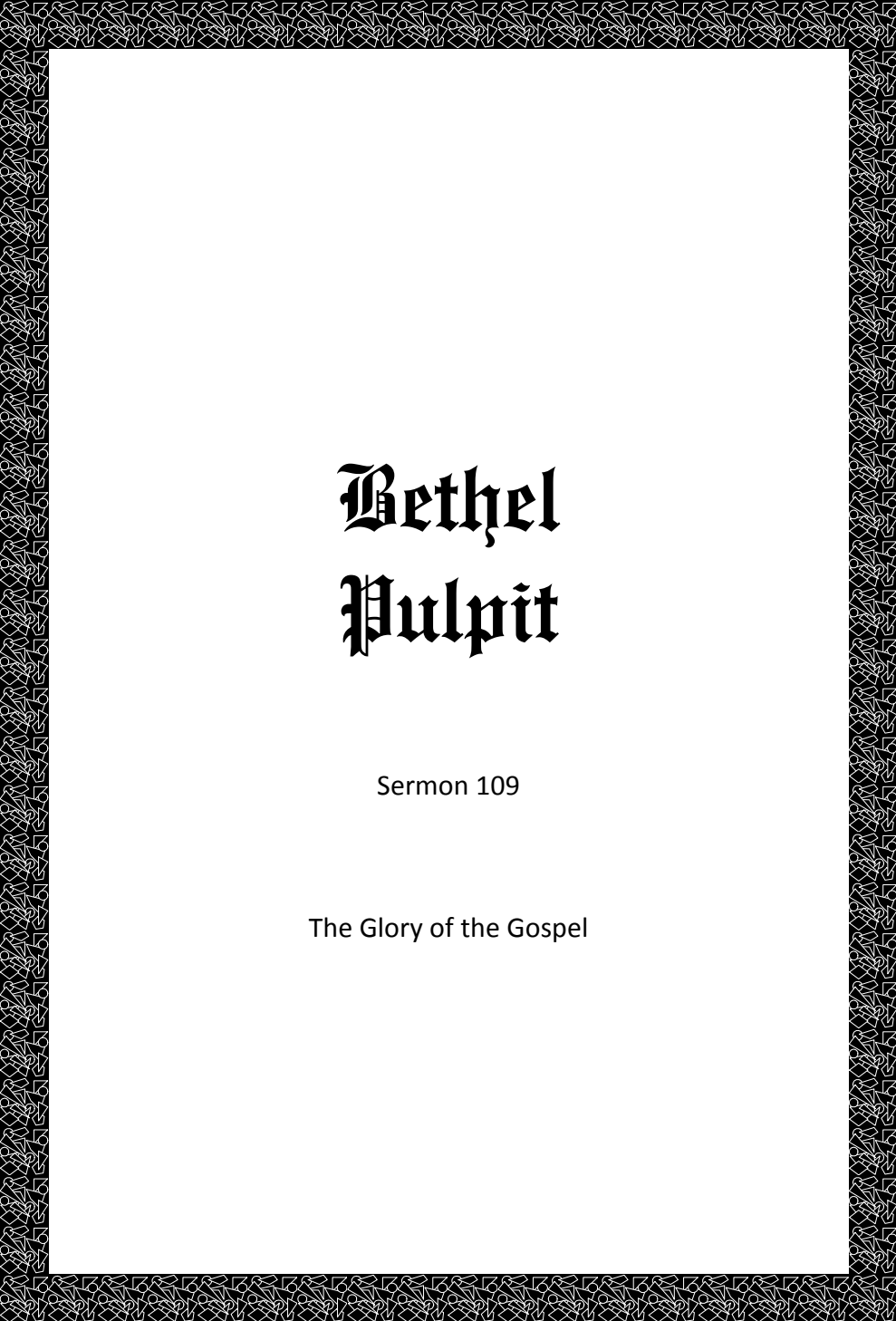




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 109

The Glory of the Gospel

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day morning, 17th July, 1994**

Text: “According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust” (1 Timothy 1. 11).

