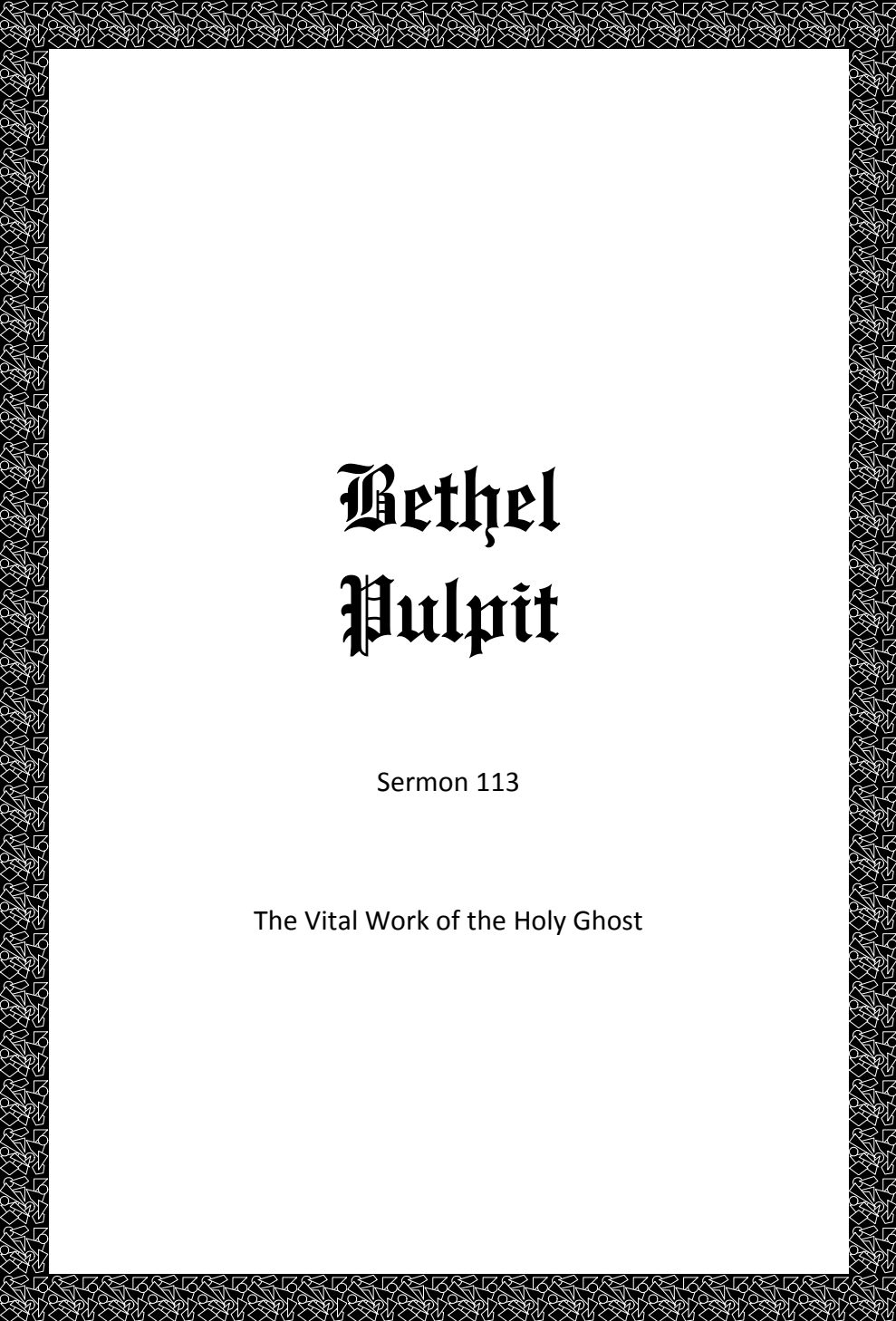




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 113

The Vital Work of the Holy Ghost

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day morning, 2nd October, 1994**

Text: *“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14. 26).*

Here we are at the foundation of all real religion. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost – three Persons, one God – the glorious truth of the Trinity. God the Father from all eternity chose His people. God the Son in the fulness of time was made flesh and shed His precious blood to redeem them from hell. God the Holy Ghost quickens them one by one into newness of life and saves them by grace. We have the three glorious Persons in the Godhead, not three Gods – only one God, holy, infinite, almighty, eternal, immutable, only one God – but God in three distinct Persons. And we find that blessed unity in the plan of salvation, and we see the work of each of the three Persons of the Godhead in the work of salvation. Now may all of you be made Trinitarians, not just because it is in the articles of faith, or just because it is in the Bible, but by gracious teaching in your heart may you each be made Trinitarians.

