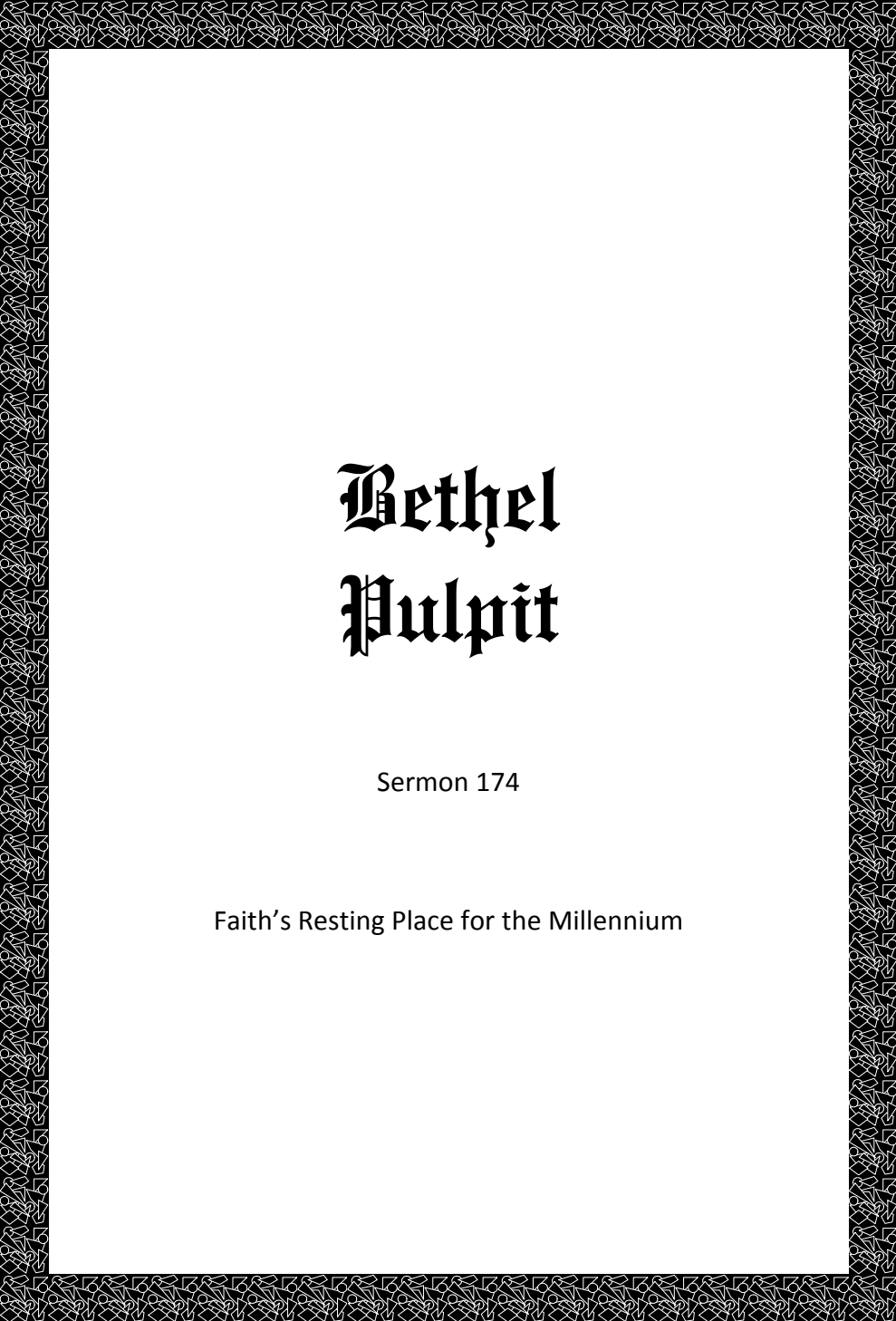




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 174

Faith's Resting Place for the Millennium

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day morning, 2nd January, 2000**

Text: *"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day" (2 Timothy 1. 12).*

