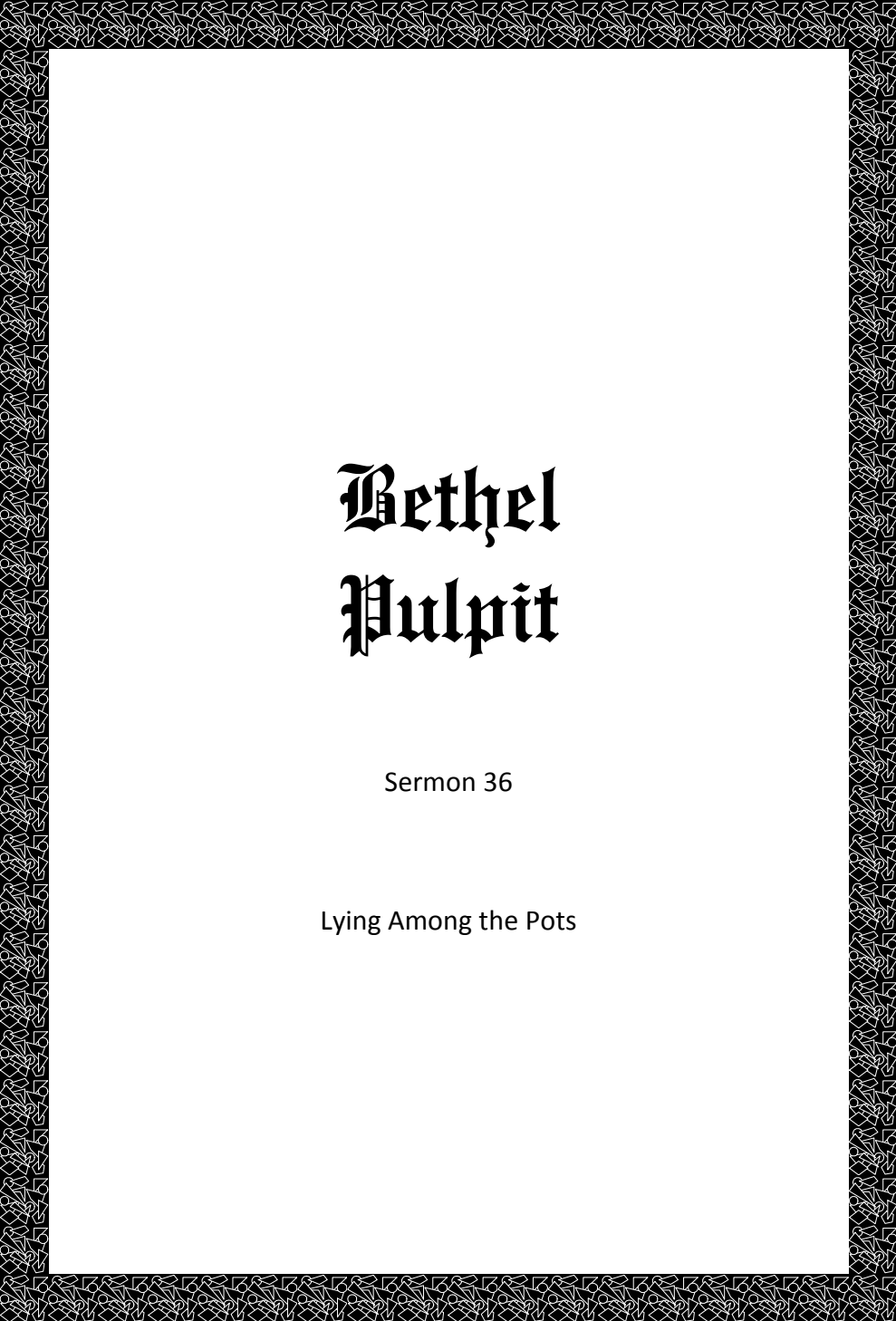




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 36

Lying Among the Pots

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Thursday, 17th April, 1969**

Text: *“Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold” (Psa. 68. 13).*

This Psalm contains some very sweet, precious things. It appears that it was written on the occasion when King David had the ark of God brought up from the house of Obed-Edom to Zion. And as David brings the ark up, he looks right beyond the type, looks to his greater Son, the Lord Jesus, and he has a sweet view by faith, not just of the ark entering Zion but the Lord Jesus rising, ascending into glory. “Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive: Thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also.”

