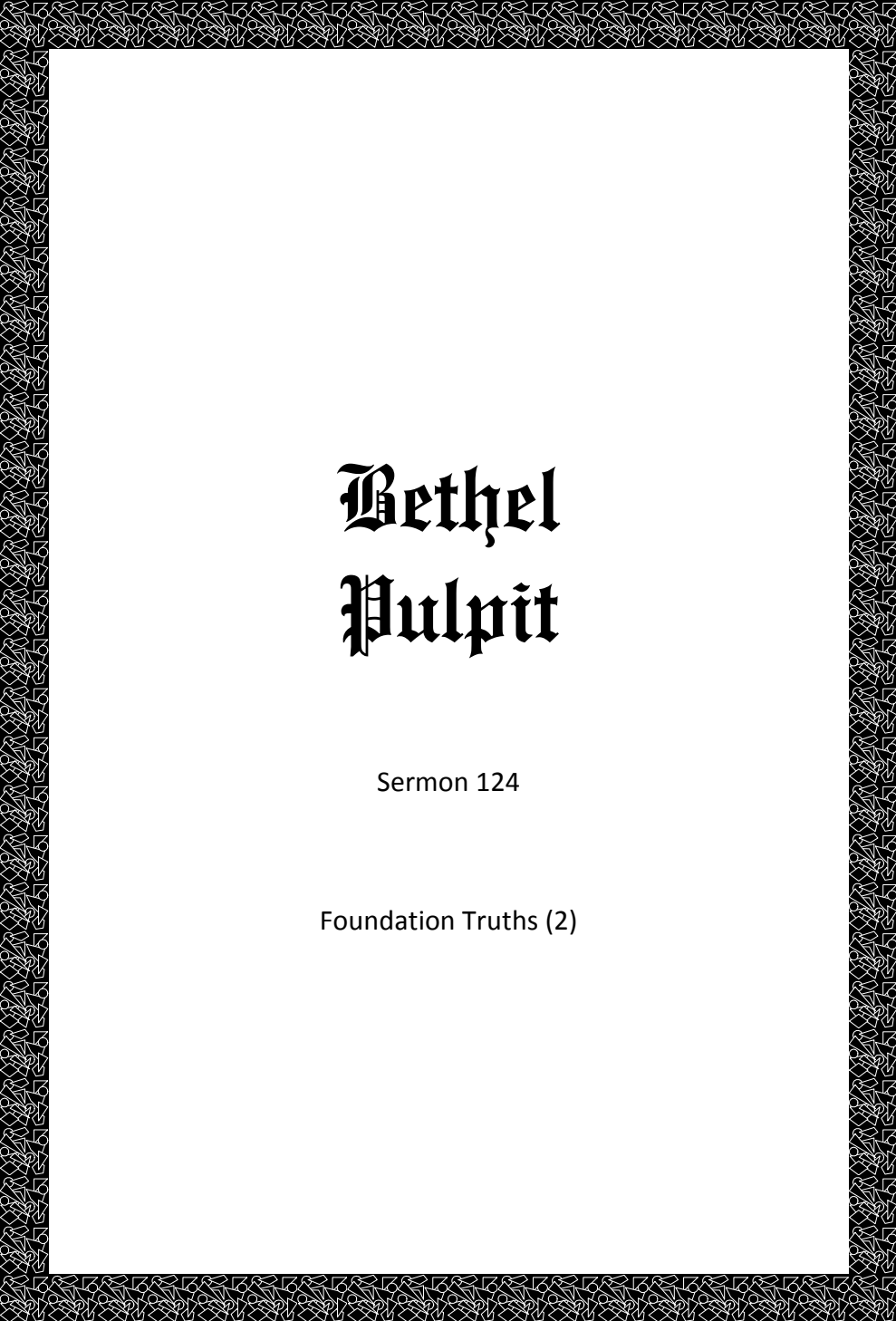




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 124

Foundation Truths (2)

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day evening, 16th October, 1994**

Text: *“But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3. 4-7).*

Here we have the whole of the gospel, a full, free, finished salvation, the whole plan of it from everlasting to everlasting and the glorious accomplishment of it. You have the work of the eternal Father in His kindness and love. You have the work of the eternal Spirit in the washing of regeneration. And you have the work of the eternal Son, the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. O what a gospel this! The wonder of it is, God does it all. It is so suitable to these sinners of the third verse who are lost and ruined and sinful and undone and can do nothing to merit heaven: “foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.” “And such were some of you.”

