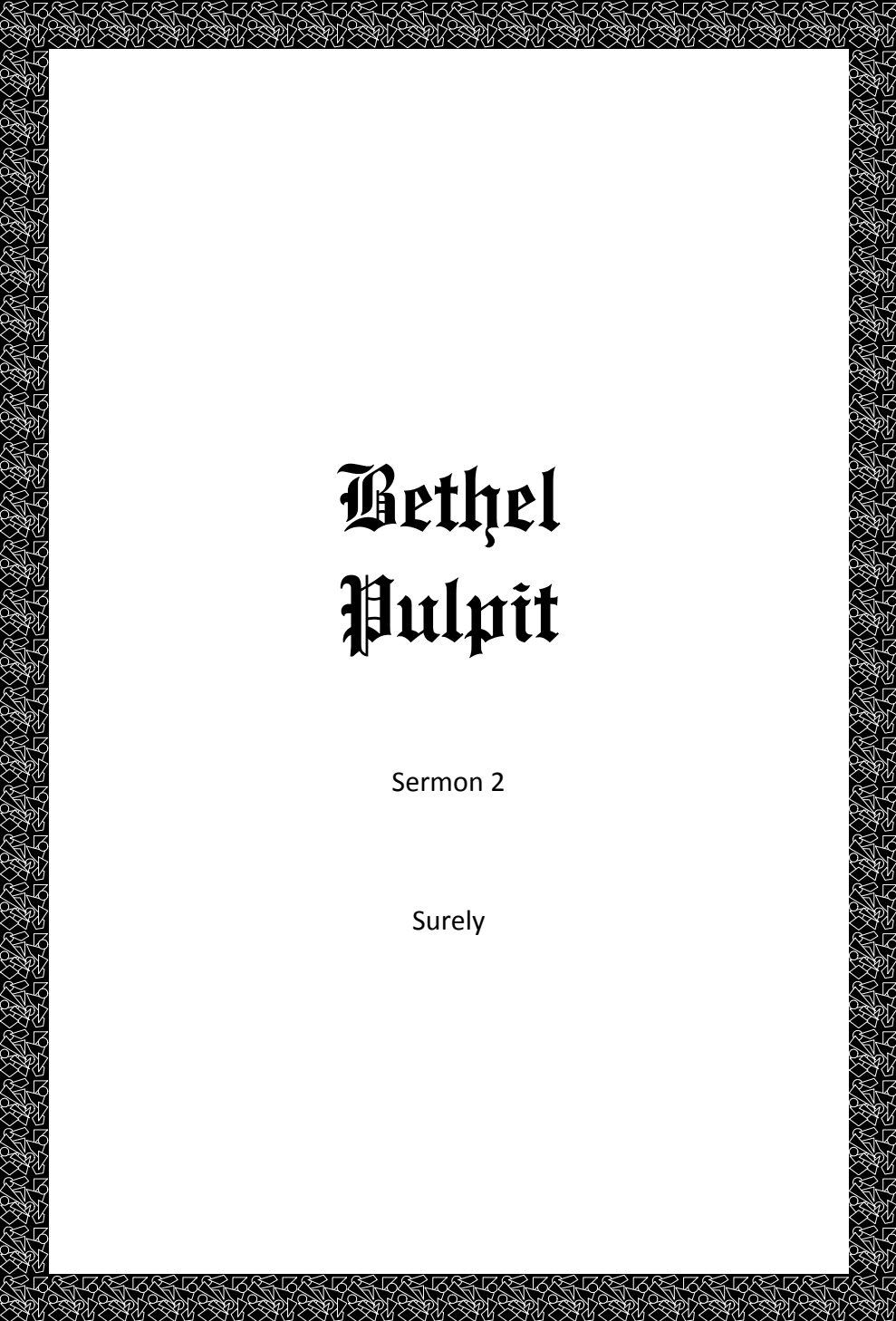




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 2

Surely

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Thursday, 22nd August, 1985**

Text: “*Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows*”
(Isaiah 53. 4).

There are no wonders like the wonders of redemption. Perhaps some of you have had to say,

“E’er since, by faith, I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.”

Now here we are led by faith into the wonders of redemption. Here we approach the cross and view the dear Redeemer bleeding, dying, making atonement for sin. We have to say, as God did to Moses, “Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.” The wonders of redemption! The wonder that this One who hangs there bleeding, dying, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, is none less than God’s dear, eternal Son. You say, “Why is it that the great Creator should hang bleeding, dying on the cross?”

“’Tis love the cause unfolds,
The deep mysterious cause,
Why He who all the world upholds,
Hangs upon yonder cross.”

