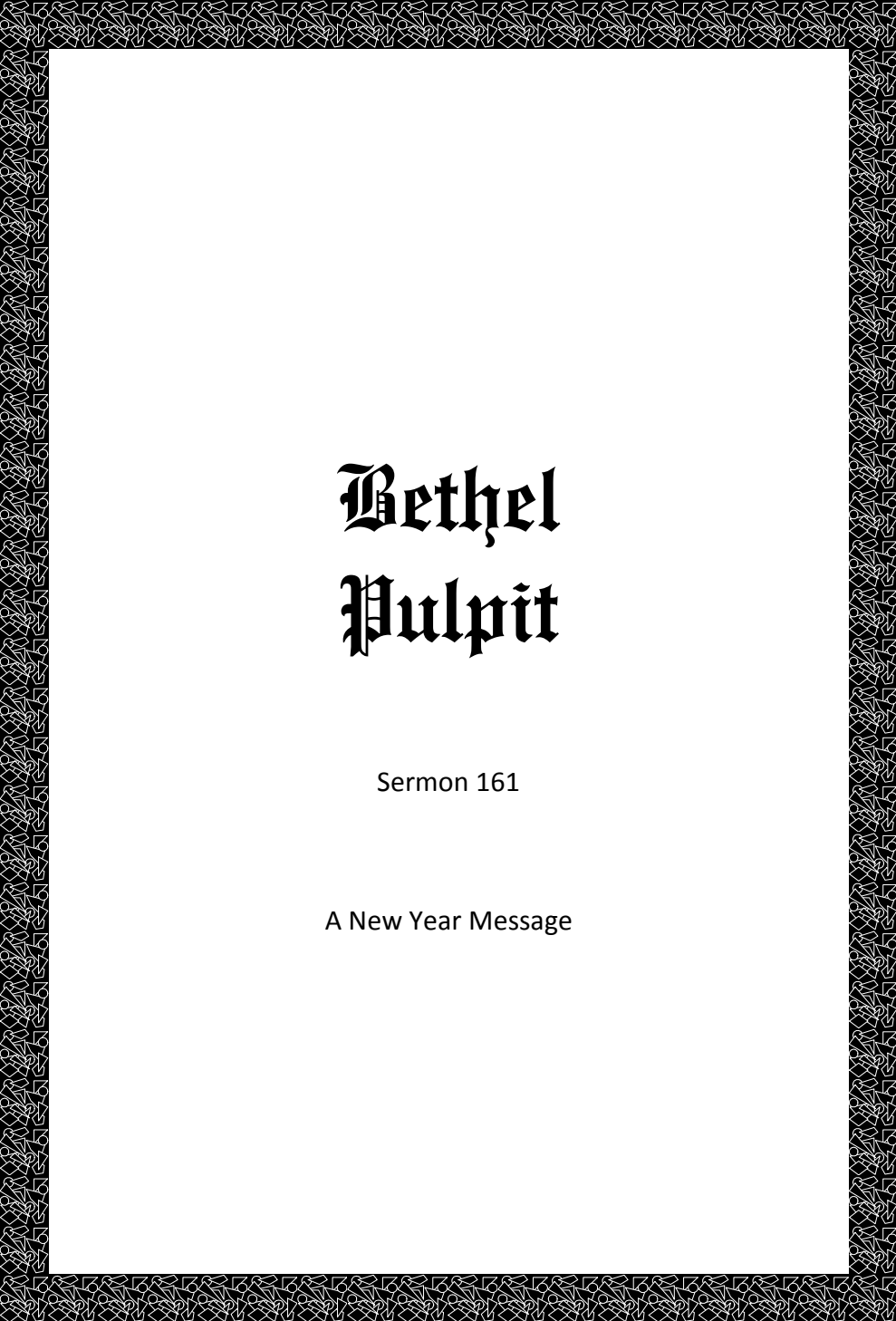




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 161

A New Year Message

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day morning, 4th January, 1998**

Text: *“Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved” (Psalm 55. 22).*

This is a message for the new year. Looking back over many years, well over thirty years, there have been these first Sabbaths of the new year, and the Lord's message to the people. I do hope and pray and believe that this is not just my word, but that it is the Lord's message for you as a congregation at this present time and through this year, because, beloved friends, we shall each need it. “Thy burden” – those things that rest so heavily upon you, those things that concern you, those things that are hard for you to carry, those things you seem ready to sink under. Your burdens.

