of God? Of course I here include the grace, and the mercy, and the power, and the promise of God, and everything that pertains to our salvation. If you are brought thus far, then you are in a position to overcome falsehood, for whatever doctrine contradicts the perfection that is in Christ, you will stand against it, and you will be found at last one of the Lord’s children. So he was their Saviour, in all their afflictions he was afflicted; and brought to know the immutability of his counsel, you will thus bear this testimony, and by this testimony you will overcome all error, you cannot be deceived, you cannot be deluded; you will thus see that your religion is of God, that your testimony is of God. Thus, then, it is by the word of their testimony.

But let us take another view of this. Is this a matter of importance? Well, I can say this, friends, to you, that just what poison is to the body, that false doctrine is to the soul; and if we are taught of God, you may depend upon it that the Lord will so try us, so afflict us, so thwart us, and so humble us, as to make us feel that nothing but his grace can save us. And besides, what did the martyrs suffer for? On what account was their suffering? Not on account of their naming the name of Christ, not on account of their abstractedly believing in Christ; their enemies, the antichristian power, never persecuted them for that, never put them to death for that; that was not it,—except the Pagan power, but I refer now to the Papal power especially;—the Papal power did not put the

people of God to death because they believed in Christ ; they put the people of God to death because of the doctrines they held. Therefore it is you find the souls of them that were slain for the *testimony* they held. Perhaps some of you will say, Do you mean to say that the martyrs the Papal power put to death were put to death for doctrine ? Certainly they were. For when the Pope pretended to be what you know he still pretends to be, the martyrs, holding the truth concerning the completeness that is in Christ, the immutability of God, and also the great truth that none but God could pardon their sins and save their souls, these men saw that Popery was one huge lie ; these men saw that the doctrines that were proposed to them were contrary to God's truth ; therefore they suffered the loss of anything and everything, and went through indescribable tortures, rather than give up God's truth. And so they overcame him by the truth. Why, these men, if they had said, "Well, if you will allow me to believe in Jesus Christ, I will confess holy Church, I will confess the Pope's authority, I will confess this and that ;" the answer would have been, "Certainly ; we shall be all right together then." So if you look into the matter, you will at once perceive that the Papal power put men to death not for simply believing in Christ, but for the truth's sake. And so the truth now, being unknown, is almost everywhere hated. Let us hear a word or two more upon this. Now it is by the truth of God that we are reconciled to the Lord ; and as I said just now, what poison is to the body, error is to the soul. Hence the apostle Paul, as you see, in his Epistle to the Galatians, when they brought in something for the creature to do to help to save the soul, instead of resting the whole of it with the Lord, you would almost have thought the apostle would have said, "Well, never mind ; I dare to say that the men mean well, and rather than have any divisions, rather than have anything unpleasant, rather than lessen the number of our hearers, rather than lower our name, rather than become the offscouring of all things, rather than be hated of all men for the truth's sake, rather than be cast out for the truth's sake, we will go on together ;—those of you that like to have circumcision and a few works, do ; those of you that like to say it is partly of grace and partly of works, do. But does the apostle shew any sign whatever of such compromising as this ? Why, friends, if you and I were to study all our lifetime, could we find stronger language than he uses to reprobate anything that would set aside any one part of God's blessed truth ? Does he not say, "If an angel from heaven should come and preach any other gospel to you, let him be accursed." Thus, then, those of you that know not only that salvation is of grace, but know the order of that grace, by holding fast this testimony you overcome Satan as a deceiver. He was a liar from the beginning. And let me say to this assembly this evening, though what I am now saying I am sure will not appear of essential importance to any of you except those that know the truth,—let me say that the fall of man took place not by any bodily act, or act of violence, but it took place simply by a falsehood, "Ye shall be as gods ;" and they believed that. And you would think, to look at it,—Well, there can't be so very much harm in that, in believing that that tree ought to be embodied with the other trees ;—I don't like this exclusive system, it looks like election, or something of that description ; why should not that tree be embodied with the other trees ? I don't see much harm in it ; and so Eve and Adam partook of the fruit. But what did God see in it ? what did your Maker see in it ? I will tell you what he saw in it ;—he saw this in it,—that Satan was put into God's place. I am not telling you that Adam and Eve meant to do this ; and I do not tell you that the Puseyite and Catholic priest intend to put Satan into the Saviour's place ; but as God liveth, they do ; as I am a living, or rather a dying man, they do ; for if you put a false doctrine into the place of God's truth, though men may say, "Never mind doctrine ;"—they see no harm in it, but God sees Satan put