I wonder how many of you there are here this morning who love the gospel. Perhaps some of you have to put it more like this:

“Then shall I love Thy gospel more,
And ne’er forget Thy Word,
When I have felt its quickening power,
To draw me near the Lord.”

O but the wonders of the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I want to try to speak to you this morning concerning the glory of the gospel, because there *is* a glory in it, a glory that faith views, “the *glorious* gospel of the blessed God.”

1. First of all, there is *the glory of the gospel plan*. O what a wonderful plan is that of the Three-One God in eternity past in the covenant of grace! You see the glory of divine wisdom. How was it possible that there could be such a plan in which God would punish sin and yet save sinners, in which God would be just and yet “the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus”? How was it possible that heaven should be that holy, holy, holy place where nothing that defileth can enter in, and yet everyone who does enter in should be a sinner? The glory of divine wisdom in the gospel plan. How was it possible that the eternal God should become Man? How could the eternal Son of God become a real Man without ceasing to be God? And how could He be a real Man and not be a partaker of original sin? You see the glory of divine wisdom in the plan of salvation, and you see the glory of mercy in the sovereign choice of the people of God, and that wonderful love that was set upon them, and the determination that they should be saved from everlasting ruin, from sin and death and hell. Now it is a glorious gospel in its plan. I wonder if some of you ever look back and think of the plan of salvation. You think of the glory of free grace in the plan of salvation.

“Grace first contrived a way
To save rebellious man,
And all the steps that grace display
Which drew the wondrous plan.”

The glory of the gospel plan. When you think that the eternal God – Father, Son, Holy Ghost – had no need of any creatures, the eternal God, self-existent, self-sufficient; and yet the glory of the gospel plan that there might be millions who one day should live and reign in glory with God for ever and ever. May a few of you this morning be brought to admire the gospel plan. May a few of you see that apart from this gospel plan, the glory of grace in it, you must have been lost for ever. And may some of you come here:

“The streams of love I trace
Up to the fountain, God;
And in His wondrous mercy see
Eternal thoughts of love to me.”

2. “The glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.” But especially there is *the glory of the Person* in whom the gospel centres, and without whom there would be no gospel, this glorious Person who “brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” What a theme is this, the glorious Person of the Son of God, into whose hands in the plan, the gospel plan, the whole of salvation’s work was committed; that glorious Person, the Son of God from all eternity, that glorious Person who took our nature without sin into union with His divine Person.

The Lord Jesus prayed just before He suffered, “Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory.” And that prayer of the Lord Jesus must be answered. They *shall* behold His glory, by faith here, eternally by sight hereafter. O but did you ever have a glimpse of the glory of the Person of the Son of God?

“See where it shines in Jesus’ face,
The brightest image of His grace!”

To see the glory of the dear Lord Jesus who is the Foundation of the gospel, without whom there would be no gospel. There is a glory, isn’t

there, in the incarnate Son of God? Some of you have had a glimpse of that love, haven't you? Some of you come today, don't you, praying, "Sir, we would see Jesus"? But to see His glory in the gospel. You can see the glory of the Lord Jesus in creation, in every rolling star, in the flowers, in the streams, in the fields. You can see the glory of the Son of God there. You see His glory in providence, in the wonderful outworkings of providence. "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." You can see the glory of the Son of God in His wrath against sinners eternally. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." O but to see His glory in the gospel. That is, His glorious suitability to meet your need; that is, His glorious suitability to do for you all those things that you can never do for yourselves. I do hope there might be a few of you here this morning who by faith might see the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ, that it might be revealed to you by the Holy Spirit, that He might be made attractive, that you might say, "Whom having not seen, we love," that you might say, "Here it is I find my heaven, while upon the Lamb I gaze."

