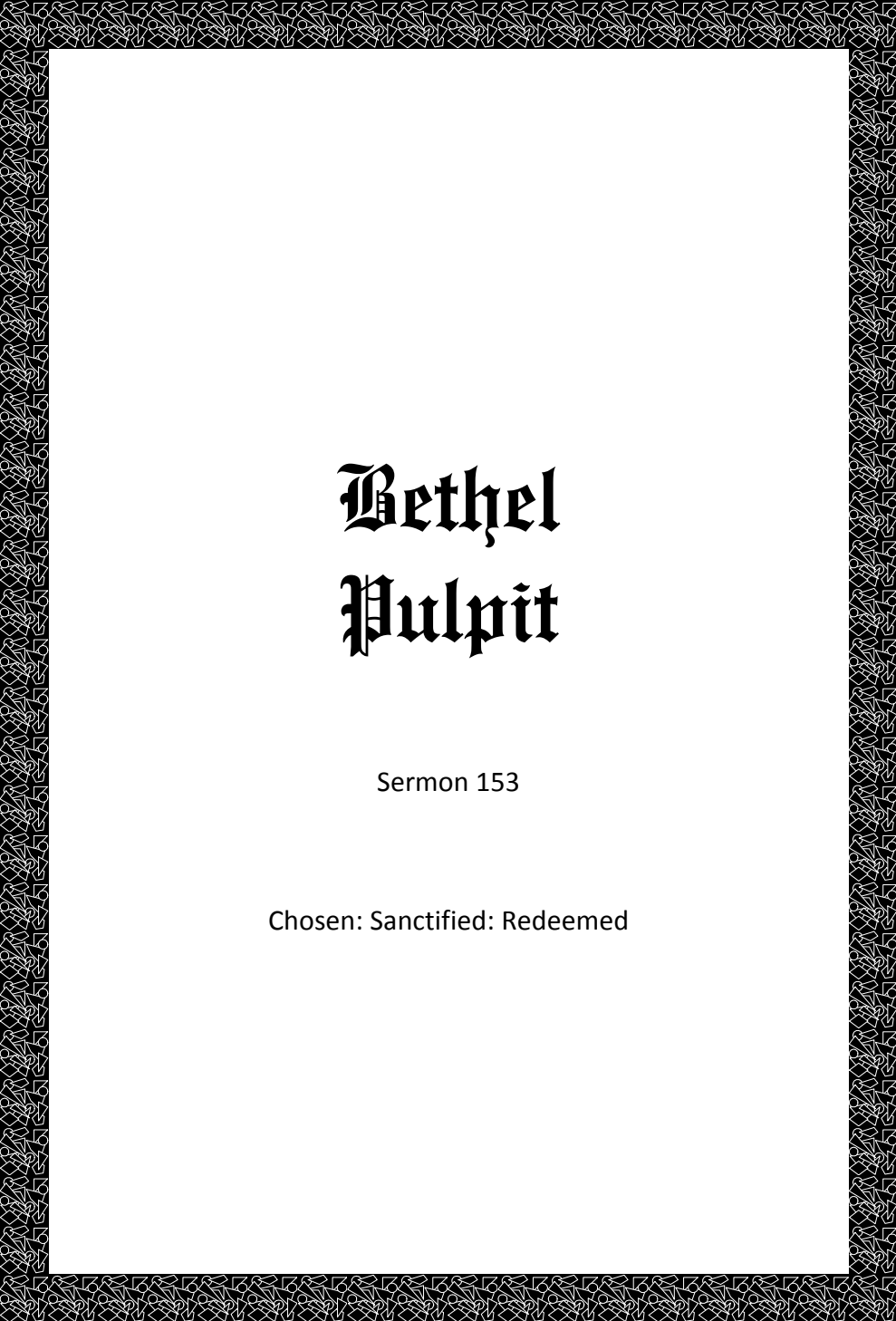




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 153

Chosen: Sanctified: Redeemed

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Thursday, 5th March, 1998**

Text: *“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied” (1 Peter 1. 2).*

This is a very beautiful description of the people of God as they are “saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation,” bound up in the bundle of life. And so here we have revealed that “truth from nature never learned, that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost to save our souls are all concerned.” We have all the three Persons in the Godhead here in Their distinct work in love to sinners and in salvation: the Father’s eternal choice, the Son’s redeeming work, and the Holy Spirit’s work of grace in a sinner’s heart bringing him to the knowledge of the truth. Father, Son and Holy Ghost, one God. Now beloved friends, these are divine certainties, and these are soul-establishing truths. It reminds us of John Kent singing of the eternal flowing forth of God’s free grace as a pure, crystal river. He says, “There’s not an *if* or *but* to foul the waters here.” Well, there is not an *if* or *but* to foul the waters here. I would that truths like these might be used by the Spirit of God to establish us in the truth and I would that you might be established in your personal interest in them, which is God’s own work. “The Highest Himself shall establish her.” “The God of all grace ... make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.”

