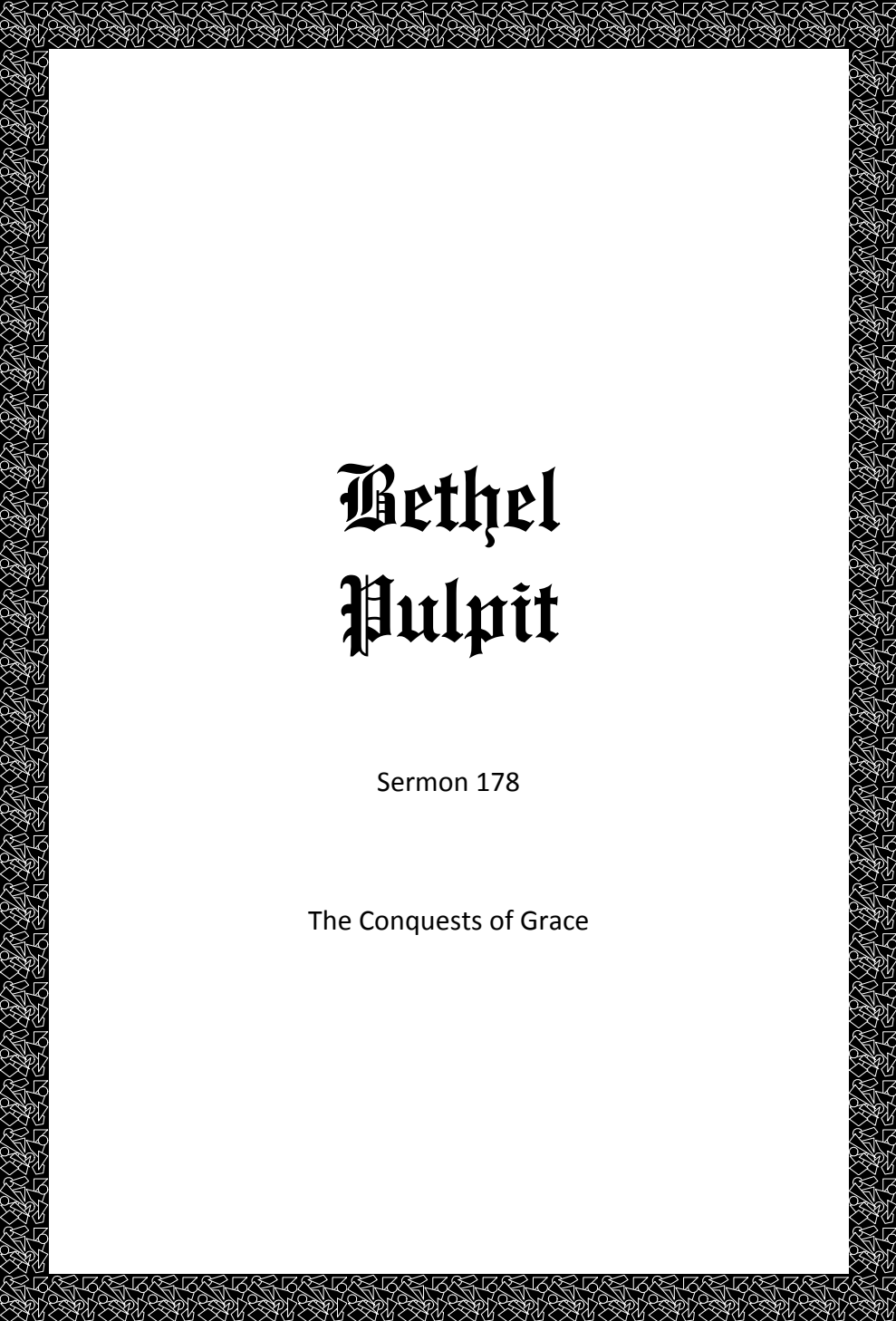




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 178

The Conquests of Grace

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day evening, 9th April, 2000**

Text: *"Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies; whereby the people fall under Thee" (Psalm 45. 5).*

This is a most beautiful Psalm. I remember in my early days spiritually how often it was such a delight just to open the Bible and to read the forty-fifth Psalm, the glories of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. There is not a shadow of doubt that the psalmist here is speaking of Christ. We read this evening in the Epistle to the Hebrews chapter 1 where the apostle quotes the sixth verse in this Psalm, a word addressed to Almighty God: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." And he tells us there that that word is addressed to the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Now He is the sum and substance of this beautiful Psalm. The translators were not far out when at the top they put, "The majesty and grace of Christ's kingdom," for this Psalm so sweetly speaks of the Lord Jesus as Zion's exalted God and King. In this Psalm our eyes see the King in His beauty. "My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the King: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer."