into the place of his truth. Oh, you that know the truth, I was going to say, do love the truth, do contend for it; it is the truth that makes you free; the truth is your shield and buckler; and without this testimony, without this knowledge of the truth and this holding fast the truth you cannot overcome Satan as a liar. And recollect, he does all his fatal work by falsehood, transforming himself as an angel of light. Ah, what a world is this! The few men we have in our day scattered up and down the land that stand out for this testimony against that that deceives the soul, what a name they have. Go into a village,—Is there a place of worship here? Oh yes, several, sir; but whatever you do, don't go to that horrid little place just down that court, or down that lane; there is one of those hypers there; pray don't go there; they are all Antinomians together. Or I am going to London next week, I will ask my minister where I may go to. Well, there are plenty of places, but whatever you do don't go to hear *A* hyper, or *B* hyper, or *C* hyper; or any of those hypers; for the ministers are all very bad men, and the people are all very bad people, and it would be a horrible thing if you should go there. Oh, how Satan is permitted to succeed in this way; how he labours to invalidate the Saviour's testimony in this very way. I have often thought of a remark of one of our members. He was coming to London, and asked his minister, who was a low doctrine man, a man that had not felt his need of the perfection of Christ, and the immutability of God,—this man said to him,—Whom shall I go and hear? Well, he said, I will tell you where not to go; and he very emphatically cautioned him against us. Well, the man went about, and went about, and did not find what he wanted; and at last he thought, Well, if ever there was a wretch on earth, I am one; if ever there was a sinner on earth, I am one; if ever there was a creature deserved hell, I do; and whatever these people are at the Surrey Tabernacle, it is utterly impossible for them to be worse than I am; and if the minister is a devil of devils, he cannot make me worse than I am; and I will go. So the man came, and God met him, and took him up, and gave him liberty and peace. Ah, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" All good came from there. So then by a knowledge of the truth we overcome Satan's falsehoods. "By the word of their testimony." But take away this word of their testimony, then you must have such a Jesus Christ as the Pope may hand to you, just such a Jesus Christ as the dancing Puseyite may hand to you, just such a Jesus Christ as the free-willer or the half-way man may hand to you. But let me tell you that you are a sinner complete, and if you have found it out, nothing but a Saviour complete will meet your necessity; you are a poor, changing, capricious creature, and if you have found it out, nothing but the immutability of the blessed God can be a foundation for your hope for eternity. Thus you see the necessity of the truth to overcome falsehood, and hereby overcome Satan; for every false doctrine that is brought in puts Satan into the place of the blessed God. If the Roman Catholic priest did but see this, he would not be a Roman Catholic priest five minutes longer; if the Puseyite and thousands of others saw what they were doing—but we may say, as did the Saviour, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." But it would be unpardonable in us that know the truth to make light of it; it would be unpardonable in us to give way for one moment. "To whom," saith the apostle, "we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you."

Let me give you a sample of the Old Testament saints. I will first show you that which they all rested their hope upon; secondly, their character; and, thirdly, their happy destiny, illustrating the idea of overcoming by the word of their testimony, that their testimony was a testimony they had received from God, that made it their testimony. Now the Old Testament saints saw the yea and amen promises of God in Christ, the