So by faith we venture and by faith we behold the Man.

“Surely He hath borne our griefs.” You know, beloved friends, for many, many years now, whenever I read Isaiah 53, there seems to be such an emphasis, such a weight on this word, “*surely*.” It was so when the Lord led me by faith into the mysteries of redemption here, this word “*surely*.” “*Surely He hath borne our griefs*.” So I want to linger for a little while on this opening word. I do not want to hasten over it. “Surely, *surely*, He hath borne our griefs.”

The first thing is *the certainty of these things which took place*. We have to say with the apostle that “we have not followed cunningly devised fables.” We have to say with the hymnwriter,

“’Tis no wild fancy of our brains,
No metaphor we speak.”

O the certainty of it, the truth of it, that the Lord Jesus did suffer, did bleed, did die! The awful, solemn, mysterious fact of it! “Surely, *surely*, He hath borne our griefs.”

Then also there is the emphasis we have here on *the real sorrows, the real agonies of the Lord Jesus*. “Surely He hath borne our griefs.” I do not know whether you have ever been tempted on this point as I have been often over the years. I do not want to put doubts and difficulties into your minds, but there is this temptation: that if the Lord Jesus be true, almighty God, and He *is*, then His sufferings could not be just the same as those of a mere man. It may be that someone here has been sorely tempted on that point, that though He did suffer, perhaps there was a mitigating of those sufferings because of His divine nature. Now this is God’s answer to it: “*Surely* He hath borne our griefs.”

You see, Satan may at times tempt you on the Sonship of the Lord Jesus and His Godhead, and sometimes he may tempt you on His real, true, proper humanity. He was as real a Man as any who ever lived, apart from sin. He could suffer as much as any man who ever lived. And really, beloved friends, I believe that He suffered more. You say, “How do you make that out?” Well, shall I put it like this: if a person is a genius at music, the slightest discord grieves him. A person who is not musical at all is not affected by that discord. So with a very godly man, when he looks on sin in others, it grieves him. With an ungodly person, it has no effect. Now my point is this. With what horror did the holy soul of the Lord Jesus view sin. “He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin.” Now who can fathom that, what it meant for the dear Redeemer to be made sin, the awful weight of sin that was laid upon Him, that sin that was imputed to Him? “Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.” There was never love like His and there was never sorrow like His. “Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto Me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted Me in the day of His fierce anger.” “Surely, *surely*, He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.”

Then there is another aspect of it, and O that some of you might be led into it by the Holy Ghost. That is, *the “surely” relating to the word “our.”* That is, may you be blessed with the sweet assurance of faith of your personal interest in these sorrows that He underwent, these agonies that He endured. Now may the Holy Ghost bear that witness with your heart. “Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.” And may faith say, “Mine.” “Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine.” Then Calvary to you will be the place of love. It will be the place of humility. It will be the place of repentance, as in measure you say, “He loved me, and gave Himself for me.” “Surely, *surely*, He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.”

You know, beloved friends, there are many “surelys” in Scripture. If you take your concordance you will be amazed how many there are, how many times in Scripture we have the word “surely.” And some of them are very blessed “surelys,” some of them are very beautiful “surelys,” and all of them flow from this wonderful “surely” as it concerns Christ on the cross. “Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.” This is the ground, the foundation, of all the other “surelys.”

Let me mention only one or two. “*Surely* I will do thee good.” That was God’s word to Jacob, that word that Jacob in his greatest distress could plead before God, a promise spoken not just to Jacob, but to all the seed of Jacob. “Surely I will do thee good” – now, and to all eternity. And that “surely” is built on this “surely.” All the promises flow through the blood of Christ.

Another “surely” is this: “*Surely*, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.” Now that “surely” is based on this “surely.” As a sinner, you can never say you had one grain of righteousness apart from Christ, or one ounce of strength apart from the atonement. All the righteousness God’s people receive, all the strength they ever know, flows to them through the blood of Christ.

Then just to mention what is perhaps the best-known of all the “surelys,” the concluding verse of Psalm 23. “*Surely* goodness and ‘mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.” That “surely” is based on this “surely.” Apart from the cross of Christ, there would be no goodness and mercy for a guilty sinner, and most certainly it would never follow you all the days of your life, and

there would be no heaven apart from the blood of Christ. Apart from Isaiah 53, heaven must have been empty. But here is a sinner and he can say, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." And the verse begins with that "surely." "*Surely* goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

"*Surely* He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." Have you ever blessed God that the gospel is sure, that it speaks of things that are sure, things that are certain? They are all bound up with this "surely," here. O that sure foundation on which the church is built, that foundation laid in the blood of Christ! And how sure the blessings of the gospel are, and how sure the promises, and how sure the covenant of grace! How sure the hope of a believer! They are all bound up with this "surely." There would not have been anything sure apart from the sufferings and death of Christ. You know, beloved friends, it is not how much religion we have: it is the reality of it. If the Lord speaks that one word "surely" into your heart and mine, then we shall "enjoy a gospel day and heaven begun below." "*Surely* He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows."