“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.” This is God’s eternal choice of His people in Christ, and this truth runs right through Scripture from beginning to end. Abraham’s two sons, Isaac and Ishmael, one chosen. And Isaac’s two sons, Jacob and Esau, one chosen. I have known what it is to tremble before the divine, eternal decrees. I wonder if you have. Yet in the Word of God this is revealed as an act of God’s wonderful love. Apart from His eternal choice of His people, there would not have been a single sinner in heaven. The whole human race would have perished in their sin. Why He chose some and passed by others is never revealed. One thing is very clear, that in His choice of His people He did not choose any for any good foreseen in them, or because He foresaw that they were going to choose Him, or because He foresaw

that they were going to receive the gospel report. “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God.” Do not misunderstand, do not mistake this word *foreknowledge*. Some have perverted it that God foreknew who would believe and who would not, and therefore He chose them. That puts man first and God second. That makes God dependent on man’s choice. What it means is that God, knowing everything, knew that He would create the world, knew that man would fall, knew that man would be ruined in sin. But He foreknew the persons He would choose. But it goes further than this. You must realise that *knowledge* in Scripture often means more than just knowing a thing, knowing a fact. It often implies a relationship, a relationship of love. “Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son.” “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.” As the eternal Father chose His people in Christ, He loved them with an everlasting love. And,

“Long e’er the suns refulgent ray
Primeval shades of darkness drove,
They on His sacred bosom lay,
Loved with an everlasting love.”

“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.” There in God’s everlasting purposes of love and mercy they were as safe, as eternally secure as they will be one day when they are gathered safely into heaven. “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.” And as the Father chose them, He chose them in Christ, and there personally they stood in union with Him, in bonds that can never be broken.

“Heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus,
Long e’er time its race begun;
To His name eternal praises;
O what wonders love has done!
One with Jesus,
By eternal union one.”

“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.” And as the Father chose them, He entered into covenant with His dear Son on their behalf, that in the fulness of time Christ should come, pay the awful debt that they owed, do everything needful for their salvation; and that covenant stands and it can never be broken. O what a blessed view we have here, what a blessed people! “The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by

Him; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between His shoulders.” This blessed view of the people of God, all the people of God, His church in all ages, as they stood eternally secure, their salvation secure, before time had any being, “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.” This blessed, beautiful, glorious, sacred truth!

Now if the verse ended there, we might admire, but we must needs despair. How can any sinner know that he is chosen? How may I know that I am chosen? Beloved friends, the Word of God never, in any place, sets forth God’s eternal choice of His people in isolation, just standing by itself. Always when this sacred truth is revealed, joined to it are the dealings of the Lord with His chosen in time to mark them out and prove them to be the people of His eternal choice. There is a most blessed, sacred unity in the Godhead. Those whom the Father chose, the Son redeemed, and those whom the Son redeemed, the Holy Spirit sanctifies. So this is not set forth in isolation. It is not just chosen, and then heaven, and nothing in between. “Through sanctification of the Spirit.” And that simply means this: that if you and I are amongst this favoured, chosen, blessed, eternally-loved people, then the Holy Spirit will work in our hearts and make that salvation known to us. It is elect, it is chosen, to heaven; but there is a way that they come to heaven. Each one of them, all the Lord’s chosen without exception, are born into this world “the children of wrath, even as others,” dead in trespasses and sins. But there will come a moment in the life of each one when the Holy Spirit works in their hearts in the new birth. “Ye *must* be born again.”

We have the Holy Spirit’s work here spoken of as the “sanctification of the Spirit.” We have this word *sanctification* in all kinds of ways and places in Scripture, but the root meaning of sanctification is always this: to set something or someone apart for a holy use, or a holy purpose. So you have the vessels of the tabernacle: they were sanctified. That means they were set apart for a holy purpose. We have the Lord Jesus speaking of Himself as being sanctified. You say, Whatever need that the holy Son of God should be sanctified? He was set apart for a holy purpose. The psalmist says, “But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for Himself.” So the time will come, if you are one of these chosen ones, when the Lord will sanctify you by His Spirit and He will set you apart. He will set you apart from the world. He will set you apart from what you

once were. There will be a difference in your life, a gracious difference. O this sanctification of the Spirit! It embraces a sinner being called by grace. “All that the Father giveth Me” – that is “elect according to the foreknowledge of God – “shall come to Me” – that is the sanctifying work of the Spirit. “And him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.” You have the choice and the calling: the Father’s work, the Holy Spirit’s work. You cannot separate what God has joined together. If you are one of the Lord’s chosen, you will know something of the sanctifying work of the Spirit in your heart and life. If you know something of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in your life, it is a clear mark that you are one of the Lord’s chosen. If you never know anything of the sanctifying work of the Spirit, then it proves you are not one of the Lord’s chosen.

