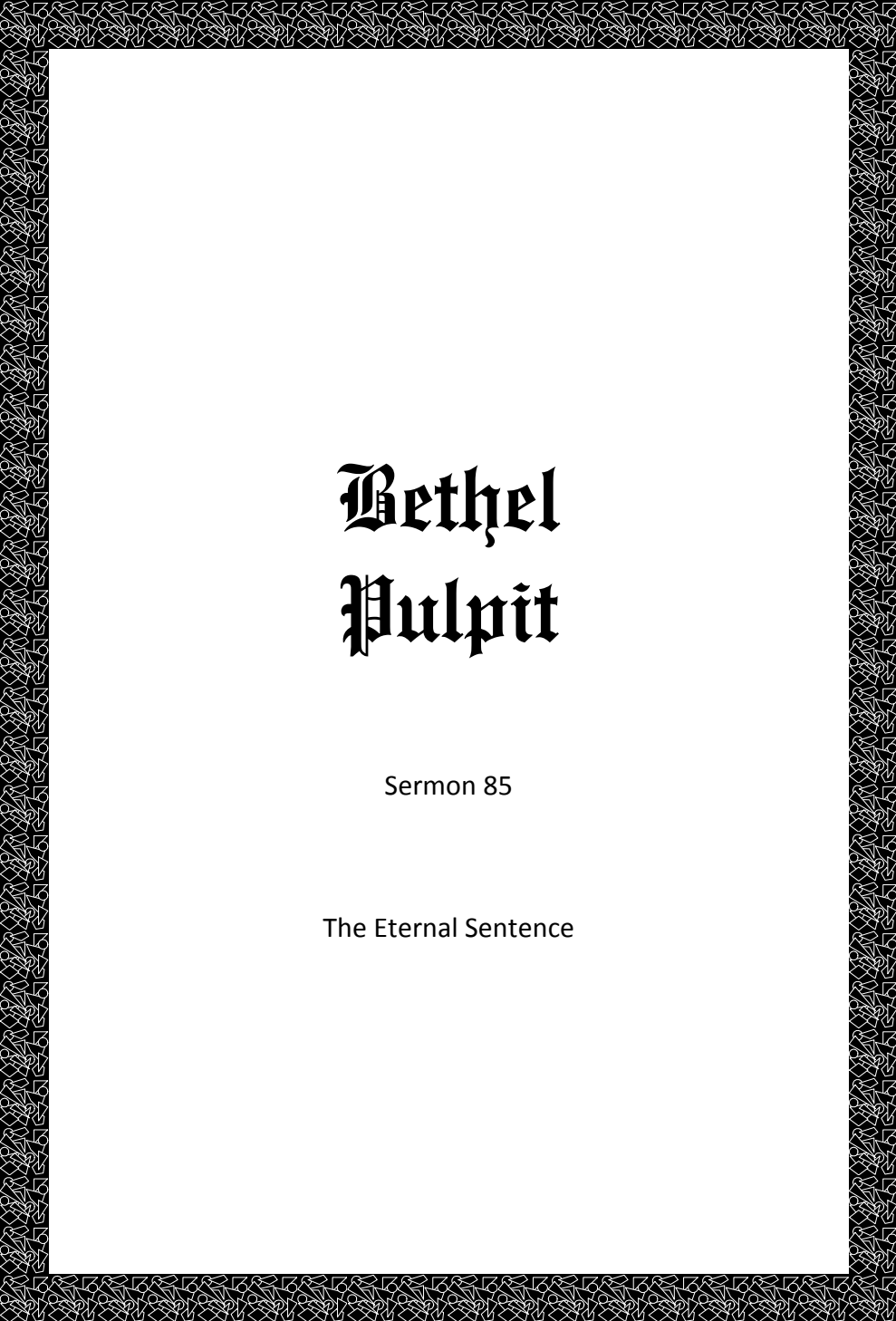




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 85

The Eternal Sentence

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day evening, 5th April, 1992**

Text: *"Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25. 34).*

It will be a wonderful thing if you and I hear that word in the last great day: "Come, ye blessed." Now may it be so for each one of us through the mercy of God displayed in His Son.