3. "The glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust." But then you see, we view *the outworking of the gospel plan and the accomplishing of it*. I like that word, *accomplish*. Some time ago I was asked to give an address on the subject, *An Accomplished Redemption*. I thought what a suitable title, *An Accomplished Redemption*.

"Hear the Lord Himself declaring
All performed He came to do;
Sinners, in yourselves despairing,
This is joyful news to you."

An accomplished redemption. I have often looked at that rather mysterious word, the Lord Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, appearing there in His glory, and there talked with Him Moses and Elias. We are told that they "spake of His decease" – that is, His death – "His decease which He should *accomplish* at Jerusalem." I have never heard that expression anywhere else, of any person *accomplishing* his death. A person dies, or perhaps during the war we used to read of those laying down their life for their country. But to *accomplish* your death? O the wonderful accomplishments of the death of Christ. "His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." This is the glorious gospel, what the

Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ accomplished in His finished work that there might be a gospel to be preached to the vilest sinner out of hell.

We see the glory of the incarnation. “Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.” We see the glory of His baptism, the Holy Ghost descending like a sacred dove on His head, and that voice from heaven: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” We see the glory of His temptation. “Our Captain stood the fiery test, and we shall stand through Him.” We see the glory of His teaching, the glory of the miracles He performed, and we see the glory of that holy, sacred, spotless life, lived in obedience to His Father’s law, to be the justifying righteousness of all His people. And we see such a glory in that righteousness. “No age can change its glorious hue; the robe of Christ is ever new.” O to come as a filthy, guilty sinner, to be stripped of all your filthy garments and to be clothed in the glorious righteousness of the incarnate Son of God!

“And, lest the shadow of a spot
Should on my soul be found,
He took the robe the Saviour wrought,
And cast it all around.”

And then the glory of His sufferings and the glory of His matchless love shining through it all. “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.” There is a glory in the sufferings and the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Really it is like the sunset. On a day like this you look up at midday and there is such a glory in the midday sun, isn’t there? But if you see a really beautiful sunset this evening, well, it is different, but it is even more beautiful. There is a greater glory in it, though it is a different glory. You see the glorious Sun of Righteousness set in blood, the glory of the death of Christ, His precious blood shed to save sinners from sin and death and hell. “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.” “Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” The glory of a substitute, one who takes the dying traitor’s place and suffers in his stead. The glory of the sacrifice. “Once ... hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.”

Then you see the burial of the Lord Jesus and the glory of His resurrection. “Who is this that cometh up from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.” You see the glory of His ascension into heaven. You see the glory of His exaltation at God’s right hand. You see the glory of His everlasting priesthood. Now these are the accomplishments of the gospel. This is how the plan of salvation was accomplished. O there is a glory in it. “All the glory, Lord, be Thine.”

4. “The glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.” Then there is the beauty of the gospel ministry, and it is a glorious gospel which is preached. There is *a glory in the gospel, the preaching of the gospel*. “It speaks of pardon, full and free, through Christ, the Lamb once slain.” O but how many of you have been brought to love the preaching of the gospel, as it centres in the Person and finished work of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? There are some people who like preaching that deals in curiosities and prophecies, visionary things, or that deals with providence, or with all kinds of little stories. But “we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock” – the Jew, he was a religious man, self-righteous – “and unto the Greeks foolishness” – he was the opposite; he was a worldly man; he was an intelligent man, an intellectual man – “but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.”

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” There is a power in the gospel when applied by the Holy Spirit greater than any power on earth. That power which can change lives, which can raise the dead, which can soften hard hearts, which can turn sinners into saints. “Sinners, deserving endless pain, Thy great salvation see.” We go back to our early days, what a delight it was to hear the everlasting gospel preached, to hear it again and again that “the Saviour died, and by His blood brought rebel sinners back to God.” O may there be many gospel lovers here! O there is such a sweet attraction in the gospel! It is a mark that your ears have been opened. “In that day shall the deaf hear the words of the Book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness” O the glories of the gospel! And how our very souls used to respond:

“Hail, great Immanuel, all divine!
In Thee Thy Father’s glories shine;
Thou brightest, sweetest, fairest One
That eyes have seen or angels known.”