This is the one grand certainty as we enter the new millennium. This is the *only* certainty. "I know whom I have believed." Beloved friends, everything else is uncertain. What this year will bring, what the new millennium will bring, we do not know. We are thankful to the Lord for the advancements in science that there have been, in medicine, improvements in earthly comfort. But the Word of God warns us of the last times. It gives a pessimistic view of human nature. It give a pessimistic view of our own hearts. "Evil men ... shall wax worse and worse." It is a world of uncertainty. It is a world of confusion. I do not know what feelings you have as you pass from year to year, from century to century, from millennium to millennium. Perhaps many hearts are sad. Perhaps many hearts feel to be confused. Perhaps many hearts feel to be afraid. But this is your resting place. As those who have a sweet hope in the Lord Jesus, as those who believe in His name, this is our resting place. There is something real. There is something solid. There is something which is not uncertain. "I *know* whom I have believed." It is a Person, a glorious Person. Paul is not just saying, "I know where my trust is placed." He *is* saying that, and that is what we say. We say, whatever else, we know where our hope, where our trust is. But Paul is saying, "I know Him. By experience I know Him. I know Him as my hope. I know Him as my Saviour. I know Him as my foundation. I know Him. I have proved His faithfulness. I have proved His love. There are many things I do not know, but I know Him. 'I know whom I have believed.'"

So beloved friends, it is in this spirit I want to try to speak to you this morning. It is in this spirit I want to try to speak to you as we begin the new year, the new century, the new millennium, that here is faith's resting place, in Christ and in Christ alone: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever"; that we know Him and we trust in Him. "I know whom I have believed." And especially in the light of this: there is so much we do not know, so many things that none of us know,

but, “I know whom I have believed.” And then there are some things we *do* know, and perhaps we wish we did not know them. But, “I know whom I have believed.” Well, may this be an encouragement to you. May it be the anchor ground as you seek to venture forward in the unknown way and in your pilgrimage. “I know whom I have believed.” Something certain and solid in this uncertain world; something that lives and lives for ever in this dying world; something to cheer our hearts in this sad world, and it *is* a sad world. With all the affluence and all the increase in knowledge and all the inventions, the world has never been sadder. There is so much sadness everywhere. But, “I know whom I have believed.”

Well then, first of all thinking of the unknown way. We do not know what this year has in store for us, what gloomy lines are writ for us, what bright scenes may rise. Very wisely, the future is hidden from us. We just do not know what there will be in this coming year. We do not know what illness, what affliction, what sorrow, what tragedy. We do not know what blessings, what hope, what prosperity, what success. We do not know what destruction, what death. We do not even know how long the Lord will tarry. It is this complete uncertainty. And perhaps there are some of you who enter this new year with many fears and much apprehension about this coming year and the unknown way. There are some things perhaps you do know and they fill your hearts with sadness and fear. There are several things you do not know. You wonder what may take place with yourself personally, what may take place in your family, those you love, what may take place in your relationships with other people, what may take place in your business, what may take place in the church of God, what make take place in our own country, in Parliament, what fresh laws there might be, what changes to our constitution. Perhaps some of you venture forward and your hearts are full of fear and apprehension. There is a cloud over it. There is this gloom over it. We do not know. We know not. We do not even know what one day may bring forth, but *we know whom we have believed*.

O beloved friends, what a resting place you have here for the year 2000, and as long as you live! What a solid foundation we have here! We do not know the unknown way, but, “I know whom I have believed.” I know the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I knows that He is on the throne. I know that He is almighty. I know that He is in control. I know that “the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” It is not wicked men in control. It is not

Satan. It is not blind chance. “I know whom I have believed,” and I know that He is in control. The Lord sitteth upon the throne. “The Lord sitteth King for ever.” It is not a precarious throne. It will never be vacated. “He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?” There are all these things that are unknown, but we do know this one thing. “I know,” and what a mercy, what a comfort it is! It is not uncertain knowledge. “We have not followed cunningly devised fables.” We are not going to prove we are wrong in this, that we are deceived. We may have many, many thoughts about this year. When the time comes, we may have been deceived. We may be disappointed; we may be glad. Things may not be as we anticipated, as we feared. But there will not be anything *here* in which we are proved wrong. I know that God is still on the throne, that He who made a way through the waters of the Red Sea, He who fed Elijah by the ravens, He whose name is Jehovah-Jireh, He who shut the lions’ mouths, He who triumphed over sin, death, hell and the grave and ascended triumphant into heaven, “I know whom I have believed,” and I know He is in control. “The government shall be upon His shoulder.”