You notice here that the Lord Jesus is spoken of as the King. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. He sits on the throne. He is exalted. He is almighty. He ever lives. He ever reigns. And "He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. "The King." When He was here upon earth, He was "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." When here upon earth, He was "despised and rejected of men." "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." And the only crown that He wore was a crown of thorns. But that sacred head once crowned with thorns is now eternally crowned with glory. And when you and I see Him on that great day, as each of us shall, we shall see Him as the King, see Him as the King in all His glory and all His majesty. Those who have despised Him on earth, those who have denied His fairest claims, they shall now see Him as the King. Those who did not believe on Him here on earth will believe on Him then to their eternal confusion. The soldier who pierced His side will now see Him as the King. Those who mocked Him and smote Him and spit upon Him and buffeted Him, they shall now see Him as the King. Pontius Pilate, who judged Him and condemned Him, will now see Him as the King, his Judge, to be condemned. For "every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him." Who can rightly describe the eternal glory and majesty of the King in that last great day?

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed." *Then*, in the last great day. *Then*, when time shall be no more. *Then*, when all preaching of the gospel is for ever finished. *Then*, when

the number of the Lord's elect is complete. *Then*, when the Lord has descended from heaven with a shout, the voice of the archangel and the trump of God. *Then*, in that tremendous day. And whenever we mention that tremendous day, and when we think of that tremendous day, and tremble about that tremendous day, what a wonderful word this is:

“His blood can cleanse the blackest soul,
And wash our guilt away;
He will present us sound and whole,
In that tremendous day”!

“*Then* shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed.” Then, when the elements have melted with fervent heat, the heavens been rolled up as a scroll, the earth and all things in it been dissolved, “*Then* shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed.” *Then*, when the great judgment seat has been set up, the great white throne; *then*, when the final separation has taken place, the separation into the sheep and the goats, the separation of the whole human race from Adam to the end of time.

It is the King who will make the separation, and there will be terrible surprises in that day. There will be some on the left hand who everyone took for granted were among the sheep, and there will be some on the right hand who here on earth have been despised and even accounted to be among the goats. Now it is what the King shall say on that day. I might have a good opinion of you. I might think you are going to heaven. I might have welcomed you into our church. But it is not what I think on that day; it is what the Lord thinks. You see the solemnity of it, and yet you see the blessedness of it. It will not be left to any fallible judgment. There will not be any prejudice there. There will not be any bias. It will be that perfect judgment. *The King* shall say to them on His right hand – that is the sheep, those who are separated from the goats, the saved, those who are separated from the lost, the righteous, those who are separated from the wicked.

“*Then* shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Now it will not be the first time they have heard His voice. It will be a solemn thing if the first time you ever hear the King's voice is when He says to you, “Depart.” Now to those who hear

that word, “Come, ye blessed,” it will not be the first time. They have heard that voice, each of them, in the gospel.

“I hear the welcome voice
That calls me, Lord, to Thee,
For cleansing in the precious blood
That flowed at Calvary.”

Now have you heard that voice? “Come, ye blessed of My Father.” It will not be the first time they have heard that voice. It will not be a strange voice to them. “Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Also, it will not be the first time that the Lord has welcomed them. Why, here on earth they have known that loving welcome, each of them has known that loving welcome at the throne of grace, the blood-sprinkled mercy seat, as they have come as sinners seeking pardon and mercy for Jesus’ sake.

“Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father.” I wonder if these things have ever been made very real and very solemn to you. Some of us have had to learn the awful solemnity of it, to tremble concerning the eternal sentence, to say, “How can I bear that awful thought, what if my name should be left out?” To pray,

“May I among Thy saints be found
To see Thy smiling face.”

“Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Well then, the great point is this: who are these? Who are they who shall receive this loving welcome, this eternal welcome in the great day? Well, the Word of God does not leave us in the slightest doubt. They are those who are blessed of the Father. Now that is not just what I think; that is what holy Scripture lays down. “Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father.” So the great thing for you and me to find out is whether we are among the blessed of the Father or not. How many of you have a sweet hope that you are? All of them are blessed with an interest in the everlasting, electing love of the Father. Every one of them has an interest in the covenant of grace, every one of them is blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places

in Christ. Every one of them is blessed with an interest in the Saviour's death, the Saviour's precious, sin-atonement blood.

"Come, ye blessed of My Father." I know what some of you are saying: "Now this does not give me much comfort. Can you bring it any nearer, any closer?" Well, "Come, ye blessed of My Father" – all of them without exception have been blessed with the new birth. "The Lord shall count, when He writeth up the people, that this man was born there." They have all been blessed with the new birth. "Ye must be born again." If you and I have never been blessed with the new birth, then we can never come to heaven. All of them, every one of them is blessed with the new birth.