This verse I have read to you is one of the clearest of all the verses on the Trinity. We have each Person in the Godhead distinctly mentioned. First of all we have the Lord Jesus speaking, and as He speaks He speaks of His Father, a distinct Person. And then He speaks of how the Father will send the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, how He will send Him in the name of Jesus. So you have these three distinct Persons here: the Comforter, who is the Holy Ghost, the Father who sends Him, and the Lord Jesus who speaks, who says, “In My name.” Three distinct, glorious Persons. But beloved friends, as you go through Scripture you will clearly read how each one of them is God: that the Holy Ghost, the divine Comforter, is God; that the eternal Father is God; that the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is God. Well, may we be graciously established in these foundation truths.

Now here, of course, we have this very beautiful truth concerning the Holy Ghost, the divine Comforter, “whom the Father will send in My name.” In many places we read of the Father sending the Son, don't we?

Here we read of the Father sending the Holy Spirit. If you turn to the similar verse in the next chapter you read of the Lord Jesus sending the Holy Spirit. O this wonderful gift! Apart from the Holy Spirit's gracious work, His divine influence, we know nothing at all savingly. This precious gift of the Holy Spirit, "the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name."

I want you young people to be very clear on one or two things. First of all, the Holy Spirit, or the Holy Ghost, is a Person; not just some feeling, some influence, but a Person. Secondly, the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit, is a divine Person; He is God. When we read of the sending of the Holy Spirit, which especially took place on the Day of Pentecost with such amazing effect, do not think for one moment that the Holy Spirit had not existed before. He existed from all eternity. Do not think of that any more than thinking that when the Lord Jesus was born at Bethlehem this was His beginning. O the Lord Jesus from eternity always was the Son of God, but at Bethlehem He appeared in this world. The Holy Ghost likewise from everlasting was God. We read of various of His influences in the Old Testament, but in a special way on the Day of Pentecost He appeared, He was seen. Now may you young people, you children, be very clear on who the Holy Spirit is. And here we have something of His great and gracious and glorious work.

Really, you know, there are three great works of the Holy Spirit. The first, *the mysterious incarnation of the Son of God*. How is it possible that the Son of God should take our nature? How could He be made a Man without ceasing to be God? How could He be a real Man without being partaker of original sin? So we have the great mystery of the virgin birth, the greatest of all the works of the Holy Ghost. No wonder that Mary, dear Mary – wasn't she a godly woman? – no wonder that Mary said, "How shall this be?" "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Now that is the greatest work of the Holy Ghost, the conception of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The second great work of the Holy Ghost is *the inspiration of the Scriptures*. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." That is why the Bible, the Holy Scriptures, are infallible, inerrant,

no mistake, no possibility of any mistake, because inspired by the Holy Ghost. People speak of a secular poet being inspired, or people talk of somebody running in a race, and say he ran like somebody inspired. It is nothing to do with that at all. The inspiration of Scripture means they were God-breathed. That is what inspiration is. “Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” This word *moved* is a word which is usually used of a ship, an ancient sailing ship when it was being impelled along by some breeze, by the wind, and it was being carried along. “Holy men of God spake as they were *moved*.” Peter wrote that. He knew what it was to sail on the sea of Galilee, for the wind to blow the ship along. He said, it is just like that in inspiration. That is what happened to Paul and John and myself and others. We wrote as we were moved of the Holy Ghost. It is a great mystery, the inspiration of Scripture. All the writers had their own peculiar characters, their own peculiar style, yet there is that perfect inspiration, that perfect infallibility, verbal infallibility. We do not believe that the Holy Ghost suggested something to them and they wrote it down how they wanted. The verbal inspiration and infallibility of Scripture.

The third great work of the Holy Ghost is *the work of grace in a sinner's heart*, beginning with the new birth, life given, and then the maintaining of life, the teaching, the testifying, the glorifying of Jesus, the manifesting of the Saviour, the establishing, the keeping, and then at last bringing safe to heaven. Of course in this verse, that is especially the thing we have. “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” So we have this very simple, very beautiful point that the Holy Spirit is the Teacher of God's people. If your religion is real, you will be divinely taught, you will be graciously taught. That is why you find that every sinner saved by grace from the Day of Pentecost to now has been in complete agreement on vital things. On inferior things they may have differences, but as they are all taught, all led by the same Spirit, “they all declare, I nothing am, my life is bound up in the Lamb.” The Holy Spirit does not teach different ways. He does not teach this one that salvation is all of grace and teach this one that he must have some part in it. He does not teach another one his own utter depravity and ruin and helplessness and another that he has a free will and he can decide for himself.

