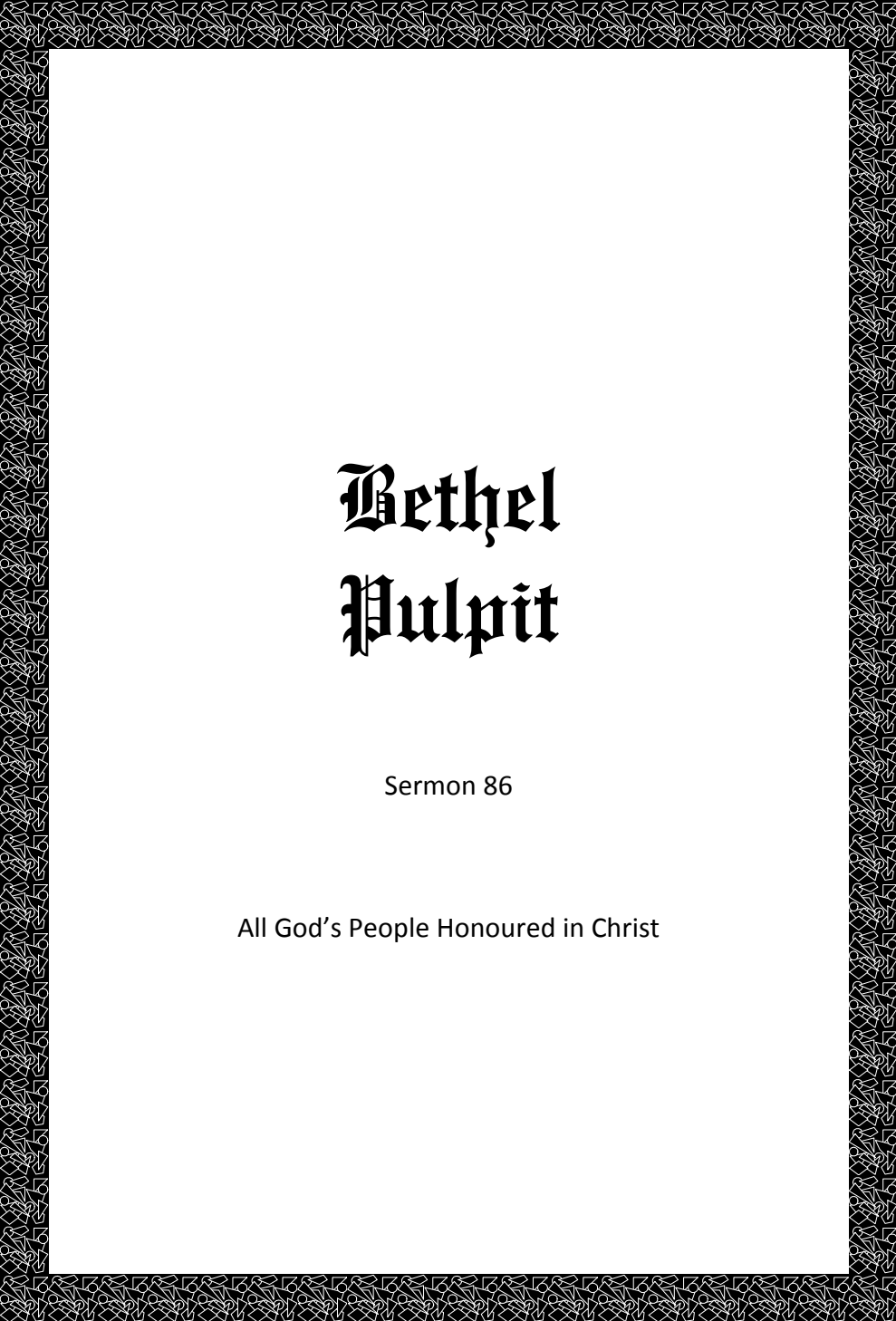




# Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 86

All God's People Honoured in Christ

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton  
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,  
on Lord's day morning, 23rd August, 1992**