There are some very sweet, precious truths in this Psalm. It was the Psalm that so often resounded when the Puritan army went into battle. It was the song which was so often sung by the godly Covenanters in Scotland. There are some sweet things in it. But also, my friends, you will notice this: there are some things in the Psalm most difficult to be understood, perhaps some of the hardest portions in the whole of the Word of God to understand. The point seems to be this. There are so many things that David alludes to, and now, many generations afterwards, we do not quite understand his allusions.

Concerning this verse I have read to you, there have been so many, many different things said. I have not the time to go into all these things; I leave them. I feel that the vital point here is very clear. The vital point is this: it is a mounting up, a rising up above inferior things. And there is a complete contrast, a striking contrast laid before us. On the one hand there is “lien among the pots.” I take this to be a rubbish heap; nothing attractive there at all; a scene of desolation, destruction and death. The opposite figure is the dove ascending up to the heavens, with the sun glinting upon its feathers, sometimes giving a glimpse of silver, and sometimes giving the appearance of gold – a sweet sight of liberty; a sweet sight of beauty.

Now here is this striking contrast, and the great point is mounting up above inferior things. I want to bring a few aspects of it before you this evening as the Lord shall help me. I believe living souls are exercised on this point, this mounting up: "O that I might know more of it!"

"Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." I want to speak of it first of all concerning the beginning of a work of grace in a sinner's heart. You know where a sinner is, my friends, before the Holy Ghost begins with him: he lies among the pots. This is where the world is. You can look around at the world and this is the Lord's description of it, this is the Lord's judgment upon it: it lies among the pots. It is lying on a rubbish heap. You see one here among the pots. It is lying on a rubbish heap. You see one here seeking after earthly wealth and gaining so much. It is only lying among the pots. You see another fulfilling all his ambitions and he is admired by men, he is honoured by men. In the sight of God he lies among the pots. And so you may go on with all that the world calls good or great. It is lying among the pots; but only grace will bring us to realise this.

If there are those of you here tonight who are still in nature's darkness and death, you are lying among the pots. You are like Job upon the dunghill; it is the rubbish heap. With all your desires and all your schemes and plans and high thoughts and possessions, you lie among the pots; and you must lie there unless grace intervene. O how solemn man's fallen state! He lies among the pots, and yet so great is his darkness and blindness, he does not realise it, does not realise the awful, sad, solemn state where he is found.

"Lien among the pots." But what a difference when grace intervenes! Then, for the first time, there is a rising above all this rubbish which is around. The convicted sinner does not feel it. He does not feel to be like the wings of a dove covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold; but he is. There is something mounting up, something rising heavenwards, something ascending Christwards from that heart for the first time. And as the Lord Jesus looks down from heaven He sees it as a thing of beauty. He sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied. Are there some of you brought there? You have "lien among the pots," but now there is something which begins to lift you above them. You look at your

vain hopes, your empty religion; you look at your earthly attainments, your earthly possessions; you see it all as lying among the pots. So the apostle looked at all his attainments, all his religious attainments, and he said, "I do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him." This is a soul ascending heavenwards: a little prayer springing from your heart; a desire after Jesus; a prayer for forgiveness; a longing that the Lord might be merciful to you; "an upward glancing of the eye"; a going forth towards Calvary, seeking after an interest in the Saviour's blood. Do you know anything of it? Is there anything in your heart which was not there by nature? Anything that begins to ascend? Anything which begins to rise up, to mount up heavenwards? O, the delight the Lord Jesus takes in this! He sees it as "the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

Then there is this. There is liberty spoken of here, a soul set at liberty. Under that sense of conviction, as you feel your soul's need, and defilement, you feel it to be this, lying among the pots, unworthy, helpless, sinful, until the Lord graciously appears and sets you free, sets your soul at liberty. Then what a blessed exchange there is! Instead of the pots, it is "as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." This, if you will, is "beauty for ashes." O the difference when the Lord intervenes! When He makes known the value of His precious blood! When He reveals to your soul the value of His precious, sacred obedience unto death! O the difference! The Lord gives you "beauty for ashes."