“The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, *He* shall teach you all things.” Again it is a witness to the personality of the Holy Spirit. An influence cannot teach; a feeling cannot teach. He, this glorious Person, this divine Person, He who is God, He who understands all mysteries, He who was there when the eternal covenant was made, He who was a witness both to the death and the resurrection of the Son of God, He who inspired the Scriptures and so knows the real, true meaning. Now, “He shall teach you all things.” It is a very wonderful truth, this, the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

Of course, the teaching of the Holy Spirit must be preceded by something vital, and that is the new birth. There cannot be any teaching before there is life, and there cannot be any life before that life is given, before there is a birth. You could have the best teacher in the world, you could have the most eminent professor from one of our leading universities, and he might be a great teacher, but if there was a room full of dead people, it would not do them any good whatsoever. So the first work of the Holy Spirit with us personally is the new birth. There will not be any teaching, any instruction, any leading, until that wonderful new birth takes places. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” He is still blind; he is still dead. Why is it a person can sit in chapel, why is it that some of you can sit in chapel week by week, but you do not tremble about eternity, you do not feel any concern about your sin, you do not view any wonderful attraction in the Saviour? I am speaking plainly and honestly, but in love. Why is it? Because you are still dead in your trespasses and your sins. “The living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing.”

You young ones, you children, have you ever come across this verse in the Bible, and if you have, what do you think it means, what do you make of it: “A living dog is better than a dead lion”? Well, I take it to mean this. If you have a lion and a dog together, well, the lion has it every way. It is bigger; it is stronger; it is more powerful; it is more majestic. If there was a fight between the two, the lion would come off best – so long as that lion is alive. But if you have a lion and it is lying there dead, why, the tiniest little dog there is is better than that dead lion. When the Holy Spirit revealed that in Ecclesiastes, the point was this: the vital importance of life, the superiority of life over death. There is a lot of good divinity in what our hymnwriter sings: “We cannot act before we live, and life

proceeds from grace.” O beloved friends, I affectionately press this point upon you this morning: “Ye must be born again.” O may it be a question – you cannot go to sleep tonight until you have it answered: “Am I quickened by His Spirit?” Am I born again, or am I a complete stranger to it? Do I possess the marks of the new birth? Has there been a change? Have I passed from death to life?

“Am I quickened by His Spirit;
Live a life of faith and prayer?
Trusting wholly to His merit;
Casting on Him all my care?
Daily panting,
In His likeness to appear?”

O the new birth! We talk about a call by grace; we talk about conversion; we talk about many things. Conversion is a complete turning round. But a dead person cannot turn completely round. A call by grace is hearing the call and obeying it. A dead person can neither hear nor obey. “Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.” No substitute for it, no hope, no salvation, no heaven without it. The sovereign, almighty work of the Holy Ghost in a sinner’s heart, making you live, teaching you to pray, making your heart soft, showing you your sin, your guilt, bringing you out of the world, leading you to the Saviour, giving you those hungerings and longings and thirstings after Christ. O “ye must be born again.” You cannot talk about the teaching and leading and instruction of the Holy Spirit if you are still a stranger to the first work.

“Ye must be born again.” A tiny child, a new-born babe, there is life. That new-born babe belongs to the family. He cannot say, Father – he cannot speak at all – but he belongs to the family just as much as those older children. Those little lips that now can only cry, one day they shall say, Father. But that little child is part of the family. How do you know that that little child is alive? Haven’t some of you anxiously waited when one of the babies has been born, and suddenly you have heard that cry and it has sounded like music in your ears, a living child? “Ye must be born again.” And that new-born child of grace cries. A new-born babe does not speak words, but it cries, and the loving mother understands it. That is a cry of hunger; that is a cry of pain; that is a cry of tiredness. And, “your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.” O those

cries for mercy, for salvation, the evidence of life, the evidence of the new birth! And they sound very sweet to your Father in heaven. “He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when He shall hear it, He will answer thee.” O but look at that new-born child. There is the cry, there is the moving. O the spiritual movements of a living soul! There is the hungering. “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby.” Now there must be that heavenly birth, there must be that new birth, before there can be anything, before there can be any teaching, before there can be any growth, before there can be any knowledge of the truth, before there can be anything.

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things.” I go back to my spiritual beginnings and this truth we have here this morning appeared like a revelation from heaven to my soul. I will tell you how it came. The Lord Jesus had been made very attractive, very precious, but I felt I knew so little of Him. O but I longed to know so much more. I was wondering, How can I get to know more of the Saviour, more of His beauty, more of His love? Without thinking, unconsciously, it was as though there was going to be some action, some activity, something on my part. Of course these things were very obscure. But it was that simple word of the Lord Jesus: “And they shall be all taught of God.” It was a revelation to me, that it was the Holy Spirit’s work to lead me into those things I longed to know, to teach me those things. The new birth and salvation were not the end. It was not as if the Lord had done this and you have to carry on. He who begins that good work will carry it on till the day of Jesus Christ.