What about this second verse: "Thou art fairer than the children of men"? This is the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, He who is Zion's King. "Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into Thy lips: therefore God hath blessed Thee for ever." And then this Psalm speaks of the glories of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, He who is King of kings and Lord of lords. Once He wore a crown of thorns. Now for ever He wears a crown of eternal glory. "I speak of the things which I have made touching the King.... Thou art fairer than the children of men.... Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of Thy kingdom is a right sceptre."

Now what about this: "All Thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made Thee glad"? The sweet savour in Christ, the sweet attraction to Christ. "All Thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia." Now there is something here – if you have time and the Holy Spirit's leading in meditation, or if a

minister had the grace and ability to speak of what these garments are, the garments of Christ that smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia. They are so precious and so fragrant and so attractive. Of course, there are the garments of His royalty. I think of all Christ's glorious garments, but the most precious to His people are those garments dyed in blood. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in His apparel? ... Wherefore art Thou red in Thine apparel, and Thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone." It is those garments dyed in blood. "Thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia." We might also mention the garment He gives to His people, the garment of His glorious righteousness to take the place of their filthy rags. There is an attraction in that. "All Thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces." That is whence He came, out of the ivory palaces into this world of woe. "Whereby they have made Thee glad."

So this beautiful Psalm speaks of the glories of Christ, His eternal glories as He is King of kings and Lord of lords, as He has that almighty sceptre, as He rules the world in righteousness; and yet it is a sceptre of love, a sceptre of mercy. And though such a great King and sitting on a throne, it is a throne of grace, it is a mercyseat, and unworthy sinners are welcome to venture before this great King on mercy's ground. O but to feel an interest in what He has done, and to know that love for Him! Then you will agree with the psalmist, "Thou art fairer than the children of men."

Well then, this beautiful Psalm with the glories, the beauties of Christ as this exalted King. And then we come to this verse, and we get a solemn shock. Why? Because this verse speaks of the *King's enemies*. You would not think He would have any, would you? This great and glorious King, full of goodness, reigning in truth and righteousness, you would not think He would have any enemies. "The King's enemies." You say, "Who are they?" *You and me*. And that is the awful solemnity of it, and O that you and I might realise it, that by birth and by practice we are the King's enemies. And it is an unspeakably solemn thing if you and I die without that enmity being removed, if you and I die enemies to Christ. But you see, the Word of God is so clear, that we are "enemies ... by wicked works." "The carnal mind is enmity against God" – not just *at enmity*. "The carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of

God, neither indeed can be.” That word still stands, that solemn curse in the Garden of Eden, “I will put enmity ... between thy seed and her seed.” “The King’s enemies,” in a state of rebellion against Him, in a state of enmity.

We have it very clearly in the gospels, the enmity of each human heart. “We will not have this Man to reign over us.” Well, if we are honest, by nature we do not want Christ to reign over us. We do not want His righteous rule separating us from our sinful ways, our sinful desires and from the world and from our pleasures and from our ambitions. We know that if Christ reigns over us, it will mean this. We are happy to come to chapel, we are happy to hear preaching, we are happy to sing hymns, but “we will not have this Man to reign over us.” That is you and me by nature, sitting in a Strict Baptist chapel. O that state of alienation through sin, that state of enmity, that state of rebellion! “The King’s enemies.” It is an awful word; it is a solemn word. But when we think how good and gracious this King is, and then to have that realisation that you and I by nature are His enemies, not His friends; His enemies, not His servants. There is the enmity there.