Also I know as we face the unknown way that He is almighty, He is in control; that not one thing will ever take place apart from His divine permission; that not one thing will ever take place by chance or by accident. All the things that happen will not *just* happen, *merely* happen. As Paul says, they will *fall out*. He says, “The things which happened unto me have *fallen out*.” They fall out of the hands of an all-wise God. They fall out of the hands of an all-wise, gracious providence. Whatever might happen to you tomorrow or next week or this year, it will fall out of the hands of God. And Paul realised this: strange, mysterious as it would be, it would all fall out to the furtherance of the gospel. Everything that falls out God will order to the honour and glory of His name and the good of His people. You cannot always see it, but faith says, “I know.”

The Apostle Paul liked this word, “I know.” On one occasion, speaking of this subject he said, “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” “All things,” you say, “Paul? All things?” “Yes,” Paul says, “I know it. I know that all things work together for good.” You say, “Do you feel it, Paul?” “No, I do not feel it.” “Can you see it?” “No, I

cannot see it, but I know it because God has said it.” There are times in your life when you cannot see that all things work together for your good; most certainly you do not feel it. O but do you believe it? “We know that all things work together for good” – not one by one – *together*. Like those wonderful remedies which sometimes are prescribed, all these various ingredients skilfully blended together. If you took one by itself, it is deadly poison and would kill you, but working together they do not kill you; they heal you. Paul says, “I know that all He does is right. It will be for my good, for the honour and glory of His name. ‘I know whom I have believed,’ and I know He will make all things work together for my good, even in the new year, even in the coming days.” “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.”

And to see these things falling out unto the furtherance of the gospel. When Paul said he knew that these things would fall out in the unknown way to the furtherance of the gospel, everything seemed to be going wrong, *everything*. He was in prison in Rome. His preaching, his visiting the churches, his journeys had ended and ended for ever. It seemed as if Satan had triumphed. “No,” says Paul. He says, “I would ye should understand this.” Unbelief never will and never did and never can, but faith understands this. I would ye should understand this, even this morning, these things that have happened – you can fill your own piece in there – they “have fallen out (or will fall out) rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.” How can it be so with me? With Paul, God in His mysterious sovereignty worked in two ways. Paul had to be imprisoned in Rome because there were some of God’s chosen ones there. The time had come for them to be brought into contact with Paul, even in this strange way. And then what else? In prison he wrote these wonderful epistles which are still being made a blessing to the church of God today. They have been made more of a blessing to the church of God than even Paul’s gracious ministry was. He was not mistaken. You say, “I cannot always see it.” “The things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.”

“I know whom I have believed.” The unknown way stretching before us, the new year, the new century, the new millennium, but we *know* that the Lord is there, that He is on the throne, that He is in control. “The Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” The great concerns, the small

concerns of our lives, our life's minutest circumstance, "All must come, and last, and end, as shall please my heavenly Friend." Now, "I know whom I have believed," and I know that in this new year, this unknown way, whatever comes, whatever does not come, *He* is going before. "When He putteth forth His own sheep" (and there are a lot of applications of that, aren't there?), but when He puts His own sheep forth into the new year, into the unknown way, "*He* goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him." There is safety, there is security there. "I know whom I have believed," and I know He is the good Shepherd of the sheep. I know He is in control. I know He is going before. I know He is caring for His sheep, His lambs. I know that not one of them shall ever perish. I know every need shall be richly supplied. "I know whom I have believed." There are so many things we do not know, but if we know this one thing, "I know whom I have believed"! I know He is going before. I know He still says, "I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight." You are still going to have your crooked places in the new millennium. You know that, don't you? "I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron." That is, make a way where there is no way. "I will go before thee." O to see the Lord going before us in this new year! "Behold, He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him: lo, I have told you."