**Text:** *"This honour have all His saints" (Psalm 149. 9).*

Some time ago a godly minister outside our group of churches was speaking to me and he said he felt that there was one special deficiency in the preaching in our chapels, so I asked him what it was. This is what he said. He said, "I do not think that you insist sufficiently on the dignity and the privileges of God's people as they stand in Christ." His point being that we speak so much about the sin and the ruin and the guilt and the unworthiness of the people of God, what we are by nature, worthless worms, lost, ruined, undone, but that we do not sufficiently emphasise the opposite. He was not disagreeing whatsoever with what we have to say about the lost, ruined condition, the unworthiness, the worthlessness; but he felt the believer's standing in Christ was one point we did not emphasise. Well, beloved friends, may we see both sides of salvation. May we by faith this morning see our wretchedness and ruin and vileness and guilt. But may we also by faith see "this honour (that) have all the saints." O the wonderful privilege of a child of God, his wonderful dignity, not in himself, but as he stands eternally complete in Christ, saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, in eternal union with the Lord the Lamb, blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ!

Now beloved friends, I would that together this morning we might be sweetly favoured to have a view of the wonderful privileges of God's people in Christ, the blessedness of their standing, the abundant honour that the Lord in love and mercy has put upon them – themselves so unfit, themselves so unworthy, so undeserving, yet the riches of God's mercy and free grace. In a word, He takes the beggar from the dunghill and He sets him among princes, even the princes of His people. O the high dignity of a child of God, the privilege of a forgiven sinner, the blessedness of a sinner saved by grace! "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord!" May the Holy Spirit show these things to us. We often speak about the glories of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,

don't we? Well, these are the glories of God's people as they stand eternally complete in Christ, blessed with all spiritual blessings in Him.

Well then, to set this word in its context as I feel we always must do, how does it fit in, how does it belong to this Psalm of praise? At first it does not seem to fit in, it does not seem to belong; it seems to be out of place. What has the psalmist just been saying? "Let the high praises of God be in their mouth and a twoedged sword in their hand; to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all His saints." Well, what honour? This honour, beloved friends, that when the Lord triumphs, when the Lord is victorious, all His people have a part in that triumph, in that victory. Some of you older ones remember V.E. day and V.J. day at the end of the last terrible war, the wonderful victory of the allies, first of all in Europe and then in the Far East. The emphasis in that day was that everyone in Britain had a part in that victory. It was not just the generals and admirals, but every single person in Britain down to the feeblest had a part in the honour of that victory. Beloved friends, that is something of the spirit of the psalmist here. When the Lord triumphs, when He is victorious, all His people have an interest in this triumph, this victory. "This honour have all His saints." May we especially see it this morning concerning the triumph, the victory of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ when in His sin-atonement death and glorious resurrection and ascension He triumphed over sin, Satan, death, hell, the grave. And all His people, every one of them, have a part in that honour in their exalted God and King.

"This honour have all His saints." Now the way in which this word rests on my spirit this morning is like this: some of these wonderful honours that God in love and mercy has bestowed upon His poor, unworthy people, greater honours than Ahasuerus ever bestowed upon Mordecai; greater honours than David ever bestowed upon Mephibosheth; greater honours than Pharaoh ever bestowed upon Joseph. Now as we think of these abundant honours the Lord has placed upon His people, this is the emphasis: they belong to all His people, every one of them, right down to the feeblest lamb in Jesus' fold. These honours belong to all His saints, not just to the Apostle Paul, not just to Peter and John. O that "worms of earth should ever be one with incarnate Deity"! We think of the wonderful love with which the eternal Father has loved His people in

Christ. We think of how even before the world had any being, every single one of them was there blessed in Christ and as sure of heaven as if already landed in heaven.

“In covenant from of old,  
The sons of God they were;  
The feeblest lamb in Jesus’ fold  
Was blessed in Jesus there.”

“This honour have all His saints” – to have their names recorded in heaven, their names written in the Lamb’s book of life. “This honour have all His saints” – to be blessed from eternity in covenant in the Lord Jesus, despite all their sin and ruin, shame, guilt, unworthiness. No greater honour than this, to have your name written in the Lamb’s book of life. In various places there are rolls of honour. We think of the Cenotaph. We think of many rolls of honour in public places. We think of some specially-honourable lists that are recorded in London. But there is no honour to compare with this, to have your name written in heaven in the Lamb’s book of life. The Lord Jesus sent out those disciples to preach. They thought they had a wonderful honour, didn’t they? They came back, and let us be clear, they were excited. They were excited because of what they thought was the wonderful honour which was theirs. They said, “Lord, even the devils are subject unto us.” The Lord Jesus said, “Rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you.” That is something which is not significant. That is something which does not really matter. “But rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.” “This honour have all His saints,” every one of them. I wonder if a few of you find that little prayer rising up in your heart now:

“In Thy fair book of life and grace,  
O may I find my name  
Recorded in some humble place,  
Beneath my Lord the Lamb.”

