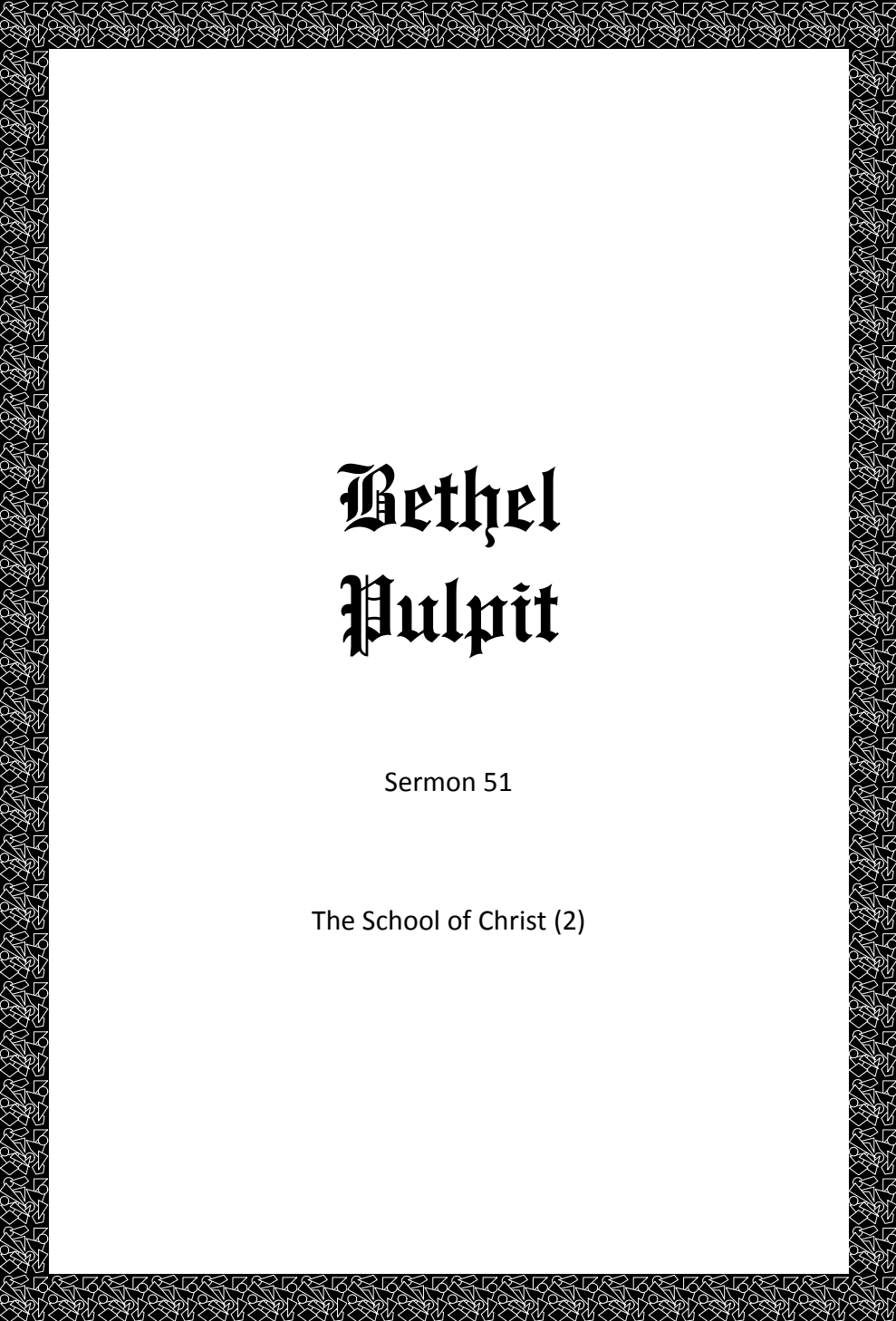




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 51

The School of Christ (2)