“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit.” So you will be different. The fear of God will be put in your heart. You will love the ways of godliness. You will hate the ways of sin. There will be that desire to walk before the Lord in His fear, to cleave to Him. There will be a fleeing from the world which lieth in wickedness. You will not be what you want to be – there will be the inward conflict, the turmoil, the unbelief, Satan’s temptation – and yet this sanctifying work of the Spirit will draw you away from sin and self and the world to the things of God, incline your heart unto His testimonies and not unto covetousness. “Elect ... through sanctification of the Spirit.” So there will be that good work of grace begun in your heart, and the work begun is carried on, for, “He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” And every movement of the Spirit will lead toward holiness and the abasement of self, and there will be a growth “in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” Tell me, have you a sweet hope that the Lord in love and mercy has dealt with you, showing you your sin, separating you from your past life, making you choose the ways you once abhorred?

“Through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” Now this is the work of God’s dear, incarnate Son. But the point here is this: those whom the Father chooses, under the sanctifying work and influence of the Spirit of God are brought to the Lord Jesus. It is *through* sanctification; it is *unto* obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. So if words mean anything at all, the end of all this sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in your heart is this:

it is to bring you to Christ, to draw you to Christ. And as often as you can trace this gracious drawing to Christ, so often you can trace the sanctification of the Spirit. “Out of self to Jesus lead.” That is the “sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” So this sinner is chosen unto obedience, and he is brought unto obedience through the sanctification of the Spirit.

Now you can take this word *obedience* in two completely-different ways. I think you will find that the godly divines have never really given an opinion which of them it means. Rather they take it to mean both. First of all, the obedience of Christ. What is the obedience of Christ? Well, it is that wonderful work that He performed as the God-Man while here on earth, obeying His Father’s will, obeying the holy law of God, satisfying divine justice, bringing in a perfect righteousness. And all this He did in the place of His people. All this He did for them. It is a wonderful work, the obedience of Christ. The Father’s obedient Servant, His love, His matchless condescension, doing all this in the place of guilty sinners, obeying that law for them which they could not obey, providing for them that righteousness they could not bring themselves. The obedience of Christ. That is what the hymnwriter means in that most beautiful hymn:

“In Christ’s obedience clothe,
And wash me in His blood;
So shall I lift my head with joy
Among the sons of God.”

Now the people of God are chosen to this and they are led through the sanctifying work of the Spirit to this: the obedience of Christ their only hope, their only plea, the obedience of Christ their only foundation. They have to reject their own righteousness and cleave to the righteousness of Jesus. And that beautiful word: “As by one man’s disobedience” – Adam – “many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One” – the Lord Jesus – “shall many be made righteous.” It is a wonderful thing, this exchange, the sinner’s disobedience reckoned to Jesus that He might make atonement for it and His perfect obedience reckoned to the sinner. O do you see a beauty, a glory, an attraction in it? This is what the Lord’s people are chosen to. This is the way to heaven, that they might be clothed in the spotless, perfect obedience of Jesus; and through the sanctifying work of

the Spirit of God they are brought one by one to make His righteous, perfect obedience their only hope, their only plea, their only foundation.

“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience.” And then, of course, the sinner’s obedience, the obedience of faith, as the Apostle Paul describes it in the Epistle to the Romans. “The obedience of faith.” That is to be brought to be a true believer on the Son of God, and then in a life of discipleship to seek to walk in obedience to Him. “The obedience of faith.” As you are brought to believe on the Lord Jesus to the salvation of your soul. “They rest their whole salvation there, nor shall they suffer shame.”

These are the Lord’s chosen. You will not climb up to heaven, you will not look in the book of life and see whether your name is written there. Even if you could, you might know there is someone else with the same name as you, and it is perhaps that one and not you. But this is the way the Lord makes election known: through the sanctification of the Spirit He brings you to the obedience of Christ. So it is this:

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

“May doubting souls believe today they are Jehovah’s choice.” Or as the hymnwriter says,

“Sinners, in their deep affliction,
Sigh and groan beneath their load;
Long to read their own election,
And with pleasure say, ‘My God!’”

May you read your own election and with pleasure say, “My God!” And to believe on Him. “Other refuge have I none, hangs my helpless soul on Thee.”