No greater honour than this! That will be the thing that will matter at the last day. “This honour have all His saints.”

Well, this morning we read that beautiful chapter 1 John 3, and that begins with the special honour that God’s people have as they are the sons of God. “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed

upon *us*, that *we* should be called the sons of God.” And the emphasis is on the *us* and the *we* – those who do not deserve it, those who are rebels, those who have sinned against God. “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon *us*, that *we* should be called the sons of God.” In another place, the eternal Father speaks, and He asks a question: “But I said, How shall I put thee among the children?” – almost as if there is a problem. Of course there is not any problem, any perplexity with the Most High God, but coming down to human level, He says, How can I do it? How is it possible? “How shall I put *thee* among the children?” And the Holy Spirit gives the answer: by sovereign love, by adoption, by the new birth. But this abundant honour, to be a child of God!

Last Lord’s day, speaking down in Cornwall, I said one or two things about that eminent but most quaint Cornish preacher, Billy Bray. He was a very poor man. He was a tin miner and worked down the mines all week. But he always spoke of himself as the King’s son. The well-known life that was published last century had that title: “Billy Bray, the King’s son.” Was he out of his senses? Was there something peculiar about him? No; he had the sweet hope that though a sinner, God had made Himself known to him as his dear Father in Christ. So he was the son of Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords. Now, “This honour have all His saints” – not just some favoured ones, not just some who are specially blessed by God, not just some eminent apostle or preacher. “This honour have all His saints.” And what an honour it is, that a holy God should so set His love on sinners, that He should not just forgive them, pardon them, not just deliver them from a deserved hell, but that He should make them His own dear children, and that for ever. “This honour have all His saints.”

“Your heavenly Father ever lives,  
And all His choicest treasure gives  
To you, the favourites of His heart,  
Nor will He ever with you part.”

“This honour have all His saints.” May some of you today have the sweet realisation that this honour belongs to you in Christ, on mercy’s ground. Worthiness has nothing to do with it. There never was a person became the king’s son or the king’s daughter because he deserved it. You cannot become part of the royal family by merit. The most wonderful

servant of the state there has ever been did not become part of the royal family. You cannot buy it. You cannot pay for it. It is by being born into the royal family.

“Behold what wondrous grace  
The Father has bestowed  
On sinners of a mortal race,  
To call them sons of God.”

“This honour have all His saints.” Now what an honour it is if you and I are the children of God! Sometimes we read of a royal pardon (more in former days than now, when people were condemned to death). Perhaps at the last minute the sovereign intervened and there was a royal pardon. It was counted a wonderful privilege. The reprieved criminal could never be thankful enough. But he was never taken to Buckingham Palace, honoured there, made a prince, put among the royal family. O that double blessing the Lord puts upon His people in Christ, forgiving their sins, making them the children of God. “This honour have all His saints.” I believe that is a great part of the meaning of that unusual word: “She hath received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins” – not double punishment but double blessing. “For your shame ye shall have double; and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion.” Those double blessings of the gospel, to be forgiven, and made a child of God! “This honour have all His saints.” No greater honour than this, to be made a son of God, to be made a daughter of the Most High, and that forever!

Now another honour is this, a wonderful honour, to have the Lord Jesus for our Friend, a Friend who loveth at all times, a Brother born for adversity. “This honour have all His saints.”

“A foe received a favourite,  
An alien made a child.”

The Lord Jesus said, “Henceforth I call you not servants; but I have called you friends.” “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” When the Lord Jesus was here upon earth, they gave Him this name: the Friend of sinners. He did not reject it; He did not refuse it. They said, “This Man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.” It is one of the beautiful titles of the incarnate Son of God: the Friend of sinners. What an honour to have the eternal Son of God as your Friend

and my Friend! If He loves us and if we love Him; if He speaks to us and if we speak to Him; if He walks with us and we walk with Him; the wonderful honour, the wonderful privilege! There are some people, and don't they love it if they can claim the remotest friendship with some honourable person, some eminent man? Don't they glory in it? Well, what about this, to have the Lord of life and glory for our Saviour and our Friend? And this, to read that He is not ashamed of us? We fail Him, we sin against Him, we let Him down, we forsake Him. He has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." His wonderful faithfulness! Sometimes people have friends, and if those friends disgrace themselves, well those who once were so familiar with them do not want to know them any longer. They keep them at arm's length, are ashamed of them. O to think that the Lord Jesus, the Friend of sinners, is not ashamed of His poor, unworthy people! How dearly He loves them, so much that rather than lose them, He laid down His life for them.