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day evening, 6th August, 1989**

Text: *“Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matthew 11. 29).*

Salvation is entirely of God's grace. This is one of the foundation truths of our most holy faith: salvation by grace. Now beloved friends, you will find this, that where there is the grace that saves, there will always be a three-fold effect. First of all, that grace which saves will always keep, and what a mercy that is! “Kept by the power of God.” Secondly, the grace that saves will always sanctify. “Jesus, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach.” The grace which saves will always sanctify. It will separate you from the world, bring you to deny yourself, to take up your cross and follow Him. And then thirdly, and this is the point which specially concerns us this evening, the grace that saves also teaches. Did you know that, that grace teaches? We have it very clearly put before us: “The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, *teaching us* that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.”

So there will be the work of grace in your heart, that saving work of grace in your heart. But the point is this: there will always be the teaching. There used to be an expression amongst us, “grace-taught souls.” So this is it. “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me.” The dear Lord Jesus by His grace saves His people with an everlasting salvation, but then He teaches them. There are so many lessons they have to learn, and some of them, all their lifetime they are learning them. But every one of God's dear people will prove at last to be a grace-taught soul.

“Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me.” Now once again, beloved friends, this evening I want to speak of some of these lessons which we have to learn and which we must learn from the Lord Jesus. This will be something that in greater or lesser measure will be going on all our lives, this learning of the Lord Jesus, this being taught by Him. It

will not always be a clear blessing, it will not always be a clear word, but do watch for the gracious teaching in your lives. Be sure that you are a learner at Jesus' feet. "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me." Now it will be in the walking out of your pilgrimage. It will be in your profession. There will be so many things you need to learn and you will learn from the Lord Jesus.

The first thing I want to speak about this evening is the lesson of godly humility, and all of us are very slow to learn this lesson. It is very hard to be saved from proud self. Proud self always likes to be well-thought-of. But the Lord Jesus, if we are His people, will teach us this lesson of humility, and sooner or later we shall learn it, we shall be humbled beneath His mighty hand. It will not be easy, but the Lord will bring us there. He says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" – that mind of gracious humility. And then He sets forth the Lord Jesus as the divine Example in His amazing condescension, that though He was "in the form of God," and "thought it not robbery" – a thing to be held fast, to be grasped at – "thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation." We like our reputation, we cling to it. He "made Himself of no reputation." "He humbled Himself." That is something we cannot do very well, but He humbled Himself. He was found in fashion as man, "and being found in fashion as a man, He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Now we are to learn this lesson of humility from the Lord Jesus, and the more we know of grace, the more we know of His Spirit, the humbler we shall lie at His feet.

It is a beautiful grace, humility, but it is not one which is attractive to our proud natures. I read to you this evening John 13, how the Lord Jesus took the towel, girded Himself, and He washed His disciples' feet. In other words, He was willing to do the most menial thing, and there was love behind it. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." But it is especially in the garden and at the cross where we learn this lesson of true humility in the obedience and the death of God's dear, incarnate Son.

"Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." This is the only place in all the new testament where we are told anything about the heart of the Lord Jesus. He tells us Himself,

He gives us a little glimpse into His own heart, and this is what He tells us: “I am meek and lowly in heart.” Now in another place He tells us this: “the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.” Usually in the sight of the world, those who are meek and quiet tend to be despised. “In the sight of God.” May that ever be written on the fleshy tables of our hearts: “in the sight of God.” It is not what you and I are before one another: it is what we are in the sight of God. We are to learn from the Lord Jesus this lesson of humility, for He says, “I am meek and lowly in heart.” He tells us that the ornament of a meek and a quiet spirit is in His sight of great price.

“Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart.” Now another thing we are to learn from the Lord Jesus is submission. Things come in our lives, trials, sorrows, disappointments, losses, bereavements, and the Lord Jesus would have us learn from Him this grace of submission.

“Lord, I would indeed submit;
Gladly yield my all to Thee.”