I am sure that many of you here this morning have your various burdens, spiritual, providential. And I am sure as you think of the new year and the unknown way, there are these various burdens. Now the Lord does not tell us we shall be exempt from them. He does not for one moment say we shall be free from them. For, “Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.” But He graciously counsels us how to deal with them, and if you and I through this new year are enabled to walk out this word, then it will be sanctified to us. Our burdens will be sanctified to us. They will be the means in the Lord's hands of driving us closer to Him, endearing to us the mercyseat sprinkled with blood.

He says, “Cast thy burden upon the Lord.” That is, in prayer. I do not know of any other way in which a sinner can cast his burden, whatever it is, upon the Lord, except by prayer. So may the Lord bless us with that spirit of prayer to cast our burdens upon Him. It is not always an easy thing to cast your burden on the Lord, is it? You seek to cast your burden on the Lord, and the next moment you find you have taken it back and are trying to carry it yourself. The Lord bless us with grace to cast our burdens on the Lord, and to leave them there in that sweet assurance that He is far more able to deal with them than you or I are.

“Cast thy burden upon the Lord,” as Ruth the Moabitess with her heavy burden went in softly by night and lay down at Boaz’ feet. What did she do? Well, she cast her burden upon him and she left it there. She knew that she could not deal with it; she could not manage it. It was too heavy, too hard for her. But she knew Boaz was able to deal with it, to carry it. She had no doubt about his ability, she had a sweet hope of his willingness; so she cast her burden upon him and left it there. “Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day.” “Cast thy burden upon the Lord.” O you go back to the Book of Ruth, chapter 3, chapter 4, and there see Boaz in love taking the burden out of Ruth’s hands, taking it in his own, blessedly dealing with it, doing everything. And that beautiful word he spoke to Ruth: “My daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest.” As you are enabled to go with your burden in humble, secret prayer to the throne of grace by faith, to the blood-sprinkled mercy seat in prayer, to cast your burden on the Lord, may it be to hear that gracious word: “My daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest.”

“Cast thy burden upon the Lord.” And O may there be those believing views of the greatness and glory and majesty and sovereignty of the Lord, a view of His precious promises, a view of the depth of His mercy, a view of the wonder of His love, a view of His faithfulness. May there be a view of the covenant of grace ordered in all things and sure. May you view His blessed suitability, His gracious ability. And may there be that blessed drawing, that gracious drawing, to draw you to the throne of grace, the mercyseat, and may you be able to “unbosom yourself to the Lamb,” to unburden your heart.

“Cast thy burden upon the Lord.” Well, the chief burden with a living soul is his sins and his soul and a never-ending eternity. “Cast thy burden upon the Lord” as the Holy Spirit enables you to look to Jesus and plead the blood which once for sin atoned – because you know at Calvary the eternal Father cast the awful burden of all the sins of all His church upon Christ, and He bore the burden and He bore it away. O may you and I be enabled by faith to cast our burden where the Father cast it in the great day of the atonement, and may it be,

“My soul looks back to see
The burdens Thou didst bear,
When hanging on the accursed tree,
And hopes her guilt was there.”

O that burden that the Lord Jesus bore and that He bore away at Calvary! He is the great burden-bearer. In His sacred humanity He bore that burden “with strength enough and none to spare.” His divinity upheld His humanity. It was as on the great day of atonement when the sins of Israel were confessed on the scapegoat’s head and then it was led, ceremonially bearing that awful burden of all the sins of Israel, led into the wilderness never to be seen again by mortal eye. The Lord enable us under the burden of sin, the burden of our souls’ concerns, the burden of eternity, to cast that burden on the Lord for Him to deal with it, for Him to remove it through the Saviour’s most precious blood.

