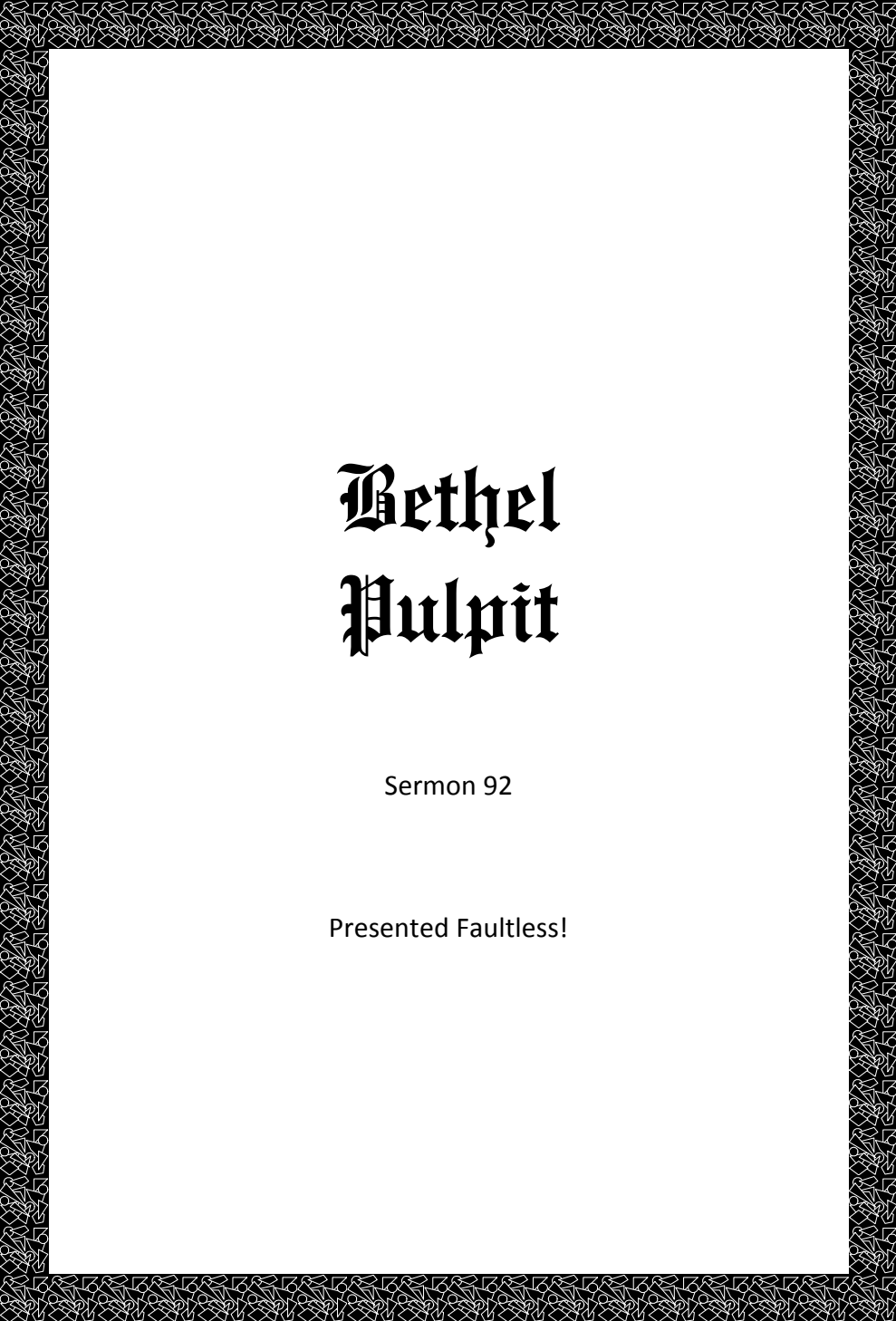




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 92

Presented Faultless!