5. “The glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.” But I want to speak on *the application* of it. Truth without application has led thousands to hell. People do not want the application of it today. O but we do need the application. George Whitefield, who preached to his many thousands, to greater numbers than anyone in his day, used to make this very solemn statement: “An unapplied Christ is no Christ.” You think about it. There is a glory in the application of the gospel.

But in the application of the gospel, the first thing is for the sinner to be brought to feel his need of it. Because by nature, you and I do not feel our need of the gospel; and perhaps there are some here, perhaps many here this morning, who come to chapel week by week, and you have never really felt a deep sense of your need of the gospel.

In the application of the gospel, first of all you will be painfully brought to feel your need of it, that you and I are dying sinners, that we have a soul that never will die. But “it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” And sometimes we see the swellings of Jordan. O beloved friends, was eternity ever made solemn to you? I wish with all my heart I could give you that sense I once felt of the awfulness, the solemnity of eternity. Now I cannot do it – only the Holy Ghost can do it – but if you ever have a glimpse of eternity, your life will never be the same again.

I will give you young ones a simple illustration. There was never a more ardent football fan in England than myself. I would travel anywhere to watch professional football. But the last time I ever attended a professional football match, the Lord had begun to lay eternity in my heart. I will tell you the way it affected me: the utter nonsense and ridiculousness and foolishness of twenty-two grown men rushing about a field, kicking a ball about, and all the people shouting and cheering, when all of them and myself had to die, and then eternity. If you ever felt, “Eternity, tremendous sound!” that will bring you away from the world; that will crucify the world to you. The two things together: the awful sense of eternity, and

then when you begin to see a sweet attraction in the Lord Jesus, that will finish you to the world, and it will finish the world to you. But the application of the gospel, it is to realise that one day you must die (you know not how soon), and then the judgment, and you and I, ruined, lost, guilty, unprepared, unable to prepare ourselves. But to tremble before eternity – this is the preparation for the gospel.

I remember also how solemn the divine decrees of election were, that there was a people chosen, and the eternal choice for ever fixed. O what if I am not among the Lord's chosen? We seem to have come into a day of half-hearted religion today. You cannot say things are altogether wrong, and you cannot say people are altogether wrong. But we go back to those early days, and what was happening in the world and what was happening in the newspapers did not seem to be any concern. The great thing was this: I have a soul to be saved or lost, and I am a sinner; I have sins to be pardoned, to be forgiven, to be washed away – no peace, no resting place. Now beloved friends, are you strangers to these things? There is the application of the gospel. Of course, this is what Paul is speaking about in the context. "The law is good, if a man use it lawfully; knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient." That is, that God is holy, righteous, just. He has given a holy law. But the point is this: we have broken it. The law is like a pair of scales, and when we are weighed in those scales, in those balances, we are found wanting. O but to realise, "My best is stained and dyed with sin; my all is nothing worth."

We must realise first of all, by divine teaching, our need of the gospel. It is not a glorious gospel to the flesh. There are some who cannot even understand it. The great and godly, gracious Lady Huntingdon, who was so blessed and made a blessing to so many two hundred years ago, was a woman of immense influence and wealth, a leading figure amongst the nobility, and her husband, the Earl of Huntingdon, was a most nice, amiable man. Many people told him he should stop his wife in what they felt was madness but he would never have a word spoken against his wife. He was a most intelligent man, but he said he just could not see the gospel plan. He could not make sense of it. Lady Huntingdon asked Whitefield to spend a morning with him, and he treated him most kindly, but at the end he said, "I am sorry, sir, but I just cannot see your doctrine. I cannot see the gospel plan." Yet "poor Joseph," a half-wit, with the truth

revealed, he saw the gospel. “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” – and Joseph is a sinner, a great sinner, so perhaps He came to save Joseph. And he ventured his everlasting all on it, and he found peace and joy in believing. I am not laying down standards – God is sovereign – but you will never be brought to love and value the gospel unless you are brought to feel your need of it.