And I do not think there is higher language of assurance in all our hymnbook than that. Sing it carefully, quietly, reverently. What if the Lord puts you to the test whether you meant it? “Lord, I would indeed submit; gladly yield my all to Thee.”

I have often told you of my young friend and cousin. When she knew she was dying, she had about six months to live. She used to turn to hymn 277 every day of her life and she used to sing it through. She said, “I used to sing it to the tune *Lovely*, but I have not got beyond the third verse yet.” She felt she had not learned the lesson of submission. She said, “I can’t sing, ‘Lord, I would indeed submit; gladly yield *my all* to Thee.’” I went to see her one day, and she said, “I have sung the fourth verse.” It is by divine teaching in the heart. It is one thing to sing these hymns, but another to walk them out.

“Gladly yield my all to Thee;
What Thy wisdom sees most fit,
Must be surely best for me.”

Now you are to learn that in the Garden of Gethsemane. That is where you are to learn what submission is. The Lord Jesus saw that bitter

cup His eternal Father put before Him, the awful bitterness of the cup. He knew all that was in it, the awful curse, the sword of divine justice which was to smite Him, and in His holy, sacred humanity, He shrank from it. “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt.” That is the submission of the Man Christ Jesus, and this is the lesson that His people have to learn of Him, and they learn of it in the garden, as they see Him sweating great drops of blood in an agony.

“Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me.” Some of these lessons are not easy to learn. Another lesson that we are called to learn is the lesson of contentment. The Apostle Paul on one occasion said, “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.” Our sinful hearts are discontented. If ever we lived in a discontented day and generation, it is this present one. The world never seems to be satisfied. The more it has, the more it wants. The spirit of covetousness abounds. “Godliness with contentment is great gain.” Now the apostle says, “I have learned it.” In other words, “When I was a scribe, a Pharisee, I did not know it then, and I did not learn it at the feet of Gamaliel, but I have learned it from the Lord Jesus, my Master and my Lord.” “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.” Now may the Lord teach us. Wasn’t it one of the Puritans who wrote a long treatise on that theme and called it, *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*? Well, it is a jewel and it is a rare jewel, and if we have it we must learn it at the feet of the Lord Jesus.

“Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me.” Then you see, we have our lives to live. We have a pilgrimage to walk out. We have the way we have to go, and we do need to be divinely taught. “‘Tis Jesus can teach the way ye should go,” and only He. Now in your spiritual pilgrimage, in your profession of the Lord’s name, in your conflicts with sin and Satan, seek that the Lord Jesus will teach you the way to go. In all your various concerns, in your family and in your business and in the church of God and in your relationships with other people, especially in the choices you have to make, the decisions you have to take, may it be this: “Learn of Me.” Do not take it for granted. Do not be sure you know the right way. Do not trust in your own wisdom.

And above all, in this spiritual pathway. There are two interesting and important scriptures on this subject in the Book of Job. Job knew a lot of divine teaching, and there were many lessons which he learned, some very precious lessons he learned. One lesson was this at the end of his life: "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." But there was an opposite lesson he learned: "I know that my Redeemer liveth." But he did not learn them from his three friends. He did not learn them from Elihu. He learned them from the Lord. But the two scriptures are these: "Who teacheth like Him?" – not a question, but a challenge. There is none can teach these lessons like the Lord Jesus. And the other is a prayer, and it is a good prayer, and it would be a wonderful thing if we learned to pray it: "That which I see not teach Thou me." There are so many things we do not see. Certainly there are spiritually. There may be things in our lives and behaviour that we do not see, and we ought to see. But if we can go to the Lord with that prayer, "That which I see not teach Thou me," "Tis Jesus can teach the way ye should go." That is a good prayer, "Shew me Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths" – to be divinely led and to be divinely taught by the Lord Jesus.

"Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me" – Christ's easy yoke. The figure, of course, is the oxen ploughing in the east. They are fastened by the yoke one to another and fastened to the plough. That is why we have the solemn scripture, "Be ye not unequally yoked together." But this yoke means first of all that you are fastened to the Lord Jesus, and then it means that you are brought under His care, under His discipline, under His control. But He says, "My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." We are going to learn of the Lord Jesus to trust Him. It is a lesson we need to learn and it is a lesson that He will kindly teach us, to trust Him at all times and to trust Him in all things. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding." "Trust in Him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before Him: God is a refuge for us." The Lord Jesus is going to teach you to put everything into His hands. He is going to teach you to leave everything in His gracious hands. Now "fools will be meddling," but this is one lesson that we have to learn, that our concerns are safe when they are in His hands. He is going to teach us how to handle our matters wisely. "He that handleth a matter wisely shall

find good.” By nature we do not know how to handle our matters wisely. He will teach us that the right way is to put our matters into His hand, for Him to handle for us.

“Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me.” O there are these lessons that we are continually learning. One thing I have noticed in the New Testament that God’s people learn and that is the new song. We are told in the Book of the Revelation concerning the everlasting song that none can learn it but the redeemed (Rev. 14. 3). That is something the Lord Jesus will teach you, to sing the song of redemption.

“Let Zion, in her songs, record
The honours of her dying Lord
Triumphant over sin.”

It will not just be learning something by heart from a hymnbook. It is to learn by faith, through grace, to sing the everlasting song. “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever.” “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.” Now the Book of the Revelation speaks of God’s people learning this song, and it tells us that it is a song that none but the redeemed can learn, and they learn it at the feet of Jesus, especially at the foot of the cross. How do you learn to sing the song of redemption? As you are brought to feel something of your unworthiness and your sin and your guilt, and then as you are led to Calvary to see the blood of Christ your only hope. And there, as you know something, just a little, of the wonders of redemption, so you will learn on earth that song which none but the redeemed can learn. Beloved friends, have you learned it? How many of you have learned 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”?

It is to learn on earth that song which will be eternally new and which will be sung for ever and ever in heaven.

“Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me.” Now some of the lessons we have to learn are solemn lessons. We have to learn that one day we must die. We learn from the Lord Jesus that we are not here for

ever. “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” We have to learn the narrowness, the hardness of the way. We have to learn what it is to separate from the world. We have to learn to deny ourselves, to take up our cross and to follow Him. So the Lord Jesus will teach us some solemn lessons, and if He really loves you, then He will tell you the truth. He will tell you when you are wrong. He will correct you when you are going astray. We do not always like it. He may use a friend to do it. What do you think if a friend comes to you and tells you that something you are doing is wrong? Does your flesh rise up against it? Do you kick against it? Or do you wonder whether it is part of this easy yoke of Christ? What about the gospel ministry? Do you love it as much when it cuts you and condemns you? It is all part of Christ’s easy yoke, preparing you for eternity, weaning you from the world.

But amidst it all, this divine teaching and these lessons you learn, all these will keep you at Jesus’ feet, keep you looking to Him, keep you hanging upon Him. And amidst it all, whatever you learn, whatever you do not learn, there is one thing that you will not fail to learn, and it is this. It is very simply stated, but there is everything in it, and it is this: that Christ is the Friend of sinners. O what a mercy that is!

“Christ is the Friend of sinners;
Be that forgotten never.”

You will have to learn this, and this will be one of the sweetest lessons you learn, and one of the most blessed lessons you learn, that there is a Friend who loveth at all times. You will learn this, and you will learn it by solemn yet blessed experience: His faithfulness. O the wonderful faithfulness of the Lord Jesus as the dear Friend of sinners! When you turn away, when your heart is hard, when you backslide, when you fail, when you forget Him, then you will learn this lesson, that Christ is still the sinners’ Friend, that His love is unchangeably the same, that still He abides faithful. Now not one of us would treat an earthly friend like we treat the dear Lord Jesus. But, “tell of his wondrous faithfulness.”