“But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.” Meditating on these verses, the glory of the gospel here displayed, that line kept coming across my spirit: “Its beauties all centre in Christ.” If there is a key word to this passage it is this: “Through Jesus Christ our Saviour.” All these heavenly blessings, all these glories of the gospel, come to lost, ruined sinners through Jesus Christ our Saviour. You think of His glorious Person, the Son of God from all eternity. You think of His mysterious incarnation, His holy life, His sin-atonement sacrifice, His death, resurrection and ascension. This is where the beauties of the gospel all centre. “Its beauties all centre in Christ.”

“Through Jesus Christ our Saviour.” All these blessings of the gospel, every one of them treasured up according to the kindness and love

of the eternal Father, treasured up in the covenant of grace, they all come to sinners through Jesus Christ. There is a lot of good divinity in the couplet, “Every grace and every favour comes to us through Jesus’ blood.” Of course, it works both ways. If you and I would venture for salvation, if you and I would come to the Father, if you and I would come in prayer, it must be through Jesus Christ our Saviour. You have the preciousness of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ here in His Person and office and work. For “unto you therefore which believe He is precious.”

“Through Jesus Christ our Saviour.” So the Lord Jesus here is revealed as the Mediator, the glorious Person who stands between. “Ye are come ... to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.” All the blessings of the gospel come to sinners through Christ the Mediator. Every approach of the sinner to a holy God is through Jesus Christ the Saviour. Beautifully was this set forth in Jacob’s ladder. You remember he slept with a stone for his pillow and he dreamed, and beheld a ladder and the top reached right up to heaven. Jacob’s ladder joined heaven and earth together. That is Christ the Mediator. “Through Jesus Christ our Saviour.” Paul reminds Titus, “Our Saviour.” “He saves from death, destruction, and despair.” Jacob in his dream saw angels of God going up the ladder and coming down the ladder – two-way traffic. All the blessings of the gospel come down the ladder; every thought, desire, prayer which goes up to heaven goes up Jacob’s ladder. At the time of the Evangelical Revival, there was a popular hymn and the chorus was, “Hallelujah to Jesus who hung on the tree, and has raised up a ladder of mercy for me.”

“Through Jesus Christ our Saviour.” Well, we read here of things being “shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.” There is an abundance in the gospel which comes through Jesus, an abundance of free grace. It is, “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” It is “Sovereign grace o’er sin abounding.”

“Which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.” You may ask the question, What does this refer to: “Which He shed on us abundantly”? Well, beloved friends, I do not see that we have to limit it to anything. All these wonderful things which have been mentioned before, all of them are shed on us abundantly through Christ.

The kindness and love we were speaking of this morning, so precious, so sweet, so attractive, that is shed on us abundantly through Christ. And then that mercy: "According to His mercy He saved us." That wonderful mercy is shed on us abundantly through Christ. And then the washing of regeneration and the wonderful renewing of the Holy Ghost, they are shed on us abundantly through Christ. It is everything which God in mercy bestows on His poor, sinful, unworthy people.

I want to linger on this. I seem to have been lingering on it a lot, thinking about it a lot recently. You dear girls and boys, you young people, perhaps you are troubled in your spirit, concerned about your soul. You cannot really settle, yet you do not really know where you are or what you are, what you want or what you do not want. Well, seek after the Lord Jesus Christ. Keep as close to Him as you can. Watch your spirit when it is attracted, when it is drawn to Him. Look for Him in the Word of God. Ask Him to reveal Himself to you. Look for Him and look to Him under the preaching of the gospel. Be open with Him. Tell Him what you feel and what you do not feel. He will not discourage you; He will not be displeased. If your heart is hard, tell Him your heart is hard. If you love Him, tell Him you love Him. If you do not feel the love to Him you desire, ask Him to give you that love. You cannot go wrong as a sinner seeking after Jesus, praying to Jesus, resting on Jesus.