“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” Now that is where the sanctifying work of the Spirit will bring you. It will not bring you to feel that you are holy: rather it will bring you to feel that you are unholy. The mark of sanctification is not that

you think you are good or pure or better or perfect or holy, but it is rather because you feel you are unholy, you want an interest in the blood of Christ. There will be an attraction in it. You will be brought there. It will be your only plea. It will be your prayer, to be plunged “in that crimson ocean, Thy atonement made for sin,” that precious blood which freely flowed when the Lord Jesus suffered in the place of His people, when He paid their debt, when He satisfied justice, when He opened the fountain for sin and for uncleanness. Does that word mean anything to you: “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin”? “No other hope have I beside; if this can alter, I must fall.” “Through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” That is where they are all brought, all the chosen are brought. They do not all have the full, sweet assurance of an interest in it, to say, “Who loved me, and gave Himself for me,” but they all rest upon it. With all of them it is their only hope of salvation.

“Unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” Now why *sprinkling*? I take it to mean a personal interest in the work of Christ. You want a personal interest in it, not just that He died for sinners, not just that He died for the Apostle Paul and for Peter, but you want a personal interest in it. I do not want to enter into this subject this evening, but I think if you read through chapter one of Peter’s first Epistle carefully, you will find a very close correspondence in many ways to Exodus 12, the Passover. Now it is a big subject. I suppose a person with the ability could give an interesting address on this. You have the lamb without blemish and without spot, the Passover lamb; you have the Lord’s people told to gird up the loins of their mind; and so you might go on with these various comparisons. But the great point on the Passover night was the sprinkling of the blood. Mind you, the lamb was precious, the blood was precious, but the safety, the security, was sheltering under the sprinkled blood. That is where the sanctification of the Spirit will bring you: not just to see that Jesus died on the cross but to long to find a hiding place beneath His sheltering blood. The precious lamb without blemish and without spot was slain and its blood was shed. But it was in the sprinkling, the application on the lintels and the door posts of the house, and the Israelites sheltering beneath the blood. The blood of sprinkling is sheltering blood.

Now we need the cleansing, because all those “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit,”

are brought to feel their sin and defilement and they want to be cleansed in the blood of Christ. “Not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot.” But then all those who are “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit,” are brought to feel their need of a hiding place, a refuge. We have sinned. God is holy. God must punish sin. His wrath abides on the ungodly. We need a hiding place. We need somewhere to shelter. But to see it in the blood of Christ, the blood of sprinkling! “Other refuge have I none.” The dependence of Israel on the Passover night was on the blood, the sprinkled blood. “The blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you.” O it is that blood of sprinkling, sprinkled on the lintels and door posts of the house, a personal interest, the sinners’ refuge.

“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” “These are truths, and happy he who can well receive them.” O beloved friends, may some of you tonight find your very soul bound up here in the bundle of life with the Lord your God, to have an interest in the work of the Father, the work of the Son, the work of the Holy Spirit, one God; to know this three-fold cord which cannot easily be broken; to view your safety, your everlasting security, your heaven here.

“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied. Now this is Peter’s wish for them and you will find that in so many of the Epistles it is also Paul’s wish. But I take it more than this. As this is an apostolic salutation by divine authority, it is something which *shall* be given, which *shall* be done. Grace, it *shall* be given to this favoured people; peace, it *shall* be multiplied to them. And we need grace, don’t we? Why, there is grace here in election, and grace in the sanctification of the Spirit. It is an election of grace. In Scripture it is divine sovereignty, but it is always spoken of as a most gracious act. “Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.” And then sanctification is certainly of grace. It is that work of grace in a sinner’s heart. O what grace there is in the obedience and blood of Jesus! May

some of you feel like Toplady: “My Saviour’s obedience and blood hide all my transgressions from view.”

O but this grace of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, it is going to be multiplied to you throughout your life, in upholding you and preserving you and keeping you and supplying your needs and sustaining you in the trying hour, to be with you through your life and to be with you in death. Grace be multiplied to you. And he adds this: peace. Have you noticed one little point? The apostles, whether it is Peter or whether it is Paul, always say, “Grace and peace be unto you.” But when the Lord Jesus greeted His disciples, He just said, “Peace be unto you.” Why? He did not need to say, *Grace*, because He Himself was full of grace and truth. O but if grace is multiplied to you, so will peace be multiplied to you on the grounds of grace. And it is only this favoured people who know anything of real peace, peace by the blood of His cross. “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be trouble, neither let it be afraid.” This peace the Saviour gives can never be lost, never be taken away. You can lose the feeling of it, but not the peace. It flows from the covenant of peace and it ends in everlasting peace. There are times when in the depths of sorrow you will know this peace in believing in your very heart. May the Lord sweetly assure you of your interest here. May He make grace abound to you and peace and that sweet assurance that it will end in peace being multiplied to you eternally. Being *multiplied* means this: it will only increase; it can never end.

Well, beloved friends, these are sacred, soul-establishing truths. May your soul and mine be bound up in them. “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.”