This words spoken here is a sweet promise, a gospel promise. Perhaps there are some of you here in your souls' concerns who so feel the death within you, death about you; you so feel your unworthiness, helplessness and your guilt; you feel that you are lying among the pots. Now this is a sweet promise made to you. It is a gospel promise, and it is the Lord who can perform it for you. It is the promise that the Lord will bring you into sweet, gospel liberty. And you know, liberty in the Word of God is always by the blood of Christ. Doctrinally, spiritually and feelingly it is by "the blood of the covenant" there is deliverance for prisoners from "the pit that can hold no water." Then as you lie among the pots, you feel you cannot rise, you cannot mount. But can you look upwards to a once-crucified, now risen Saviour? Can you cry? Are there desires that go out to Him? O the sweetness of this promise! Sweet as

the promise is as made, it is sweeter still in its performance, in its fulfilment.

“Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.” There is another point here concerning liberty. The psalmist on one occasion said: “Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped.” There will be times when your soul is ensnared, and when Satan catches you in his snare. Then you are held fast, you are held secure in bondage. Then there is no mounting up in holy joy, no rising up in sacred liberty, no true worship, no real prayer, no union and communion; you are earthbound in the snare of the fowler. Perhaps some of you are there tonight. You feel that Satan has ensnared you, and you lie among the pots and your wings are tarnished and filthy, your wings are damaged and broken. You know what a snare is? The fowler lays his snare to catch the bird and he puts there something which is most attractive, which will draw the bird to it. The snare is hidden out of sight; the bird can only see that which attracts. It goes for it, and then it is caught, it is a prisoner; it cannot set itself free. My friends, beware of snares, Satan’s snares which captivate you, which encage you, which bind you fast! Then there is no liberty.

You say, “What are Satan’s snares?” Well, it is a vast subject, but I will just say this: anything, *anything* Satan will use as a snare. The way to discern Satan’s snares is this: if you find your affections going forth after something too much; if you find your heart set on anything outside Christ too much, then you need to watch.

“We seldom see the snare,
Before we feel the smart.”

Satan will use anything to draw your heart away from Christ. And when you are ensnared, you cannot set yourself free. The more you struggle, the more you lie among the pots. O beware of these snares!

You say, “Is there any hope for a sinner who is ensnared?” There may be some of you here tonight and you are ensnared. Perhaps outwardly you have backslidden. Perhaps some special sin has come upon you; or perhaps there is something lawful which has unduly captivated your heart, and you are ensnared. The psalmist says, “Our soul

is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we are escaped.” So this is the point, the breaking of the snare – and then there is liberty. But who can break it but He whose precious office is the Breaker, gone forth before His people? And O, He has a blessed ability to break snares, and then your soul is delivered; then it can mount up, and love Him, and praise Him, and adore Him, and worship Him. Then you walk out this experience (it is all on mercy’s ground):

“Returning prodigals shall find,
Though they are base, the Father’s kind.”

But perhaps you will find that your wings have been hurt. Perhaps you will find that your wings have been affected by filth and mire. “Though ye have lien among the pots, *yet* shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.”

I want to speak on spirituality of heart. This is a mounting up, a rising above inferior things. This is being “as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.” I just pause here to make one observation. You will have noticed the promise does not say, “ye shall *have* wings of a dove,” it says, “Ye shall be *as the wings of a dove*.” There is a difference, you know. As if a child of God, set at liberty and blessed with sweet spirituality of heart, is all wings, nothing but wings. “Ye shall be as the wings of a dove”; not just, ye shall have them. Have there ever been occasions with you, dear child of God, when you have been all wings? But O, when we are made real before God, how painfully we have to feel how little we know of such an experience as this! The Lord Himself gives that clear exhortation: “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Jesus sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above . . . for your life is hid with Christ in God.”

As you are made honest before the Lord, how much do you really know of this mounting up with the wings of a dove? When you read, when you stop to think, when you try to meditate, are you *always* here? Or are you *often* here? This rising up with the wings of a dove, soaring to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus? When you seek to pray, do you find that with the wings of faith your desires penetrate within the veil? When you come to the house of God, do you find this spirituality of heart, with your affection set on things above? Or is it rather this: is it so often

that, amidst all these devotions, you lie among the pots? O the solemnity of our state! By nature we can no more rise to eternal things than in a natural sense we can fly. And even when grace is in the heart, when the Lord does enable His people to rise and mount up, do you not find this, that there is a heavy stone in your heart, that stone of sin, and unworthiness, and guilt, and unbelief, and it ever pulls you down, pulls you earthwards? I feel we are solemnly deficient on this point, this mounting up with the wings of a dove.