And you will prove it. You will prove it by divine teaching. It will be something like this, if I understand my own heart and the way to heaven. There will come times in your life, and you think, “How wonderful! I seem to be getting on quite nicely at last. Things seem to be going well with me. I seem to be walking aright.” Things seem to be

going nicely in your spiritual life, and then suddenly something happens and you come tumbling down. You fall back where you started. You do not seem to have made any headway in the things of God and you are ashamed of yourself. Then to prove it: “Yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself.” His everlasting love is still the same. “It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness.” And you will prove it, but you will prove it in the walking out of it. But you will have to come back again and again to the old foundation: “Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His

heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy.” There you find that the old foundation stands eternally secure and you have to learn it again and again and again, that Christ is the Friend of sinners and that,

“They who once His kindness prove,
Find it everlasting love.”

Now, “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me.” You will learn this wonderful lesson of the faithfulness of your never-failing Friend, the Lord Jesus, that however dark and cloudy, there is still the rainbow in the cloud, the token of His mercy, His covenant of grace, His unchanging faithfulness. And then there are those times when you feel that everything is failing and everyone is failing, and you are failing. Then you sweetly prove, you learn this lesson, that this Friend does not fail, that this Friend will never fail. You come into those days of darkness and trial and need, and then when everything else seems to be gone, you sweetly prove that this dear Friend of sinners is still there, still with you. “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.”

“Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me.” The world will lead you astray. Your own heart will lead you astray. O but to learn at the feet of Christ, to learn what you are! O but to learn what He is and to learn it by sweet, sacred experience! Like I often say, the old woman who wrote, “T” and “P,” *tried and proved*. That is the way you are going to learn these lessons of divine love and divine faithfulness in the face of your own ruin and sin.

“Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me.” In a word, divine teaching at Jesus’ feet, the lessons you have to learn, are all to one great end, and really it is this, and it is so simple, and yet it is vital: “One thing is needful.” Now the whole of divine teaching from first to last will be to that one great end, and it takes us a lifetime to learn it. There is only one thing that really matters. There is only one thing that is really needful, and that is the Lord Jesus Himself, and a vital, personal, saving knowledge of Him. O but as you go on in your life, and you have your crosses and your trials and your disappointments, more and more you will learn the vanity of the world. “Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.” You will see death stamped upon it all. If any of you fear God and you are building your castles in the air and setting up your idols, you will find there are some solemn lessons you have to learn. They will have to come tumbling down. You will have to learn that “this is not your rest: because it is polluted.” We have no abiding city here. It is all vanity and vexation of spirit. The lesson we have to learn is this: to seek our happiness, our all in the Lord Jesus, once crucified, now for ever risen and exalted.

I find very often with young persons that if the Lord Jesus begins His work in your heart, it will not be long before there comes some experience and you shrink from it. But it is part of this divine teaching. It is one of these lessons you have to learn, to crucify you to the world, that you might live only to the Lord Jesus, that you might set your affections on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, that you might be brought in measure to learn this lesson: “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world,” to learn that self is nothing, the world, the flesh is nothing, that all these things are vanity, but froth, but a bubble, and to see that the only thing that really matters is the Lord Jesus Himself. And this is the end to which all His divine teaching and all His gracious leadings are bringing you, that He might be your All in all, that He might be truly precious to your soul, that it might be none but Jesus, that you might realise that one thing and only one thing is needful – Jesus Himself – and that by faith you might choose that good part which shall not be taken from you.

Then, “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me,” to learn these solemn lessons, these blessed lessons, these vital lessons, to learn them at

Jesus' feet. "Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." And then what a wonderful promise here, and to all eternity! What a wonderful promise to those of you who are divinely taught, to those of you who are at Jesus' feet, learners in the school of Christ, who bear His easy yoke, who learn of Him! "And ye shall find rest unto your souls." "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.

(The morning sermon on the same text was published last month.)