promise of pardon, and mercy, and everything indeed needed for every poor sinner that has a heart to cry to God in the name of Christ for the mercy he needs. The apostle saith, in the 11th of Hebrews, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises." The apostle's meaning there is that Christ was not yet come, and therefore they could not yet receive the promises in the mediatorial fulfilment of them, because they were not yet mediatorially fulfilled. But mark, they were acquainted with the promises. Ah, say you, what promises were they? I will give you a sample, friends. God gave everything that he gave to Abraham by promise, and therefore gave it with certainty. The promise was positive,—a sworn promise:—"In blessing I will bless thee, and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Now they saw the promises,—not received them in mediatorial fulfilment, because Christ was not yet come, but they saw them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them. Now you may really here give way to a little perfectly safe reasoning, momentous as the matter is. You may almost hear one of the Old Testament saints say to another,—How do you hope to get to heaven? By the yea and amen promise in Christ Jesus. How do you hope to get to heaven? By faith in the yea and amen promise that shall be sealed by a Mediator's blood. They were all alike; so that the testimony they would bear would be just that I have now stated,—that they were saved by promise, that promise confirmed by the precious blood of Christ; he being the testator that should confirm these testamentary promises, making them yea and amen; at the same time those promises being backed up by the infallible faithfulness and immutability of the blessed God. That was their testimony, and that is their testimony. I thank the Lord, I bless the Lord, I glory in the Lord;—my soul hath, and will again magnify the Lord in the thought that he has not mixed up one precept with the essentials of eternal salvation;—no, bless his dear name, the same God that gave the promise gave faith to believe it; the same God that gave the promises quickened the souls of his people into a knowledge of their need and revealed the promises to them. Hence, saith the apostle, "He called me by his grace;"—by his grace. Ah, if he had waited for some preceptive good in me, he ne'er would have called me at all. "He called me by his grace;" saved me by his grace; by the grace of God I am what I am." Ah, my hearer, believe me that this matter is infinitely more important than I can explain to you. The little experience I have of these things, and the humble gifts with which I am favoured, are indeed far short of that grace and those gifts essential to set forth the vital importance of thus standing out for the truth against error. Then, say some, you that thus look to the promises, do you set the precepts aside? No, friends, we love the precepts and walk in them, and follow them; but the time will come when we shall have done with them. I am exhorted now to remember the poor, and to give to him that needeth,—a great many precepts,—to diligence, and to liberality, and so of the rest; but when we get to heaven, there will be no poor; no one will need any favour from another. There the precepts will cease, they will be all promises. And the more you know of the promises, the more, without knowing it, you will run in the way of the precepts. Hence the saints at the last great day, they seem to have been so taken up with the promises as to have forgotten what they had done altogether. "I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me." "Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in; or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?" We do not recollect, Lord. "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my

brethren, ye have done it unto me." Well, Lord, we have thought so much of thy loving kindness and thy mercy, that we had forgotten our own little bits of doings. Ah, but he does not forget them; he forgets our sins, but he will not forget our little doings, by which we show our decision for him, and love for his name. "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, and will not remember thy sins."

Now look at the character of the men in olden time that gained the victory not only by the blood of the Lamb, but by the word of their testimony. "They that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country;" and they confess that they are strangers and pilgrims on the earth; they confess that they are seeking something that this world cannot afford, and these promises contain that something. And they might have had opportunity to return, but now they desire a better country. You may desire better circumstances on earth, and you may have that desire all your life time, but that desire may be no proof you will ever get it. But if you have a heavenly desire, a living desire for the better country, that desire itself is the smoking flax the dear Saviour will not quench; that desire itself marks you as the bruised reed which he will not break. And if thou dost seek this heavenly country, and dost rest thy hope on Jesus, and canst bear testimony that you must be saved in the way the Holy Scriptures thus set forth, then that desire shall accompany thee all thy days, as a proof that thou art a spiritual and living soul, and God will not say thee nay. "They desired a better country; wherefore," however much the world may be ashamed to own them, "God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city;" and the words I have already quoted shew that they all got there; for "these all died in faith." I have had for a long time a desire to speak upon this point,—namely, the use of thus contending not only for Christ, but for the truth concerning him, contending for the testimonies of God concerning him. Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the commandments of God are that the saints of God believe in Jesus Christ, and love one another; here are they that have the testimony of Christ.