I want to press this point on you – we have not the ability to rise up; and yet the Lord commands His people to rise up. And there is a sinful carelessness; a child of God can get into a very solemn state. A sinner redeemed with precious blood and saved by grace can become content with lying among the pots, and satisfied with rubbish. O the solemnity of this! O that there were more heavenly aspirations in our heart!

“Fain would my thoughts leap out and fly,
But sin hangs heavy on my soul.”

Well, there is a promise here (but what do we know of the fulfilment of it?): “Yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.” It is the Holy Spirit’s sacred office to take a sinner’s affections and set them on things above. The Holy Spirit is that celestial Dove who descended on the head of the Lord Jesus at the time of His baptism. That is a good prayer of the hymnwriter:

“Descend from heaven, immortal Dove,
Stoop down and take us on Thy wings,
And mount, and bear us far above
The reach of these inferior things.”

It is the Holy Spirit’s work. O to know more of this! This rising far above the inferior things of time and sense, the inferior things of outward religion! This rising by faith to view the Lord Jesus, “to see the King in His beauty”! It is the Holy Spirit’s work. He fulfils it when He takes of the things of Jesus and shows them to you. He fulfils it when He makes known in your heart something of the power of Christ’s resurrection. O to know more spirituality of heart! More of that gracious work of the

celestial Dove in bearing us above inferior things! Do you have to say, “Shall I always live at this poor dying rate?”

“Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.” There is a point here which touches the world. Our carnal hearts lean toward the world; our carnal hearts are drawn to worldly things. There is a word which says, “Love not the world, neither the things which are in the world, for he that loveth the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” Then, how can I be lifted above the world with all its allurements, with all its pomp and with all its glare? Only as the Lord makes you “as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.”

There are the wings of love as well as the wings of faith, and sweetly constrained by love to a crucified Saviour, there is a mounting above inferior things. There are two things as you mount up with the wings of a dove. One is this: the world is beneath your feet. Have there ever been times with you when the world has been beneath your feet? The other thing is this: the higher a person is lifted above the earth, the more faint, the more indistinct the world below appears. And as it is in nature, so it is spiritually. The more you are lifted in sweet meditation toward the Lord Jesus and in union and communion with Him, the more you are enabled feelingly to cast anchor within the veil, the more the world will become strangely dim in your eyes.

“Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.” There is a point here concerning temptation. God’s people at times are sorely tempted; and perhaps some of you have come to the house of God tonight sorely tempted. Perhaps you are sorely tempted that you are right out of the secret; another one tempted to do something that is wrong; some of you tempted by an evil world, the allurements of sin and Satan. You will know something at times of temptation. And temptation has a downward pull, and it is too strong for you. There is only one thing you can do and that is to cry to the Lord that in the riches of His mercy He will deliver you. “Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me.” That word is usually spoken concerning a person in affliction. Well, that *is* true, but do not forget, it touches you in your temptations. “Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee.”

How does the Lord deliver? As He gives you the wings of a dove covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold. And then, only then, as the Lord graciously enables you to rise above temptation, you are free from it; it cannot lay hold of you. Christ is greater than Satan, and His grace mightier than the power of sin; and there is a setting free, there is a bringing forth, there is a lifting up.

“Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.” There is a point here concerning what Gadsby calls “carking care.” Are there not times with you when you find so many things lay hold of you, and they get on top of you, they are too heavy for you, they are too much for you? Things in your life, things concerning the church of God, things in your circumstances, sometimes great things, sometimes small things, and they weigh on you, they burden you, they drag you down, and you cannot rise above them. Well, perhaps some of you are at this very point, this very place, tonight. You cannot rise above it, you cannot get free from it. Whatever you do, wherever you go, it rests upon you, it weighs heavily upon you, and you lie among the pots, and you feel the misery of it. Sweet promise this: “Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.” As the Lord by His Spirit kindly intervenes, as He has compassion on you, as He comes right where you are, He takes possession of your soul and your feelings and your exercises, and He kindly lifts you above the reach of all these carking cares and, “If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”