"Which of all our friends, to save us,  
Could or would have shed his blood;  
But our Jesus died to have us  
Reconciled in Him to God.  
This was boundless love indeed!  
Jesus is a Friend in need!"

"This honour have all His saints" – not just some of them. It belongs to all God's people. And then there are those abundant honours that God in love and mercy puts upon all His people eternally when He brings them to heaven, to sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb. I do not think any of us can rightly comprehend the wonderful privileges, the wonderful honours of the redeemed in heaven. They may have been despised on earth. They may have been dishonoured on earth. But the abundant honour that the Lord puts upon them to all eternity, to sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob at the marriage supper of the Lamb. You remember how that angel spoke to John on the Isle of Patmos, when he showed him the wonderful privileges and glories and honours of the redeemed in heaven: "Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." And there John saw the privileges and the honours of the redeemed in heaven. No more sorrow or sighing: "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall

lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.” “In My Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 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.” “This honour have all His saints.” There will not be one lost. There will not be one left out. There will not be one miscarry by the way, despite their sin, weakness or failure. Once born again, once blessed with repentance and faith, once led to Jesus as their only refuge, their only foundation, then they are safe, and then they are blessed, and then they are honoured to all eternity. And that blessedness, that honour, they can never lose.

“This honour have all His saints.” And by saints, it means those sinners He has saved by grace, those sinners He has sanctified, taught by His Spirit, separated to Himself. “This honour have all His saints.” Well, as the old preacher said, “If we really believed what we do believe.” Didn’t John Bunyan speak about the man with the muck-rake in his hand, raking in the straws and dust of the floor, and there was a crown of glory shining over his head? So often we live as if this world was our element. We are swallowed up with carnal, inferior things. May this not only be our honour: may it be our only honour. May we not seek earthly honour and earthly fame. May this be the only honour.

“Content all honour to forego,  
But that which comes from God.”

May we have this honour: to be despised and crucified with the Lord Jesus Christ. May we have this honour: to choose “rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” May we have this honour: to esteem “the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.” To speak of the honours, the privileges, the blessedness of the people of God, and then to be swallowed up with this world – what a solemn contradiction and what a dishonouring of the Lord’s name!

There is the other side. If the Lord in love and mercy has bestowed such abundant honours on us who are so worthless, so unworthy, then how we should seek to walk before Him in love, with a tender conscience,

seeking to honour Him who has put such abundant honour upon us. Are these things your concern? And then how inconsistent to mourn and complain over earthly loss, earthly disappointments, when things do not go well, when we have our little troubles and sorrows, when we see the world prosper, and when we see things going badly with us! How solemn if we mourn and fret then!

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

Do we really believe what we profess to believe, that if our hope is in the Lord Jesus, if we really belong to Him, saved by His grace, then these abundant honours are ours? Then how we should tread the world beneath our feet! How our hearts should overflow with gratitude! How we should seek to walk worthy! How we should seek to count the little things of this life a light affliction! “Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” May some of you this morning see the wonderful blessedness, the privileges, the honours of God’s people in Christ. May you long that those privileges and honours might be yours. And then may some of you be blessed with the sweet assurance that, despite all your unworthiness and failure and sin, these honours are yours on mercy’s ground. And then may there be that gracious, sanctifying effect of this truth in our homes and families, our hearts and lives. There was one verse of a hymn that the godly used to love years ago; they used to quote it, and they used to mean it. It is not heard so much nowadays. It would be a wonderful thing if we entered into the spirit of it, because it is the spirit of this word: “This honour have all His saints:”

“Ye palaces, sceptres, and crowns,  
Your pride with disdain I survey;  
Your pomps are but shadows and sounds,  
And pass in a moment away.  
The crown that my Saviour bestows,  
Yon permanent sun shall outshine;  
My joy everlastingly flows;  
My God, my Redeemer, is mine!”

“This honour have all His saints.”