If you will, these verses I have read to you are like some glorious palace. We hear of people travelling thousands of miles to visit somewhere like the Taj Mahal and being amazed at its beauty. These glorious truths are more beautiful than the Taj Mahal. The dear Lord Jesus is the door into this wonderful building, the entrance to these wonderful blessings. Keep as close to Him as you can. Make Him your All. Seek to lean hard upon Him. Plead His name. O may this tonight above anything else be well-engraved on your hearts: "Through Jesus Christ our Saviour." O that dear Man who suffered, bled and died, but now lives and reigns in heaven, that dear Man who is true, almighty God, that dear Man who still receiveth sinners, who still says, "And him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."

"Through Jesus Christ our Saviour." You have the plan of salvation, the glorious work of redemption, the new birth. Now we come to the effect, and it is a very wonderful effect: "That being justified by His

grace.” Justification is a great blessing. Really it is a legal term. It is a judge in a court of law and he has this person before him, condemned, accused, and the judge has to make the sentence, and his sentence is that of justification. Not just acquittal, justification. A person might be acquitted but not completely without blame. Justified. I go back to my spiritual beginnings. I dare not perhaps say the Lord ever applied it, but I used to linger around it day after day, week after week. I do not know whether I have ever heard it sung in public:

“Mystery of redemption this:
All my sins on Christ were laid;
My offence was reckoned His;
He the great atonement made!”

Now this is it:

“Fully I am justified;
Free from sin, and more than free;
Guiltless, since for me He died;
Righteous, since He lived for me.”

I dare not say it was ever really applied, but I used to live in it, and it was so attractive. A lost, ruined, guilty, hell-deserving sinner, not just acquitted but accounted just, and that by the righteous Judge. It is a legal term.

But you say, “How can a righteous Judge pronounce a guilty sinner to be just? How can He justify him?” Well, on one ground alone: “through Jesus Christ our Saviour,” who takes all the sinner’s guilt and and bears it and bears the punishment for it and bears it away. And then His glorious righteousness, He gives it to the sinner as though it were really the sinner’s own. This sinner before a holy, righteous, heart-searching God, he is guilty, lost, ruined; but not in Christ. As his sins are washed away in the blood of Christ, as Christ’s glorious righteousness is put upon him an everlasting, heavenly dress, the righteous Judge sees him perfect, without spot or blemish or any such thing. He can do no other but declare him justified – not just on grace grounds, but on law grounds. I know here it is justified by grace, but that is because of the eternal plan and purpose of the three-one God in the riches of grace to work out this way of justification in

which on law grounds, through the work of Christ, this guilty sinner might be accounted just.

“That being justified by His grace.” Of course, this was the great doctrine, the great truth of the glorious Reformation. It was the truth which was burnt into Luther’s heart. When under the sentence of condemnation and ready to perish in the monastery, he stumbled on the Epistle to the Romans and there in chapter 3 the great work of justification was revealed to him. It turned Germany upside down and it turned Europe upside down, the preaching of justification. The Roman church had taught justification partly by Christ, partly by the works of the law, partly by penances, partly by gifts. Luther, with the truth burnt into his heart, laid it down clearly, that it was entirely through grace by Christ Jesus, that man’s merit, man’s works had nothing to do with it at all. Luther contended that the article of justification is the article by which the church stands or falls. I think Luther’s words literally are: it is the doctrine of a standing or falling church. “That being justified by His grace.” It is a greater blessing than pardon. It is a greater blessing than forgiveness. It includes these; it embraces these. But it is a sinner standing in Christ, perfect through His comeliness which is upon us.

“Through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by His grace.” Who are these characters who are justified? Well, those to whom the Lord has a favour, those who are the objects of His kindness and love. But they are those who are saved “by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” Really the Word of God makes it clear that those who are born again of the Spirit, quickened into life, blessed with a living faith in Jesus, true believers on the Son of God, are eternally justified through Jesus Christ our Saviour. O what a great Saviour and what a great salvation for such great sinners!