There are times with a child of God when there are all these cares surrounding him, but with the wings of a dove he rises above it. O perhaps you long for it: “O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest!” Well, there is a resting place in Jesus. Sweet view the prophet had in Isaiah 60: “Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?” Well, these are free from carking cares, they are lifted above them; but they are fleeing, they are fleeing as the doves to their windows. These windows, of course, signify the homes of the doves which they make in those little clefts in the rock. My friends, as you feel all these things weighing upon you, distressing you, pulling you down, this is the work of faith: to fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their

windows. You flee for refuge to the dear Saviour of sinners; you find a refuge, a hiding place,

“Within the clefts of His dear side,
Where all His saints in safety dwell,
And what from Jesus can divide?
Not all the rage of sin or hell.”

“Yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.” There is a point here concerning affliction. How often a child of God in affliction sinks down among the pots; like Job with all his boils, as he sat down upon the earth; he could not raise himself, he could not get away from his trial, he could not set himself free from his affliction. Or there in his misery, he sinks down like Elijah under the juniper tree; he lay among the pots. “Let me die and not live, for I am not better than my fathers.” But what do you find with Job and with Elijah? Something precious for them. And the other, they were set at liberty, and they were able to rise above their trials, above their afflictions.

There are times when the Lord draws near to His dear children in the midst of their afflictions as they lie among the pots, and He speaks some sweet word, grants a little touch, a little taste of His love, a visit, a sense of His gracious presence, something secret to sweeten all. And then there is the rising, the mounting. Among the pots you feel to be forsaken and forgotten, and no man has pity upon you. But the Lord kindly remembers this forlorn, feelingly forgotten one lying among the pots. “O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of Me.”

“Forget thee, I will not, I cannot, thy name
Engraved on My heart shall for ever remain.”

The Lord remembers, and He comes where you are, and He sets you free.

“Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.” I just want to speak on this word as it touches the glorious resurrection in the last day. Medley says, “Then let me mount and soar away,” and he speaks of that glorious resurrection. The body of the believer must return to the earth. There must be that turning of the body into dust. And here now, as sin reigns unto death, there is a lying among the pots. But death and the grave have not the victory. “O death, where is thy sting? O grave,

where is thy victory?" There is to be a most glorious resurrection in the last day, when "the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and the dead in Christ shall rise first," and those that remain shall rise to meet Him in the air. So shall they ever be with the Lord. Glorious prospect for a child of God! There is a fulfilment of this (you know, the grave is not the end): "Though ye have lain among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

These are just a few aspects of the sacred truths hidden here. In closing, I feel there are various ones of you here in these circumstances, these various spots and places as you feel you lie among the pots. Now my closing word is this: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles." Here is a clear promise: "They shall mount up with wings as eagles," and this precious promise is made to those who are faint; it is made to those who have no strength. But there is a gospel exhortation linked with it: "They that *wait* on the Lord." There are many exhortations to wait on the Lord. Some of the sweetest promises of the Word of God are made to those who are enabled to wait. Then as you feel that you lie among the pots, whatever aspect of it you are in, may the Lord enable you to wait upon Him.

Let me be abundantly clear on this: waiting on the Lord does not mean just waiting. Many people just lie among the pots in fretfulness and they assume that they are waiting on the Lord. Waiting on the Lord is an activity of life, not death. Let me open it like this. "As the eyes of a maiden are unto the hand of her mistress, so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God." In former days the maidens waited on their mistresses, and there were two things necessary as their eyes were upon their mistress. The first was this: the maid was ever waiting, watching, listening to see what her mistress would say, ready to do her mistress's bidding. Her attention was not on other things; her eyes were fastened on her mistress. This was one thing: she had not any mind, any will, any choice of her own; she was waiting on her mistress. The other thing was this. It was her mistress who gave her everything that she had. If she needed something, her mistress supplied it; if she wanted something, the mistress granted it to her. Now may you be enabled to walk it out spiritually as you feel you lie among the pots, faint, weak, helpless. To wait on the Lord "as the eyes of the handmaid are upon her mistress"; looking to Jesus, seeking to hear His

voice, knowing no will but His, seeking all your supplies from Him, longing to be near Him, wanting to see Him daily, to have union and communion with Him.

“They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles.” “Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.”