We read of something else belonging to the King. Not only has He enemies, but He has arrows. *Thine arrows*. They belong to Him. They are sharp. They are divinely directed. They never miss their aim. “Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the King’s enemies.” There are two ways the Lord Jesus fires His arrows. One is in judgment and one is in mercy. Either His enemies are all subdued and put to shame at last, eternally, or else they are conquered now in love and mercy and brought to His feet in full surrender. “A foe received a favourite, a rebel made a child.” O but these arrows! They “are sharp in the heart of the King’s enemies; whereby the people fall under Thee.” I remember Mr. Green, the pastor at Gower Street, on one occasion speaking of an oldish woman, and in many ways she seemed a most unlikely person. But he said this: “She has those two things. She can tell you how she got the arrow in her heart and she can tell you how that arrow was removed.” And really those are the two great things in real religion. We talk about the new birth. We talk about conversion. We talk about effectual calling. What is it? It is really being wounded and being healed. It is being killed and being made alive. It is having that arrow that went into your heart, and being able to tell how that

arrow went into your heart, and also being able to tell how you got rid of that arrow, because if you have that arrow *you* cannot get rid of it.

If you want a title for the sermon this evening, I think you could call it, “The conquests of grace.” I was never very good at thinking of titles for sermons. The old Puritans were magnificent; the titles to their sermons were often like sermons themselves. But if you want a title for the sermon this evening: “The conquests of grace.” We have it in the previous verses: “Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O most mighty, with Thy glory and Thy majesty. And in Thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and Thy right hand shall teach Thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the King’s enemies; whereby the people fall under Thee.” It is this picture of the Lord Jesus Christ going forth as an almighty Conqueror, a divine Conqueror. At last it will be solemn; it will be so eternally against His enemies. But these are the conquests of grace. He is going forth after those He has eternally loved, He has redeemed by His blood. They are in a state of enmity, alienation against Him, but He is going forth with those arrows that are fired, those arrows that are divinely directed, those arrows which never miss the mark, those arrows which are so painful, but those arrows fired in love and mercy to bring that sinner in willing bonds to Jesus’ feet in full surrender.

“Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the King’s enemies.” For many years now I have seen quite an attraction in that verse we read this evening in the sixth chapter of the Revelation: “And I saw, and behold a white horse: and He that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto Him: and He went forth conquering, and to conquer.” This is Christ and these are the conquests of grace. “I saw, and behold a white horse” – a figure of purity, a figure of victory. “I saw, and behold a white horse: and He that sat on him had a bow.” This is Zion’s God and King. This is this same glorious Person as in Psalm 45. “He that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto Him.” It is Jesus who wears the crown. His Father gave a crown unto Him, and if you are subdued by sovereign grace, you will give a crown unto Him. “On His head were many crowns.” “Crown Him with many crowns, the Lamb upon the throne.” “And a crown was given unto Him.” Now this is it: “He went forth conquering, and to conquer.” That can be said of no other man. It could never be said of any of the great warriors that they went forth certain of conquering. The

great Duke of Marlborough, they said he never lost a battle. He conquered in every battle he fought. When he went forth, he desired to conquer, but he did not know that he would. But with the Lord Jesus, the divine certainty of it, and with the Lord Jesus no possibility of defeat; with the Lord Jesus none of His purposes to be overthrown. “His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?” “He went forth conquering, and to conquer.” Well, may the Lord Jesus ride forth in our midst tonight on the white horse with the crown on His head, with the bow in His hand, and may His arrows be sharp in the heart of the King’s enemies, and may He go forth conquering, and to conquer.

“Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the King’s enemies.” Now the Lord Jesus has many arrows. He has a quiver full of arrows. What are these arrows that the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ uses as He goes forth conquering, and to conquer in the conquest of grace? Well, there are many of them. I took up a little book this afternoon. There was a young boy (I think he was about nine years old) and it was the evening and his father read one of those most solemn chapters like the one I read this evening in the Book of the Revelation, and the little boy trembled and shook and sobbed. Many years later, when he was a well-known minister, he said, “What it was that night, it was one of the Lord’s arrows that had entered into my heart.” But the little boy did not know the way of salvation, nor did his father. I suppose in those days most fathers read the Word of God at night. A sad, solemn thing that this custom has now gone! But it was not until he was a man that he learned the way of salvation. So God’s own Word, often the Lord uses it as an arrow in the heart. It penetrates. A word like this: “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” A word like this: “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.” A word like this: “How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?” Yet over the years, as we have heard people tell their little testimonies, some unusual words the Lord has used. You would not think it would be a sharp arrow. You would not think it would be a word of conviction. But you see, the Lord is almighty and He is all-wise and all-sovereign, and He uses His Word. Sometimes it is the Word read. Sometimes it is the Word preached. Sometimes it is a Word that you perhaps see on a placard. O but those arrows are sharp!