Well, let us go on. Here we see the Lord Jesus as the sin-bearer. It was because He undertook to bear His people's sins that He had to bear their griefs and carry their sorrows. In those mysterious transactions of the cross, all the sins of all God's people were taken and laid on the Lord Jesus. He bore them. O the wonderful mercy it is that in bearing them He for ever bore them away. "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us."

On the great day of atonement, there were two goats. The lot was cast, and one goat was for the Lord, and one for the people. One goat was slain and burnt without the camp. Its blood was brought by the high priest into the most holy place. The other goat, the scape goat, had all the sins of Israel ceremonially laid on it. It was then led out into the wilderness and left to wander there, never again to be seen by human eye. It symbolised the complete removing of sin in the atonement.

Now we have it here. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." You see, divine justice admitted of a substitute, if a substitute could be found which would satisfy the law, satisfy divine justice, make atonement for sin, pay the ransom price, bear away the sins

of the people of God. Justice allowed of a substitute. “And He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore His arm brought salvation.” It was none but Jesus. O how willing He was to become His people’s substitute!

And this verse speaks of substitutionary sufferings, and a substitutionary atonement. What is a substitute? One that takes the place of another.

“He took the dying traitor’s place,
And suffered in his stead;
For man (O miracle of grace!)
For man the Saviour bled.”

“Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.” It was because He bore His people’s sins that He had to bear their griefs and carry their sorrows. It was because He went to Calvary as His people’s Substitute. In a word it is this: He instead of me. That is substitution.

But O these griefs that He bore, these sorrows that He carried as the Substitute, as the sin-bearer! The cruel nails, the spear, the crown of thorns, the shame, the mocking, the scoffing, the derision. They all forsook Him and fled. “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” And then the bitter sorrows of His holy soul, that sin that was laid upon Him which He bore – sin not His own. And then the hiding of His Father’s face, the smiting of the sword of divine justice which reached His very heart.

“Surely He hath borne our griefs, and *carried* our sorrows.” He carried them even to death, because it was necessary not only that He should suffer and bleed, but that He should die, death being the wages of sin. It is by His death that His people live. “Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.” Yet though He died, He rose triumphant and ascended into heaven, and ever lives and reigns at God’s right hand. O how sure these things are!

“How sure is our salvation! Christ
Died, rose, ascended, intercedes.”

“Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.”

Now I wonder how many of you see a beauty and an attraction in the sufferings and death of Christ, in the wonderful love He displayed, and in the work of redemption that He accomplished, in the salvation that He brought in. There is salvation in no other. There is salvation nowhere else. And the work of the Holy Spirit is this: “I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him.” Now that is the Holy Spirit’s work concerning the substitutionary sufferings and death of the dear Redeemer, to cause you to feel your great need, the need of your soul, the need of your sin, your need for eternity, for the judgment day, your lost, ruined condition, your inability to do anything to save yourself or merit heaven, and then to turn your eyes to the cross of Christ, that beholding the Lord Jesus you might mourn over your sins, and rejoice in that hope, that salvation you find in a suffering Saviour.

“Death’s within thee, all about thee;
But the remedy’s without thee;
See it in thy Saviour’s blood.”

“Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.”

You say, “Was it for me?” Well, venture on Him, confessing your sin. Look to Him and Him alone. Plead the merit of His death, His precious blood. Hear Him cry, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” And may you, like Bunyan’s pilgrim at the cross, have cause to say, “He hath given me rest by His sorrow and life by His death. Blest cross, blest sepulchre, blest rather be the Man who there was put to shame for me.” “Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.”

It almost seems wrong to bring controversy into such a sacred subject as this, but there is a class of people who misuse this beautiful verse. Really, this verse is the foundation of “pentecostalism,” and their doctrine is that when the Lord Jesus died on the cross, He not only bore His people’s sins but He bore all their illnesses, all their ailments, and the teaching is that a sinner by faith should claim what Christ accomplished at Calvary, not only with regard to sin, but also with regard to sickness. The doctrine of faith-healing is built on this verse.