"I know whom I have believed." Now to pass on to something else. There are so many things concerning this new year, this new millennium, we do not know, but one sad and solemn thing we do know is this: that we are still in the body, still in the flesh. We are still sinners. We are still liable to fall. We will not be any better. We will not be any stronger. Now I know all this, and it fills my heart with sadness. But, "I know whom I have believed," and I know He is an almighty Saviour. I know He has lost none of His power to save. I know His arm is not shortened that it cannot save. I know His ear is not heavy that it cannot hear. Now, "I know whom I have believed." O may we find this resting place for faith this morning as we venture in this new year. We think of our sinful natures. We think of the sins in ourselves we shall commit. O but, "I know whom I have believed." And I know this, that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." I know the wonderful efficacy of the atonement. Our hymnwriter says,

“Here’s pardon full for sin that’s past;
It matters not how black their cast;
And O my soul, with wonder view,
For sins to come here’s pardon too.”

We would be free from sin (wouldn’t we?) if we could. Our hymnwriter says, “But I would be holy.” Yet we *know* that we shall sin, but O to find this resting point: “I know whom I have believed.”

“There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.”

We know the wonders of the Saviour, that He is able to save even to the uttermost, the wonders of His great salvation, the wonders of His glorious righteousness, the wonders of His all-prevailing intercession, the wonders of His precious blood. “I know whom I have believed.” And as you venture forward on your pilgrimage, He “is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.”

“I know whom I have believed.” Now there is another thing. Although we do not know what the year holds, the century holds, the millennium holds, sadly, solemnly we know this: that there will be sadness; there will be sorrow. Well, there must be, as long as time endures. “Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.” You know, beloved friends, this wonderful new millennium and all the excitement, all the domes and all the wheels and everything else, you know they cannot deliver one person from sadness, from sorrow. Yet you know there is going to be this. You may be in it today. You may be in it tomorrow. We do not know what is before us, but we know there will be sadness; we know there will be sorrow. But, “I know whom I have believed.” O what a resting place for the people of God as they venture forward in all their weakness and helplessness and need, if you are sweetly enabled to look to Him and if you are sweetly enabled to lean upon Him. He is able to supply all your needs. He is almighty. He is able to hear and answer your prayers. He is able to deliver you in the trying hour. He is able to uphold you, able to preserve you, able to keep you, and not only able, but willing. We see His divine, almighty power, O but we see His tender, loving heart.

We see His wonderful sympathy. “His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness.” Here is faith’s resting place. These are the blessed certainties in an uncertain world, that whatever sin there might be, whatever sorrow there might be, whatever trial there might be, whatever temptation there might be, that He is still there and He is still almighty and He still loves His people and He still cares for them.

“I know whom I have believed.” You see the uncertainty, the unknown way, what there will be, and our weakness, our sinful nature and all the sorrows and trials there might be. O but this rock foundation we have here! Whatever may be, whatever may not be, whatever will be, whatever will not be, this sure, this certain, this solid, this tried foundation, the Rock of Ages, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” His love, His compassion, His faithfulness, His divine, almighty power. He is there. He is on the throne. He is in control. He is still an almighty Saviour. This is the one thing we do know for our hope and comfort and joy in this dark, dying, perishing world. “I know whom I have believed.” Now may our hope be fixed there, our faith be fixed there, in all our weakness and helplessness and need and fear and foolishness. O to see everything in Christ! “It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.” Now we know that, that wonderful fulness of grace, that fulness of mercy and divine strength and all the help that the people of God need. Now, “I *know* whom I have believed.” That fulness must ever abide, that all-sufficient Saviour. O there are so many things we do not know, but there is this one thing we do know.