“The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things.” We need to be born again, and then we need to be graciously taught, we need to be graciously instructed. There is very little that we know. There is so much we need to know. There is so much we long to know. O beloved friends, beware of your religion when you think you know it all. Paul said, “Not as though I had already attained” – that is Paul, the great apostle – “either were already perfect: but I follow after.” He wanted to be taught. “I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.” There are so many lessons we need to learn. God has never committed the care, the teaching of His beloved children to any man, not to any parent, not to any minister, not to any pastor. “They shall be all taught of God,”

right down to the feeblest, right down to the most ignorant, right down to the most unlearned, right down to “the vilest sinner out of hell, who lives to feel his need.” “They shall be all taught of God.” Then we have that wonderful new-covenant promise: “For they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest,” through this divine teaching. What a word is that: “All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children”! May that prayer be burnt into many a heart – I believe in measure it has been burnt into my heart – that prayer of Job: “That which I see not teach Thou me.” O may the Holy Spirit teach us those things we do not know, those things we need to know. When you read the Bible, God’s holy Word, may it be with a prayerful desire that the Holy Spirit will teach you through the sacred pages. When you come to chapel to hear the preaching of the everlasting gospel, may it be with a prayer that the Holy Spirit might be your divine Teacher, that He might take of these things of Jesus and show them to you.

“The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things.” There used to be an expression about in our chapels, you do not hear it so much nowadays, but years ago you often heard it. They would be speaking of some godly, old man and they would say, “He is well taught.” It was a good expression; it was a scriptural expression. These dear old saints, they were well-taught. They were well-established in the truth as it is in Jesus by the Spirit of God. They might get mixed up and call Moses Noah or something like that, but on vital truth they were well-taught. Some of them could not explain it, but they knew it. It was something like this. If there is a false coin and it falls on the ground, you can tell there is something the matter. It does not ring right. You are not an expert on coins. You cannot explain what is wrong, but you know the coin did not ring right when it fell on the ground. And those godly old souls who were well-taught, well-established, they could not always reason it out, but when they heard something, they could tell if it did not have the right ring. They were well-taught this, well-established in their heart: nothing in self, everything in Christ, self abased, Christ exalted. “The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things.” Perhaps why the expression is not used so much today as in former days, *well-taught*, is because we do not find so many of these graciously-established, graciously-taught people today. You see, the truth

was burnt into their hearts, and because it was burnt into their hearts, they could not deny it. They knew what they believed and they knew why they believed it.

“The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things.” If only I could convey this to you, communicate it to you, this wonderful privilege of the people of God, to have a heavenly Teacher, to have a divine Teacher an infallible Teacher to instruct them in the truth. Well, it was a revelation to me many years ago and I still realise just a little of the preciousness of it. But may you realise the wonder of having this heavenly Teacher and may you be able to cry that you might know His teaching. “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?”

“The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things.” Well I just want to make two observations at this stage (and I do not seem to be getting on very fast this morning). The first observation is this: obviously we have to take this with some limitation. When we have this wonderful promise that the Holy Ghost will teach us *all* things, most surely it means all things that He sees fit, all things that are needful for our salvation, all things that are needful for our real, spiritual good. You cannot take it in an unlimited sense. I mean, the Holy Spirit is not going to teach you what year the world is going to end. The Holy Spirit is not going to teach you when the next general election will be and who will be the new prime minister. When the Lord Jesus says, “He shall teach you all things,” it means with this gracious limitation: all things for your real good, all things needful for your everlasting salvation. So you have not to pry into mysteries you were never meant to understand; you have not to pry into things and quote this as your authority for it. “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever.”

The second observation: all we really know, we really possess of any spiritual value, is what the Holy Ghost has taught us. In other words, we have as much religion – no more, no less – than what we have received from the Holy Ghost.

“The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things.” Well, it is almost time to finish, and what an inexhaustible subject it is, the things that the Holy Spirit *will* teach a sinner saved by grace. The solemnity of eternity. He will teach you this: that one day you must die, and after this the judgment. He will teach you that you are sinful, lost, ruined, undone. You can do nothing to save yourself, to merit God’s favour. He will teach you this: “My best is stained and dyed with sin; my all is nothing worth.” He will teach you that salvation is all of grace. He will teach you that Jesus is a great and glorious and almighty Saviour, because the great work of the Holy Spirit is not to speak of Himself, but to glorify Christ. He will teach you the value of the Lord Jesus. He will teach you the preciousness of His promises. He will show you, “Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Sometimes He will lead you and teach you in providence the way to go: “This is the way, walk ye in it.” He will shut wrong doors, open right doors. But it is this: the teaching of the Holy Spirit in salvation, establishing us, building us up in the truth. In a word it is this:

“There’s not a man that’s born of God,
But readily will say,
‘If ever my poor soul be saved,
'Tis Christ must be the way.’”

This is the religion which takes a sinner to heaven. This is the teaching of the Holy Ghost. “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”

(If the Lord will, the evening sermon on the same text will be published next month.)