Secondly, I notice *the pre-eminence of the grace of God in the Christian*;—"they loved not their lives unto the death." Let me reason with you here closely for a few minutes. A great multitude of people followed the Saviour, and he turned round and gave them a solemn address upon this very point. "If any man come unto me, and hate not his father and his mother, his wife and his children, his sisters and his brethren, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Now, friends, I am not so far gone as to suppose that the meek and lowly Lamb of God that laid down his life for us, teacheth hatred to our relatives; that would be as contrary to his meaning as darkness is to light. Therefore, as our divines very well say, it means to love less; but that appears to me to be a very defective definition. Now the idea is this:—put your heavenly Father into the place or by the side of an earthly father; put the Saviour into one scale, and put all your relatives,—we will suppose that you have the kindest of parents, and brothers, and sisters, wives, and husbands, and so on;—now put all these into one scale, and all they can do for you, and then put the Saviour into the other scale; and then if you are called upon to say,—now which is the more weighty of the two, which is the more valuable of the two? would you not immediately say,—Well, my dear relatives must soon die, and will be my relatives no longer; I must soon die, and I shall be their relative no longer. Therefore, if I would, if I were put to the test, give up the Saviour rather than give up my relatives,—that is, if my relatives stand opposed to the Saviour, and I would rather give him up than give them up, why, then I should make a very unwise choice. So if all my relatives stand opposed to the Saviour, then I see that he is of infinitely more value than all my relatives; so then, if it must

he so, I will give them up rather than give him up, for he outweighs everything. I shall never forget what a man said that came to our chapel in the Borough Road a few times. He came from one of the theatres; he was some official in the theatre; he came a few times, and I had some hope of the man. I met him one day, and he looked very altered; he looked the worse for drink; and drink and the devil are very much alike,—satisfied only with entire and universal dominion. I said, "Why, I have not seen you lately;" and on he staggered; and a day or two afterwards a person said, "Do you know So and so?" "Yes." "Well, he is dead,—died drunk; and what do you think he said? He left your chapel, and said he would rather go to hell with his friends than to heaven without them." But then he must have been intoxicated in more senses than one when he said that;—it brings out most awfully the secret ignorance and enmity of the heart. Ah, my hearer, believe me when I tell you that the human heart is capable of anything. One of old said, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do such things?" If therefore we are taught of God, and made to be victors, we must be prepared to give up anything and everything rather than give up Christ, rather than give up saving truth. And now mark,—*"his own life also."* If we look at our mortal life, we thank God for it, and we pray the Lord to be with us in life. I am not going to be unnatural; my religion does not teach me to be unnatural. If I had my choice, as far as I am concerned as a creature, I would rather live a nice little number of years yet,—that is, if I had strength to be useful. Still, at the same time, if we had to live an antediluvian life, the end must come; and for us rather than part with our life to part with Christ if we were put to the test, would not be wise. So, then, all the martyrs were very wise in giving up their life rather than give up God's truth; for *"whosoever shall lose his life for my sake—and the gospel's,"*—do not separate those two expressions,—*"for my sake and the gospel's,"*—for the truth; for while the blood of the Lamb overcomes the enemy as an accuser, truth overcomes him as a liar and deceiver;—*"whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it."* Perhaps I had better not say any more upon this part; or else the Saviour goes on much further with it, but I dare not now meddle with it, and therefore will make just a few remarks in conclusion. Do you not think, every one of you, that the dear Saviour was wise in prizing the counsel of God above everything else? Do you not think the Saviour was wise in making it his meat to do the will of his heavenly Father, and to finish his work? Do you not think the Saviour was wise to become poor, and have nothing to do with this world, rather than give up anything that pertained to our eternal welfare? For Christ is not only a substitute for us, but also an example to us, not that you are called upon to give up much outward comfort, but thousands of our brethren have been, and we must have the same spirit; as saith the Saviour, *"Except a man forsake all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."* Now you must not take that scripture in the letter of it; we do not ask you to forsake your houses, and your fields, and your business, and your property, and your avocations; it would be ridiculous. The meaning of course there is twofold;—first, if you are put to the test you are prepared to do so rather than part with God's truth; and then, secondly, do you see so much value in Christ, do you see so much essential importance in holding fast his truth, that to the best of your judgment you trust you are prepared to give up anything and everything rather than give up his truth? If so, then join with me, and I will join with you, to pray for more grace, to live in more assurance of interest in these things; for the martyrs, if they had not been blessed with great assurance of interest in the things, could not have suffered as they did. I felt these things very deeply a few days ago, when I hardly knew which way matters would go with me, whether I should live or die.