“The glorious gospel of the blessed God.” And then there is the application of it. You will seek mercy, seek salvation, seek forgiveness, seek cleansing in His precious blood. And,

“The vilest sinner out of hell,
Who lives to feel his need,
Is welcome to a throne of grace,
The Saviour’s blood to plead.”

O but the glory of the application of the gospel. There are two or three things glorious in the application of the gospel. The first is this, poor sinner: it comes right where you are, just like the good Samaritan. When you are helpless and dying and wounded and burdened and groaning, you cannot take one step, you cannot do anything, neither do you deserve anything; but it comes right where you are and does everything for you and pours in the oil and the wine of heavenly consolation and peace by blood. But the second thing in the glory of the gospel application: its complete freeness, without money, without price. It is such a hard lesson to learn. Our old selves want to be doing something, bringing something, giving something. But the gospel in its entire freeness: it is free to pardon, free to forgive. “I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life *freely*.” Now that is the glory of the gospel in its complete fulness. But then the third thing: its application is everlasting. The Lord does not come to a sinner and apply the gospel to his poor, wounded conscience, and then a week or two later dash his hopes and cast him off. “They who once His kindness prove, find it everlasting love.” That is the glory of the gospel.

“The glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.” May many of you sweetly feel the application of the gospel to your heart, and may you feel something of the glory of it. As an illustration, let me just refer you to Ezekiel 16. There you have a sinner,

lost, ruined, guilty, compared to a child cast out in the day of its nativity, not washed in water, not salted at all, not swaddled at all. This is it; this is the need for the gospel: “None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the lothing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born.” That is a lost sinner. I wonder if it is you. This is the gospel, the gospel in its application: “And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live.” This is the gospel: “Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread My skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest Mine. Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil. I clothed thee also with brodered work, and shod thee with badgers’ skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head. ... And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through My comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God.” I can think of no greater blessing for any of you here this morning than to have that word sealed home to your conscience: “Perfect through My comeliness, which I had put upon thee.”

“What wondrous love, what mysteries,
In this appointment shine!
My breaches of the law are His,
And His obedience mine.”

6. “The glorious gospel of the blessed God.” It only remains to mention *the effects of it*, the gracious effects of it. And there is a glory in the effect of the gospel: that changed life, those dried bones now living, that hard heart made soft, that lion made a lamb. In a word, “A foe received a favourite, a rebel made a child.” And that loving, tender walk, because there is a standard in the gospel, and there is a walking in the gospel, and there is an honouring of the gospel. And you see, although the gospel is free, and salvation without works, yet those who are wrought upon by the glorious gospel of the blessed God, how tenderly they walk!

O beloved friends, may you and I be more and more under the influence of the gospel in our preaching and in our hearing, under the influence of the gospel in our conversation one with another, under the influence of the gospel, its influence upon our spirit, saving us from our own spirit, a wrong spirit, a hard spirit, an unkind spirit. The influence of the gospel: “Freely ye have received, freely give.” The influence of the gospel: “Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” O we can lay no claim to an interest in the gospel if our life, walk and conversation are never influenced by the gospel. There will be a gracious effect, and it will be seen, and it will be felt, and it will be experienced.

“The glorious gospel of the blessed God.” O may we highly value it. May we highly prize it. Some countries do not have it. Some countries have had it removed from them. Some churches have had it removed from them. When the Lord has a controversy with any people and that controversy is not resolved, then He withdraws the gospel, and once the gospel is withdrawn, then there is withering, then there is famine, then there is death. Now may the Lord not take the gospel away from us, as a nation, as a denomination, as a congregation here, and personally, because it is a glorious gospel. As Mr. Popham used to say, “I feel I have preached a poor sermon this morning, but it is not a poor gospel that I preach.”

“The glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.”