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Thursday, 25th February, 1993**

Text: *“Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen” (Jude 24, 25).*

We do not know much about Jude. Usually he is believed to be the brother of the Lord. There are many mysterious things in his epistle, aren't there, hard to be understood? Yet if Jude's epistle is hard to be understood, the beginning and the end are not. There are some very beautiful, sacred, sweet, soul-establishing truths at the beginning and at the end.

Often Paul breaks out in a doxology of praise, and Jude does the same right at the very end. “Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.” That is, *Amen*, there is not anything else to be said. That is, Amen, so may it be – our prayer. And that is, *Amen*, so *shall* it be – God's decree.

Now this doxology of praise is to the eternal God – really you have all the Persons in the Godhead here. But “the only wise God.” Didn't Philpot on one occasion say he thought the Lord's people appreciated the wisdom of God less than any of His divine attributes? The wisdom of God in grace, the wisdom of God in the plan of salvation. How is it possible that God could be holy, and yet save sinners? How is it possible that His justice could be honoured, and yet His love and mercy should reign? How is it possible that heaven could be a holy, holy, holy place, and yet it should be full of those who by birth and practice are unholy? How was it possible, when the plan of salvation in wisdom was devised, that the Son of God could become the Son of man? How could He possibly be born, become a real Man, and yet not be a partaker of original sin? These impossible questions! “To the only wise God our Saviour.” Eternal wisdom, infinite wisdom, divine wisdom, making a way

in all these vital things that sinners might be saved with an everlasting salvation.

“The only wise God.” And you see it personally, in your own life, especially when you look back.

“With mercy and with judgment,
My web of time He wove.”

Everything in its proper place; all things working together for good; God never making a mistake. “The only wise God.” If only we rested here! What I mean is, in our daily concerns when we are full of confusion and everything seems to be going wrong:

“In all His holy, sovereign will,
He is, I daily find,
Too wise to be mistaken, still
Too good to be unkind.”

“To the only wise God.” I take it that “the *only* wise God” really has the two sides to it. On the one hand, it means He is the *only* one who is truly, eternally, infinitely wise, and on the other hand, He never is anything but wise; He never does anything which is not wise.

“To the only wise God our Saviour.” And He gives wisdom to those who have none. What a wonderful thing it is if you and I are made wise virgins with oil in our lamps! What a mercy it is if we are made wise builders, building our house on the rock! And what a mercy if we are made “wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus”!

“To the only wise God.” And then in our little lives: “He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good.” You have those things tonight in your lives, things you have in your family, things you have in your work, your business, things you have in your relationships with other people, things where you need to act wisely, plans you are making, decisions you are taking. Now how can you act wisely? “To the only wise God.” “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”

“To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.” It is ascribing it all to Him. It is putting the crown on His head, ascribing the glory to Him which is

rightly due to His name, ascribing all the majesty to Him, the dominion, the power, realising His greatness, His authority, the government on His shoulder. “The only wise God our Saviour” is on the throne. “The only wise God our Saviour” omnipotent reigneth. “The only wise God our Saviour” “doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?” “To the only wise God our Saviour.” Now may we know something of that spirit of holy gratitude and tenderness and thanksgiving and praise. “To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.”

There are two things especially – and these are the two things I really want to speak to you about this evening – two things especially that are ascribed to the only wise God our Saviour: keeping His people from falling and at last presenting them faultless. I wonder if there are some of you like me this evening. These are just the things, exactly the things I want the Lord in love and mercy to do for me. These are the things we need. These are the things we want. These are the things we just cannot do for ourselves. Now just look at them.

First of all, He “is able to keep *you* from falling.” Now that is joyful news indeed to sinners in distress, who feel their absolute, utter, complete weakness, and who know they cannot keep themselves. I had this burnt into my heart many years ago:

“If ever it could come to pass,
That sheep of Christ might fall away,
My fickle, feeble soul, alas!
Would fall a thousand times a day.”