“I know whom I have believed,” and I know that He is still on the mercyseat. Whatever would you and I do as we venture into the unknown way, as we pass into the new year, if there were no throne of grace, if there were no mercyseat? But this is one thing we do know: there is a mercyseat, and it is sprinkled with blood, and sinners are welcome there with all their fears and sorrows and sins and woes and anxieties. We know there is a mercyseat. We know that “with heaven and earth at His command, He waits to answer prayer,” that the Lord is still merciful and gracious. Now we know this. There is a resting place here. There is a place where faith can look, a place where faith can rest, however trying, however dark the day, whatever things there might be in our country, in the world, in the church of God, in our families, in our lives. O but “the

mercyseat, where Jesus answers prayer; there humbly fall before His feet, for none can perish there.” Now, “I know whom I have believed.” I know there is a mercyseat. I know that the Lord Jesus is there, and He still says, “The cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto Me, and I will hear it.” He still says, “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.” He still says, “Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass.” He still says, “Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you.” O some of you say, “I long to feel these things!” Well, may the Lord cause you to. May there be the blessed, divine application. But sometimes we have to venture forth in the dark. We have to walk by faith and not by sight. We see the cloud and we fear as we enter the cloud. But then at times faith can see that there is a bow in the cloud, the token of the Lord’s covenant. He says, “I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant.” For even the three disciples “feared as they entered into the cloud.” “And behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him.”

“I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.” Now I know that He is still there, the mercyseat is still there. There are so many things we do not know, so many things it is wise we do not know. And then there are things we do know and we wish we did not know them. But, “I know whom I have believed.” This is the Lord’s antidote, the Lord’s remedy. “I know whom I have believed.” I know that those precious promises He has made are still secure, are still yea and amen. I know His faithfulness. “Hath He said, and shall He not do it?” The faithful God. I know that He has promised, “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee.” I know that He has promised, “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.” Now, “I know whom I have believed,” and I know that He has made some exceeding great and precious promises. I know He has said, “The Lord, He it is that doth go before thee; He will be with thee, He will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.” O to know these precious, precious promises that the Lord in love and mercy has made! And may it be as we sang on Friday, the eve of the millennium:

“Resting on His promise,
What have we to fear?
God is all-sufficient
For the coming year.”

That all-sufficiency of grace and love and mercy.

Now, “I know whom I have believed.” O but this unknown way, this uncertainty. We do not know how long the world will go on. We do not know when the world will end. We do not know when the Lord will come again the second time with a shout from heaven in great power and glory. We do not know the day when we shall die, for we are not here for ever. In a sense you could almost say that this was Paul’s dying testimony, because it is generally agreed that this second Epistle to Timothy was the last epistle Paul wrote. When he comes to the last chapter it is very clear he wrote at the end of his life. He says, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” Is he soon going to suffer a martyr’s death? Is he soon going to be beheaded by the cruel sword of the emperor? O but he says, “I have a good hope through grace. I have an anchor for my soul, come what may. ‘I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.’”

“Firm as His throne His promise stands,
And He can well secure
What I’ve committed to His hands,
Till the decisive hour.”

Now beloved friends, I most affectionately ask you, have you got this same sweet hope that the Apostle Paul had, that when the Lord returns, or when your last day comes, you can say, “Well, whatever else, ‘I know whom I have believed’”? Now some of you are tried on the sweet assurance. You wonder how things will be. But can you say this: “Amidst all my fears, amidst all my sins, amidst all my darkness, I know where my hope, my only hope is placed; I know where I am looking; I know what my only ground of trust is. It must be none but Jesus, no other hope, no other Saviour, His precious blood, His righteousness. So many things I do not know, but I do know where my hope for heaven is placed. ‘I know whom I have believed.’” O these two things. He says, “I know Him. I know He is on the throne. I know He is in control. I know His precious blood. I

know His precious promises. I know Him.” But also, “I know where my hope, where my trust is placed.”

So beloved friends, as we venture into the unknown way, and it *is* the unknown way, may it be resting in the Lord. May it be looking to Him alone. “My hope, my only hope’s in Thee.” May it be leaving everything in His hands. May it be trusting to Him alone, to Him only. And O may it be looking up into heaven. We look back over the past century, we look forward, but may it be to look up, to see the Lord Jesus, see Him there, see Him in control, to see Him “our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble,” to see that all things are in His hands, *all* things, and to rest in this resting place: all these things I do not know, but, “I know whom I have believed.” And beloved friends, this is solid ground.