Now the teaching as it is set forth is this: that this beautiful verse is quoted in Matthew 8 where the Lord Jesus was dealing with sickness, and we are told that here was the fulfilment of this word in Isaiah 53. "When the even was come, they brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils: and He cast out the spirits with His word, and healed all that were sick: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." Their teaching is that surely Isaiah 53 speaks of the death of Christ and Calvary, and yet we are told in the New Testament that this was to bare the sicknesses, the illnesses of His people.

It seems to me that this is a dangerous doctrine, especially for a poor child of God who is seriously ill and seems to make no recovery. It seems to me a solemn charge that that person is not exercising faith in the value of Calvary to set free from sickness. Many of the most godly of the Lord's people have had very afflicted bodies and have had to endure much sickness and much suffering.

But what of this claim concerning Matthew 8? Well, beloved friends, it is a misinterpretation of Scripture. In Matthew 8 *at Capernaum* the Lord Jesus was healing sick people, and that was a fulfilment of this verse; He was bearing their griefs and carrying their sorrows. But at the end of the gospels we read of Calvary. This is a second and completely different fulfilment of this verse. There *at Calvary* the Lord Jesus was not bearing the illnesses and the sicknesses of His people, but bearing their sin, their guilt, and taking them away, taking them away for ever. Now I hardly feel it right to introduce controversy when we come to such a sacred subject as this, but as this point is so prevalent in the religious world today and as such multitudes of people are quoting this verse as their foundation, it only seems right to me to give you the real, scriptural meaning of it. "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows."

Now there is one other very blessed side to it, and that is this. "We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." The Lord Jesus, throughout the whole of His earthly life, was a Man of sorrows. In the fullest sense at the cross He bore His people's griefs and carried their sorrows. And yet throughout the whole of that sacred life, "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," He was bearing our

griefs and carrying our sorrows. Why? That He might be a faithful and sympathising High Priest, no longer on the cross, not now in the grave, but exalted high at God's right hand.

But you see, beloved friends, it is this. Are there griefs that weigh you down? What are these griefs – the griefs of your soul, disappointments, trials, griefs in your circumstances? What are these sorrows, these heavy sorrows that you carry, that press you down? O may you look upwards to heaven and there see the loving, sympathising heart of the Lord Jesus, full of compassion. He knows what griefs are. He knows what sorrows are. Once He bore them. Once He carried them. “In all their affliction He was afflicted.” Now He suffers no more. Now He ever lives and reigns in glory in heaven. That human, loving, sympathising heart He still retains. He does not forget Calvary. He does not forget Gethsemane. He can never forget the griefs, the bitter sorrows, that He once carried.

Beloved, in your griefs, in your sorrows, He knows, He understands, He cares. Perhaps those closest to you do not really understand, but He does. O He is possessed of “the spirit of a quick understanding.” He knoweth the way that we take. Job put it like this: “*But* He knoweth.” Other people may not. “*But* He knoweth.” My sorrows may be bitter, my griefs may be extreme. “But He knoweth the way that I take.” It is not just as God that He knows everything, but from solemn experience, as He was once on earth. “When He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before.” There is not a grief they bear, not a sorrow they carry, but He Himself has borne it, He Himself has carried it. Well, may you by faith look up, away from your sorrows, your griefs, and behold a living, loving, sympathising Saviour.

“Him your Fellow-sufferer see;
He was in all things like to you.
Are you tempted? So was He,
Deserted? He was too.”

“Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.”

But O that loving sympathy, the sympathy of the living Head for the suffering members, the sympathy of the great Shepherd for the feeblest sheep, the feeblest lamb! May you be able to take everything to Him, lay

everything before Him, leave everything with Him, with the sweet assurance that He knows, that He understands, that He sympathises. But it is not a helpless sympathy, an impotent sympathy. Almighty power is mingled with His mercy, mingled with His compassion. “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations.” He knows how to uphold you, how to bless you, and O what a fulness dwells in Him as a once suffering, but now risen and exalted Christ! That fulness of grace, that fulness of divine help, that fulness of all that you need. “Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.”

Well, may the Lord enable you to look up, to fix your eyes upon Him. “Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass.” May it be, “Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you.” And O that your hearts might just be touched with His sorrows. That will make your sorrows very light. May you have a little touch of His griefs. That will make your pathway smooth. If you know something of the bitterness of the cup that He drank to its very dregs, then the cup which your Father has given you, you will be able to drink it. You will walk in fellowship with Christ in His sufferings. But above all may you know the love in it, may you know the mercy in it, may you know forgiveness in it, and may you know heaven in it. “Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.”