“Cast thy burden upon the Lord.” And then there is the burden of trouble. What is a trouble to one is not a trouble to another. And there are all kinds of troubles: greater troubles, smaller troubles, your family, your home, your business, your circumstances, your relationships, the church of God. And the Lord says, “Cast thy burden upon the Lord.” He says, “*Thy* burden.” As Mr. Gosden used to say, so often the Lord so sweetly, kindly leaves the word open. He does not describe this burden or set out another burden. He says, “*Thy* burden,” that which lies closest to thy heart, that which weighs you down, that which lies heavily upon you even this morning. Thy burden, whatever it is, “Cast thy burden upon the Lord.” So may this be the Lord’s message to you, not just today, but throughout this new year, whenever you find the burden of sorrow upon you, whatever it is, and may He sweetly bring this word to your remembrance, and may He sweetly enable you to cast your burden upon the Lord.

But beloved friends, I want you to notice that this word here has a special emphasis, and in that sense it is somewhat different from the similar word, “Call upon Me in the day of trouble.” What do I mean? Well, the Lord here says, “Cast thy burden upon the Lord,” and then He gives a very gracious promise: “He shall sustain thee.” No conditions, no hard causes. “He shall sustain thee.” But in this verse, He does not promise to remove the burden from you. He does not promise to deliver you from the burden. But He does promise, “He shall sustain thee.” So it

is a somewhat different promise from, “Call upon Me in the day of trouble,” because there the Lord says, “I will deliver thee.” Now here, “He shall sustain thee.” But there, “I will deliver thee.” Perhaps some of you say, “Well, that other one I like a lot better than this. I want the Lord to deliver me.” It is right in your trouble and in your sorrow to pray, subject to the Lord’s will, for deliverance. But why is this such a precious word, such a sacred word, such a valuable word, not to deliver you, but, “He shall sustain thee”? Well, for a simple reason. There are some burdens the Lord will not deliver you from, and some you do not want to be delivered from. Look at that mother with the care of her children. Now that is a burden, but she does not want to be delivered from it. But she does need that gracious help; she wants to be upheld; she wants to be sustained in it. Do you see the point, beloved friends? It is a different promise. “Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee.” That is a wonderful promise. This is a different promise. “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.”

There are some burdens that will not be removed. For instance, to many of us, probably all of us, as we look forward to the coming year before us (we are just at the beginning, January), the new year stretching before us is a burden. We cannot pray to be delivered from the new year. There are quite a number of people here in old age. Now old age is a burden. The Lord has said, “If by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow.” Old age is a burden. There are many here and listening in the Bethesda Home this morning, and they have the burden of old age. You cannot be delivered from the burden of old age except by death. It is something that is going to continue. You aged ones need this gracious upholding and supporting and sustaining. Do you see the point? There are those of you who have to care for aged ones. You do not want to say, “It would be a wonderful thing if I didn’t have to bother.” You like to care for them and you lovingly care for them, but you feel the burden, and you want to be sustained under it. Some people have had a sore bereavement. Now there cannot be a deliverance from that bereavement. You feel the awful burden of it, but you cannot pray for the loved one to be restored to you, to come back on earth, but you do need to be upheld, supported, sustained under it. Do you see the point here?

“Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.” We bless God for that other word, “Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will

deliver thee.” There are those burdens, when we cast them upon the Lord and we pray that we might be delivered from them, especially the burden of sin and the burden of trouble. But there are some burdens and we cannot be delivered from them. The burden of a minister, of a pastor, he cannot be out of it, set free from it, but he needs to be sustained under it. The burden of the Sabbath school teacher. You do not want to give it up; you want to be supported, upheld in it. Some people have an infirmity, and it is clear that this side of heaven there never will be a restoration. Some people have lost their sight, and it is made clear they are not going to receive it back. Some people have lost their hearing, and unless a miracle takes place (and we do not exempt miracles), they are going to continue deaf until their dying day. The Lord has not promised a miracle, but He has promised to sustain them.

The conflict of the people of God with sin and Satan, that is a burden. You will sometimes be weary of the fight of faith, weary of the conflict with sin and Satan, but the Lord is not going to deliver His people from walking out this pilgrimage and give them an easy way to heaven. He has never promised an easy way to heaven. It is a rough and rugged road. They need shoes of iron and brass, and He has graciously promised to sustain them. But you see the value, the preciousness of this promise, not to deliver (there may be deliverance; in some things it is deliverance), but there are so many burdens that God’s people are called to bear and they would not want to be delivered from them. They would not want to be set free from them. They cannot be set free from them. But the Lord has graciously promised to sustain them, to sustain them under this burden.

“Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.” Some of you may have noticed, if you have a margin to your Bible, that it gives for the word *burden*, the word *gift*. “Cast thy *gift* upon the Lord.” Now for years that used to puzzle me. I could never understand it. There did not seem to be any connection to me. They almost seemed to be opposite: a burden, a gift. We do not like a burden; we love a gift. And for many years, I could not see what the connection was between a gift and a burden, until I saw the marginal rendering in one Bible, not just cast thy *burden*, cast thy *gift* upon the Lord, but *that which He has assigned you*. Now there is a beauty when you see it like this. The burden you carry is what the Lord has assigned you, what He has given you, what He has appointed for you. In other words as the hymnwriter puts it, “Whatever

cross lies at thy door, it cometh from the Lord.” Well in that sense this morning may you be graciously enabled to see that the burden you are carrying – and it may be one of those burdens you will have to carry all through the year, and it may be one of those burdens you have to carry to your dying day – it is what the Lord has given you, and He has given you in love and not in anger. It is what the Lord has assigned to you, and He never makes any mistakes, and it is all for His honour and glory and for your real, lasting, eternal good. Thy gift, what the Lord has given thee, what the Lord has assigned thee in infinite wisdom and love and mercy. O may the Lord bless us with the humble submission of faith, the humble acquiescence of faith, to cast that burden upon the Lord.

Well, to put it as simply as we can, your daily work, your daily profession, often it is a burden to you. You do not want to be delivered from it. You do not want to be out of work. But sometimes it is hard and it is heavy. May you see it is what the Lord has given you, what the Lord has assigned for you. Paul says, “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content”; and, “Godliness with contentment is great gain.” Well, in your daily work, your daily round of service, may you sweetly feel it is what the Lord has given you, what the Lord has assigned to you. May there be that humble submission, more than that, that humble contentment. And may you be enabled to cast your burden upon the Lord and prove that He shall sustain you.

Now when David wrote this Psalm, he had a special burden, and it was one of those burdens he could not really wish a deliverance from. What his burden was at this time comes through very, very clearly. He had a very dear friend, a beloved friend, named Ahithophel, and not only was he a good friend, but they felt such a spiritual union. “A man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.” Now what had happened? This man, Ahithophel had turned to be his bitter enemy. He deceived him. In this, David walked as a type of his greater son, the Lord Jesus, when He was betrayed by Judas Iscariot. O the bitterness of it! It is a very bitter thing to be ill-treated, to be badly treated, but especially so when it is a dear, special friend. Sometimes it is a boy-girl relationship. Sometimes it is two friends like David and Ahithophel here. David’s own son Absalom had rebelled against him, and this man on whom he would have leaned, whom he would have looked to, his dear friend, what has happened to

him? He has gone over to the other side. David said, “Lord, ... turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.” But it was worse than that. God answered that prayer of David. He did turn Ahithophel’s counsel into foolishness, and that very day Ahithophel took his own life and committed suicide. What about the sweet counsel they had taken? If he is wrong, David, are you wrong too? You know the close reasoning of Satan. His beloved friend had betrayed him, turned against him, sought his death, and not only that, but he is left to himself and takes his own life, commits suicide. Do you know what David wanted to do? He wanted to run away from everybody and everything, and sometimes that will be where you will be. He said, “Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness.” And perhaps sometimes you come there. You would just like to fly away from it all. Now David was shown this by God, that God will never, never, never give you the wings of a dove to fly away from your troubles. He will give you the wings of an eagle to sustain you, to bear you up. And so at the end David is not saying, “Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away”; but he has learned the answer, learned the remedy: “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.”

This was one of those troubles we have been talking about from which there really is not any deliverance. How could David get out of this trouble? His beloved friend had turned away, betrayed him, let him down, and then committed suicide. The mystery, the sorrow of it! You cannot think of any way to pray for deliverance. You cannot pray for Ahithophel to be restored to him; he is dead. But David learned this: the sinner’s sure, safe retreat.

“Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.” Now David proved it. Why did I read the third Psalm this morning? For two reasons. First of all, this was written at exactly the same time as Psalm 55, exactly the same time when Ahithophel betrayed him. But secondly, in that third Psalm he says, “The Lord sustained me.” So he proved graciously and personally at that time, in the depths of his trouble and sorrow, what here he exhorts the people of God. “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.” He is writing by divine inspiration, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, for future generations. If you turn to the third Psalm, he can bear that sweet, sacred, humble testimony that it

was tried and proved. The two Psalms were written at the identical time, this time of deep sorrow, deep trouble. And he says, “The Lord sustained me.” “I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and He heard me.... I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me.” “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.” David proved, “My times are in Thy hand.”

“Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.” May the Lord enable you to walk it out this morning, today and throughout this new year, with all these burdens – and some you are going to have to carry tomorrow and next week and through the year – to cast those burdens on the Lord and to prove the certainty, the faithfulness of His promise, a covenant promise, a promise sealed with blood: “He shall sustain thee.”

Well, it is a lovely expression really, this, that the Lord has promised to *sustain* His people. That is why I read that lovely chapter, 1 Kings 17. “I have commanded a widow woman there to *sustain* thee.” With Elijah, it was a trying way. He had many a burden. “I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there” – the certainty of it. But the word is *there*, the place of divine appointment, the place of obedience to God’s command. “I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.” “I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.” We read how in that trying time when Elijah had so many burdens, the Lord did sustain him there. It was perhaps the strangest of places, a heathen land and the house of a widow woman. “The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail.” And dear child of God, whatever there is this year, there will always be a handful of meal in the bottom of your barrel and there will always be a little oil in your cruse, both spiritually and providentially. I am sure both Elijah and the widow woman would have liked the barrel to be overflowing with meal, but it was not like that. And as we look forward to the year before us, we would like to have all the grace and strength and ability for all the burdens of the new year. But it is not like that. The Lord says, “As thy days, so shall thy strength be.” Like Israel in the wilderness with the manna, it was when they needed it they had it. It was day by day the manna fell. *Sustain*. “I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.” There will always be a handful of meal at the bottom of your barrel and always a little oil at the bottom of your cruse. The faithfulness of God!

“Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.” It is a beautiful expression, to be sustained. Our hymnwriter says, “By Him my feeble soul’s sustained.” What does it mean? “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.” Well, it means you are going to be upheld, divinely upheld, graciously upheld. “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness.” That means that you are going to be upheld. “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.” It means you are going to be supported, graciously supported, divinely supported, supported by that arm which bears all creation up. “And thus supported, who shall faint?” “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.” It means you are going to be helped, graciously helped, when you feel weak, in every time of need. You are going to have to pray that prayer as you cast your burden on the Lord: “Lord help me.” “I have laid help upon One that is mighty.” And the Lord is going to help you. That gracious help, that divine help, to carry you along, to bear you through. He says, “I bare you on eagles’ wings.”

“Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.” It means you are going to be given sufficient strength. “And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Even the great Apostle Paul thought the burden would be taken away, but the burden was not going to be taken away, but he was going to be sustained under it. “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.” Paul says he besought the Lord thrice that He would remove the thorn in the flesh. “And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Daily strength for daily burdens. “Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.” The weakness is yours; the strength is God’s.

“Let not thy heart despond, and say,
‘How shall I stand the trying day?’
He has engaged, by firm decree,
That as thy days, thy strength shall be.”

However many the days, equal strength. “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.” In a word, it means that God will supply all your need, whatever your needs are this year. That is a lovely word:

“Standing on His promise, what have we to fear?
God is all-sufficient for the coming year.”

You and I are not all-sufficient. We are not sufficient at all. We have to cry out like Paul, “Who is sufficient for these things?” But Paul learned it: “Our sufficiency is of God.” “God is all sufficient for the coming year.” “He shall sustain thee.” It is that way of humble dependance, a helpless sinner leaning, depending on an almighty Saviour. “He shall sustain thee.” Every need, body, soul, circumstances, family, the church, health, relationships, whatever it is. “Jehovah Jireh, the Lord will provide.” “My God shall supply all your need” – all of it – “according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” There is a never-failing treasury of grace, strength, wisdom, help, everything you need there. “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.” Gadsby says,

“My every need He richly will supply;
Nor will His mercy ever let me die.”

Now may the Lord seal this to many a heart:

“In Him there dwells a treasure all divine,
And matchless grace has made that treasure mine.”

“Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.”