"Come, ye blessed of My Father." As they are blessed with the new birth, so they are blessed with having their eyes opened, blessed to see things they never saw before, they never saw by nature: the solemnity of eternity, their own need, the awfulness of the judgment day. When they stand there, it is not the first time they have seen it. They have often seen it in their souls' feelings, and the awfulness, the solemnity of it. All of them are blessed with having their eyes opened by the Spirit of God, opened to see their need, their sin, opened to see the vanity of the world, opened to see the blessedness of the people of God, opened to see some beauty in Christ that they should desire Him. All of them have been blessed with this: "One thing I know" – many things they do not know, but "one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."

"Come, ye blessed of My Father." Now all of them have been blessed with a spirit of prayer. Of necessity they have had to pray. What a blessing to be taught to pray – not just to pray when in trouble, to get out of it, not just to pray for leading or guidance, not just to pray for some worldly advantage, but to pray for mercy, to pray for forgiveness, to pray to be prepared for heaven, to pray to be made right, to pray to be made "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." "Come, ye blessed of My Father." Blessed in this, being taught by the Spirit of God to pray for these eternal blessings.

"Come, ye blessed of My Father." They have all been blessed with repentance. The Lord Jesus Christ preached repentance. John the Baptist preached repentance. The apostles preached repentance. No hope, no salvation, no heaven without it. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." So they are all blessed with repentance, inwardly to mourn over

their sinful condition, outwardly to forsake their sins, and to leave the world, to return to it no more.

“Come, ye blessed of My Father.” Now all of them are blessed with faith. Faith which realises the need of the Lord Jesus, sees a sweet attraction in Him. Faith which ventures, ventures empty-handed.

“Nothing in my hand I bring;
Simply to Thy cross I cling.”

Faith which ventures on the atonement, pleads the precious blood. Faith which says, “Thou, O Christ, art all I want.” The goats on the left hand never knew these blessings, never knew the new birth, never had their eyes opened, were never taught to pray, were never given repentance, never possessed true faith. They never saw a sweet attraction in Christ. They never sought His mercy. They never pleaded His precious, sin-atonement blood.

There is the eternal separation here. I will tell you the preaching that will do your souls good: the preaching that makes the separation *now* in the gospel, that the Lord Jesus will make in the great day. Now that will be the preaching that will do your souls good. And good hearing will be this: when you say, “Let my sentence come forth from Thy presence.” Lord, show me whether I am on the right hand or the left hand *now*. Show me whether Thou hast put me among the sheep, Thy dear children, or not. That is the preaching, the only preaching. You will not want generalities. You will not want someone to preach all love and smooth things, to encourage you you are right, to bolster you up on negative evidences. You will want the preaching to tell you: these shall be on the right hand and saved, and *these* on the left hand and lost. And you will want that sentence to be made in your own conscience.

“Come, ye blessed of My Father.” All of them are blessed with the holy tender fear of God. It makes their conscience soft. The things they once did, they can do no more. They have reality in their religion. Their religion is in the sight of God. It will be, “An unctuous light to all that’s right, a bar to all that’s wrong.” Some things it will constrain you to do. Other things it will constrain you not to do. You will be blessed with the fear of God.

“Come, ye blessed of My Father.” And you will be blessed with love. It may try you, but there will be those times in your life when you will know something of the love of Christ to sinners in your own little measure, and when you will love Him in return. When put to the test you will say,

“Do not I love Thee, dearest Lord?
Behold my heart and see;
And cast each hated idol down,
That dares to rival Thee.”

“Do not I love Thee from my soul?,
Then let me nothing love;
Dead be my heart to every joy,
When Jesus cannot move.”

“Come, ye blessed of My Father.” There is one thing that all of them are blessed with which, if you have eyes to see it, stands out very clearly in this chapter, and that is humility. You say, Where does that come? Well, when the King so kindly says to them, “I was an hungred, 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.” Now you see the humility. They never knew they had all these marks and evidences of grace. They were not resting on their works for salvation. All this comes as a solemn shock to them, that the Lord should commend them in this way, and they say, “When, Lord, when?” They were blessed with humility here on earth. All who are among the blessed possess humility.

“They all declare, I nothing am,
My life is bound up in the Lamb.”

This humility shines so brightly, though they do not know it. When the Lord gives them this wonderful, loving commendation, they almost reject it; they say, “Not me, Lord, I never possessed all these virtues about which Thou art speaking.” You see the humility, and you see the opposite, the very opposite in the wicked, in the goats. When the Lord solemnly reproves them because these things were not found, they dispute the point, they argue the point with Him. That is solemn, eternally solemn. They come to the gates of heaven, the gates of hell, without ever really being

humbled, ever really knowing their need. When the Lord reproves them, they are ready to dispute the point, to argue the point with Him.

“Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father.” Now I just pause here for a moment to turn aside from the subject. In these verses there is perhaps the clearest word we have in all Scripture of the absolute oneness, the absolute identity between Christ and His people. He is speaking of His people, but He says, “*I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in,*” and so on. And to the wicked, “*I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in*” – the absolute oneness and identity between Christ and His people! “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.” The oneness, the identity between Christ and His people.

“Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father.” Now there is something very solemn and heart-searching even in this loving welcome the Lord gives to His own people, and that is the qualification He lays down for them. Now sometimes this tries me, almost frightens me. Here, He judges them on the evidences of their religion, the outward evidences of their religion. What about this – clothing the naked, and visiting the sick, and coming to those in prison, visiting those who are hungry, giving drink to those who are thirsty, and taking strangers in? Have you and I ever taken a stranger in? Now it comes close. Let us be very clear, this is not salvation by works. The Lord Jesus makes that abundantly clear. He also makes it abundantly clear that these saved characters were never resting on their works, because the Lord’s commendation comes as a solemn surprise to them, a solemn shock. But the very solemn, vital point here is this: if there is no reality in our religion, if faith does no work by love, if there are not the marks, the effects, the fruits of it, then our religion is valueless; and He whose eyes are as a flame of fire will search it out in the great day.

“Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” So heaven is an inheritance. The Lord Jesus says, Come ye blessed, *inherit* it. You can never earn an inheritance. You can never pay for it. You cannot buy it. You cannot deserve it. It is

something which is bequeathed to you. It comes to you because you are an heir. That very word, inheritance, destroys the whole idea of salvation by works, if anyone tries to read it into Matthew 25. “Come, ye blessed of My Father, *inherit* the kingdom.” It is an inheritance, an inheritance reserved in heaven for you. It is for those who are heirs, “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus.” And you become an heir by being born into the family. So that great point is our concern, to be made “meet to be partakers” – not onlookers – “to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” In the great day when the inheritance is given, we want to be partakers, not onlookers. The angels will be onlookers, the good angels and the wicked angels. And all the lost, all the goats, they will be onlookers. We want to be more than onlookers; we want to be partakers. “He hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of saints in light” – made meet through an interest in the Saviour’s righteousness and blood and intercession. “Made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

“Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the *kingdom* prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Now it is an inheritance and it is a kingdom. The dying thief prayed, “Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.” And the Lord Jesus sweetly assured him of his interest in that kingdom: “Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with Me in paradise.” Now you remember how whilst here on earth the Lord Jesus so comforted His tried and tempted followers. He said, “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

“There your seat is now prepared,
There your kingdom and reward.”

“Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the *kingdom* prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Then do not envy the wicked. You may think tonight that things are going badly with you, and well for the wicked.

“In vain they boast their little stores,
Trifles are theirs, a kingdom yours.”

“Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

“Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” I take it that means from eternity. If you go right back as far as the foundation of the world, beyond that, it is eternity, isn’t it? Prepared in covenant love, in covenant purpose – “inherit the kingdom prepared for you.” You see, heaven is a prepared place for the people of God. You remember how the Lord Jesus said, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you.” This is it: “I go to prepare a place for you.” Now heaven is a prepared place. “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

“Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you.” It would seem that the preparation of the place in heaven was through the work of God’s grace in dealing with sin in the atonement, and then exalting His dear Son to His own right hand. But dear child of God, your place is already prepared in heaven, it is already waiting for you. I have never read anything more beautiful of heaven than where Krummacher in one place compares it to a newborn baby coming into this world. He says that baby has long been expected. The father and mother in love are awaiting it. Everything is prepared. The little clothes, the cradle, everything is ready. And when that baby is born, he immediately belongs; he is not a stranger. That great preacher went on to say, “I think heaven will be something like that. Our place is already prepared. A loving welcome awaits us. And when we enter heaven we shall long have been expected. We shall not be strangers.”

“Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Now the old preachers used to have a saying that heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people, and beloved friends, it is. Heaven is prepared for the people of God, and then here on earth, the people of God are being prepared for heaven. By nature we are not prepared. By nature we are not ready. It is the work of God’s grace in salvation to make us ready. For “they that were ready” – and only they that were ready – “went in with Him to the marriage: and the door was shut.” So if your religion is real, you will not be a stranger to this prayer in the spirit of it:

“Prepare me, gracious God,
To stand before Thy face.”

And then the preparation:

“In Christ’s obedience clothe,
And wash me in His blood;
So shall I lift my head with joy
Among the sons of God.”

“Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” And then the glory and the bliss and the blessedness of heaven for ever and ever. “These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.” No more sin, no more sorrow, no more sighing, to “see the King in His beauty.”

“Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God, eternally shut in.”