“That being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” Made heirs, “heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus.” You know what an heir is. Well, there are two things really with an heir. The first is this: one day the inheritance will be his. An heir is a person who has an inheritance bequeathed to him. But secondly, no-one can ever make himself an heir. If there is a wealthy man in London who is going to die next week, you could not go and make yourself an heir. No-one deserves to be an heir. Those who are sons and

daughters are heirs. It is those who are saved “by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” They are born again, but they are born again into the family of God. They are “heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus.” In eternal purpose from everlasting sons and daughters by adoption and grace, but now made so personally, experimentally, by the new birth. What a cluster of blessings we have here! “That being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs.” It means that God is their Father. It means they have a blessed inheritance in heaven. Heirs, “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.”

“That being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs.” Let us be clear, justification does not make a sinner an heir. Adoption makes him an heir. The new birth brings him into the experience of being an heir. But those who are justified *are* heirs. “Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” “An inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” In a word it is this (and I do like this verse):

“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.”

“That being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs.” Once a son, always a son. The prodigal went to a far country. He forgot all about his father. He wanted to forget about his father. He wasted his substance with riotous living. But he was still a son, still an heir. The time came when he began to be in want and he would fain have filled his belly with the husks the swine did eat. He said, “I will arise” – that is repentance, that is the resolve of living faith – “I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.” Worthiness has nothing to do with it. He was still his son. “Make me as one of thy hired servants.” A son cannot be a hired servant. O the difference between law ground and gospel ground!

“That being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs.” Sons of God by adoption and grace, you know it through regeneration.

The children of God, and if children, children for ever! What a word is this: “Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.” “Through Jesus Christ our Saviour.”

“That being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” It all ends in heaven. It all ends in this blessing of everlasting life. “Through Jesus Christ our Saviour.” He who says, “Because I live, ye shall live also.” And,

“Eternal life, at His request,
To every saint is given;
Safety on earth, and after death,
The plenitude of heaven.”

“According to the hope of eternal life.” So you see, beloved friends, these sinners who are born again, who know “the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost,” they are given a sweet hope in Jesus, and that sweet hope is the hope of eternal life at last. And it is “a good hope through grace.” You might say, Is there such a thing as a bad hope? There are plenty of bad hopes. The man had a bad hope who built his house on a foundation of sand. But a “good hope through grace.” Grace gives you this good hope. Grace is the ground and foundation of this hope. It is a good hope because it is built on solid ground.

“According to the hope of eternal life.” One day we must die. One day we must meet our Maker. One day we must venture into the great unknown. But how many of you are blessed with this sweet hope of eternal life “through Jesus Christ,” this good hope through grace, this hope which is sure and certain? And nothing else on this earth is sure and certain, is it?

“According to the hope of eternal life.” This hope is one of the graces of the Spirit which is most kindly and graciously bestowed. Those of you who remember the last war, there was a continual call for hope, warnings against despair. Hope was the keyword. Hope was the watchword. Yet when France fell, humanly speaking there was not much of a foundation for that hope of victory. It was really a call to cheer up, keep your spirits from sinking, but there was not really any solid foundation for it. The hope of eternal life in Jesus is not like that. It is a solid hope. It is built on solid ground, and it cannot be destroyed; it cannot

be lost. If the Lord has blessed you with this sweet hope, you may be tried and tempted on it, but it cannot be destroyed, it cannot be lost. To those of you tonight who are tried and tempted on your little hope, I would say this:

“Does Satan tempt you to give up,
And call no more on Jesus’ name?
Cast not away your little hope;
Come hither, and behold the Lamb.”

“According to the hope of eternal life.” “Which hope we have.” What a wonderful mercy if we can say that! “Which hope we have.” Once we did not have it, but now we do. “Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil, whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus.” There is a solid anchor-ground for hope within the veil in the Person of a once-crucified, now risen, exalted Saviour. It is all through Jesus Christ our Saviour. There will be the darkness and the storm; but,

“When darkness veils His lovely face,
I rest on His unchanging grace;
In every rough and stormy gale,
My anchor holds within the veil.”

“According to the hope of eternal life.” These are sure and certain things. They do not know any change with changing time. You can be tempted on them, tried concerning them, but you can never lose them. They are outside the sinner. “Your life is hid with Christ in God.” It is indestructible.

“After that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” What sacred, soul-establishing truths, all bound up with a three-one God! “These soul-supporting truths contain all blessings that a God can give.” O may we through the Holy Spirit’s leading be sweetly persuaded and assured that the salvation of our immortal souls is bound up here.

(The morning sermon on the same text was published last month.)