Now this is joyful news indeed to those who feel their absolute, utter ruin and helplessness, who cannot keep themselves: He is able to keep you, even you with all your sin, with all your weakness, with all your helplessness, He “is able to keep you from falling.” Though Satan is so strong, though the world is so strong, though indwelling sin is so strong, though unbelief is so strong, and though you are so weak, He “is able to keep you from falling” – the gracious ability of the Lord.

We often have it in the epistles: “He is able.” And often something is added at the end, as there is here. “He is able.” Now do you believe it?

Some of us had to learn it like Daniel. It seemed we were almost in the lions' den. "Daniel ... is thy God able to deliver thee?" Well, tremblingly we said, Yes, and we proved we were not deceived, we were not mistaken. Now have you learnt the answer to this question? "Is thy God able to deliver thee" from the lions, and devils, and sin, death and hell, and people and circumstances and fears? Now is thy God able? You have it so often in the epistles: "He is able." One word is this: "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." Another one is this: He "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." "He is able" – the gracious ability of the Lord. There is nothing too hard for Him. What is it you have tonight? What is it you cannot manage? "He is able." "The cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto Me, and I will hear it." "He is able."

"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling." We can no more keep ourselves than we can save ourselves. You see, there are three things we need if the Lord has had any dealings with us in love and mercy. We need Him to keep alive His work in our hearts. We need Him to keep us from falling day by day. And then we need Him to keep us finally. Now He "is able to keep you from falling." I said that though there were many things hard to understand, there are some clear, simple things at the beginning and the end, and there is one at the beginning on this very point, and it is this: "preserved in Jesus." This was a good word to me in my early days: "preserved in Jesus." I know in our hymn we sing of it between the time of our first birth and our second birth: "Preserved in Jesus when my feet made haste to hell." But that word is not exhausted when the new birth has taken place. What about this word, does it suit you well: "The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore"? "Preserved in Jesus."

He "is able to keep you from falling." Years ago there was someone who came to see me wanting to join our church. When she had finished her account, she said, "But the thing which concerns me is this: it is walking it out afterwards." Well, that is a good exercise, isn't it? Immediately this word dropped so powerfully on my spirit: He "is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." I remember quoting this word to her. But it is one thing to be baptised; it is one thing to make an open profession of the Lord's name; it is one thing to begin; but it is the walking it out. You

need shoes of iron and brass, but the Lord has promised them. “And as thy days, so shall thy strength be.” He “is able to keep you from falling,” able to keep that work alive in your heart. It seems so feeble, that flame, that dimly-burning flame, that bruised reed, that smoking flax. He is able to keep it alive.

“His grace shall to the end,
Stronger and brighter shine;
Nor present things, nor things to come,
Shall quench the spark divine.”

He is able to keep you, keep alive that work in your heart. And He is able to keep you from falling day by day. We need to pray that prayer, “Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.” “Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe” – and only safe as Thou dost hold me up. O but a tempting devil and our own carnality and weakness!

He “is able to keep you from falling.” And then to keep you finally, keep you from falling into hell finally. “He will keep the feet of His saints.” And they are well-kept whom the Lord keeps. “Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” Now do not leave out those two important words, *through faith*. It is not just something automatic. It is not just that this person was called by grace and fifty years later this person dies, and it is just automatic. May we ever be delivered from thinking that our souls’ preservation, our souls’ safe-keeping is just automatic. It is by faith. We shall be brought to feel our weakness, to look to the Lord, to rest upon Him, to seek His help, to pray our way along. It will not just be, I am a child of God; “once in Him, in Him for ever”; and a careless walk. It is by faith. It is “looking unto Jesus.” Beware of carnal security. Bunyan’s pilgrim did not do very well with carnal security. You can carnalise a doctrine. You can take that blessed doctrine of the eternal safety of the people of God and you can carnalise it. We have to pray our way along. “He that endureth to the end shall be saved.” We have to cry, “Keep me, Lord; save me from falling; uphold me, preserve me; maintain me in Thy fear.” It is by faith.

“Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling.” “Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” Your safety, your preservation lies in one point and one point alone, the power of God. They tell me the word “kept” is a word in

the original Greek which is difficult to translate into English. It really means *garrisoned*. It is a military term. It means being completely surrounded by a garrison, and the garrison is divine, almighty power. What a mercy, what a blessing! We need to pray for it, and day by day at night to bless God if He has brought us safely through the day. “Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling.” He *is* able to keep you from falling.

And then the second thing. He “is able ... to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.” If ever there was an unbelievable word in Scripture it is this, that such a guilty sinner should be presented faultless. But there is something very beautiful, very attractive here. We sang it recently, didn’t we?

“Needful when I in heaven appear,
To crown and to present me there.”

How needful the Lord Jesus is in the last great day to present us there! There is something so attractive in this, the Lord Jesus at God’s right hand, a great High Priest, an almighty Saviour, there waiting, and one by one they come into His presence, sinners saved by grace, and He takes them and presents them to His Father.

“He will present our souls
Unblemished and complete
Before the glory of His face,
With joys divinely great.”

He “is able . . . to *present* you faultless.” You read sometimes about persons who have been elevated to the House of Lords, and the first time they attend, they do not just go there and take their place. They have someone, or two people, who take them in and they present them. Again, it is something like this. There is perhaps some eminent man. He has a beautiful mansion in which he lives. His son has a friend he knows at school. This friend at school is a poor boy who just lives in an ordinary house, and one day he is invited by the wealthy gentleman to go to the mansion. He is very, very fearful about it all. He is so afraid of going there. But when he arrives, there waiting outside the gate is his friend, the son of the owner, and he takes him in, he introduces him, he presents him to his father. He is so welcome; he could not be more welcome, the friend

of the son. It will be something like that in the great day: this poor sinner, so unworthy. O but the King's Son is there waiting at the gate to present you to His Father. O that loving welcome that awaits the Saviour's friends in heaven!

“Needful when I in heaven appear,
To crown and to present me there.”

Now you see, the Saviour presents His beloved people as His dear friends. He presents them because of their union with Him. He presents them on the ground of His merit. He says, “Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me.” But what about this: “to present you faultless”? The closing lines of the hymn we sang just now are the best commentary you could have on this:

“Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.”

“To present you faultless.” We read of one man who was *approved in Christ*. We read of some who are *complete in Christ*. We read of those who are *perfect through His comeliness*. “To present you faultless.” You see,

“Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.”

Now when you look at yourself, how many faults can you find? It seems to be nothing but fault and failure, failure and fault, fault and failure. In the last great day, beloved, you will be presented faultless. There are two very beautiful scriptures on this which come right to the heart of it, one in Ephesians and one in Colossians. The one in Ephesians is this: “Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word” – now this is it – “that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”

“Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.”

It is to be washed from all guilt and defilement in the Redeemer's blood, the open fountain. Then it is to be completely covered with the pure, spotless, white robe of Christ's righteousness. "That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." "He is able ... to present *you* faultless." It does not matter how great the sin; it does not matter how great the sinner; the merit is all in Christ, in His righteousness, in His blood. "He is able ... to present you faultless."

Now the other verse in Colossians: "You that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death" – now this is it – "to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in His sight." That is the point, isn't it: what we are *in His sight*? Now this is it: "to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in His sight."

"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" – as the Lord Jesus for ever and ever shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied, the purchase of His pains, and all His people shall be eternally satisfied with Him. Really, not so much in the words, but this will be the substance, the theme of the song of the redeemed in heaven: "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling." Of course it will be sung in retrospect, looking back, brought safely through, tried and proved, the faithfulness of God, the immensity of mercy. "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."