But the Lord has many arrows. Sometimes it is the humble, faithful testimony of a child of God and it is like an arrow in your heart.

You think, “He is going to heaven but I am going to hell.” It is like an arrow in your heart. Sometimes it might be just a hymn you are singing, or as happened when Gadsby’s hymnbook first appeared, some of the proofs were being used in a cheesemonger’s shop to wrap the cheese in. (In those days they were not so careful about hygiene!) An ungodly man in London bought a pound of cheese and read the wording on the wrapping: “Pause, my soul! and ask the question, Art thou ready to meet God?” That was an arrow in his heart. Sometimes it is a sore disappointment and the Lord uses that sore disappointment as a sharp arrow of conviction in your heart. “This is not your rest: because it is polluted.” Or sometimes it may be a sudden death. Perhaps there is someone you know at school or college or hospital or work, or some relative, and that death is like an arrow. I remember taking a funeral. There was a young man, ungodly. He looked at his mother’s coffin and said, “If that were me, if I were in that coffin, I would be in hell.” That was an arrow and it was sharp.

“The King’s arrows.” He planned them, devised them, made them, uses them. He directs them. They do not miss their aim. There are all manner of arrows. The Lord is not short of these arrows, but they are sharp. That is, they wound; that is, they hurt; that is, they stick. Have you ever gone home from chapel on the Lord’s day evening and there is some scripture you have heard or something said from the pulpit and it is really troubling your conscience? You try to escape it, and when you go to bed, you think you will forget it, but when you wake up it is still there. On Monday morning it is still there and you try to get rid of it, but you cannot. It is one of the Lord’s arrows and it is sharp, it penetrates and it sticks. Only He who fired that arrow can take the arrow out. You have to be found at His feet seeking that in love and mercy He will remove the arrow that He fired. But it is all in love and mercy. Of course, He is not going to allow you to go headlong to hell in these ways of ungodliness and sin, but they are not pleasant, these sharp arrows.

Trying to think of some of the arrows that stuck in my heart, one was just that one word: *eternity*. O that was a sharp arrow, that there is an eternity, that it is for ever and ever. Another sharp arrow was that the people of God had got something that I had not got, and if I never had it, I must be lost. And another sharp arrow was this: the realisation that one day I must die and dying out of Christ is to be lost eternally. Tell me, have you ever had an arrow in your heart? It is an unspeakably solemn thing if

you never have, if you come to chapel week by week and the Word never touches you, never wounds you. How can you be healed if you have never been wounded? And how can you be saved if you have never been lost?

“Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the King’s enemies.” But if the Lord has ever wounded you, it is in love and mercy that He might heal you. If the Lord has ever wounded you, it is that those very wounds might draw you to His blessed feet that He who wounded might heal. “Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?” You know what Gilead’s sovereign balm is, the blood of Christ applied by the Spirit of God. That is the balm of Gilead and it will heal any wound, and it does not matter how deep these wounds are that the sharp arrows have made. The balm of Gilead will heal every wound. It will cleanse from every sin.

“Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the King’s enemies; whereby the people fall under Thee.” You see, these sharp arrows, they wound and they weaken and they slay. There is death in them that there might be life. These sharp arrows will slay your unconcern, and they will slay your unconcern for ever. You were not bothered, you were not really concerned about your sins, your soul, eternity, the judgment day; but let one of these arrows divinely fired, divinely directed, enter your heart and that will slay you. It will slay that indifference, that unconcern, for ever. “What shall I do, or whither flee, to escape the vengeance due to me?” O these arrows, they kill, they slay. If you get one in your heart, it will slay all your self-righteousness. You once were quite satisfied with yourself. You were not perfect but you thought you were not as bad as other people. Well, that spirit of self-satisfaction, self-righteousness. O but one of these arrows in your heart and that self-righteousness is slain for ever. You feel, “My best is stained and dyed with sin; my all is nothing worth.” You look at what used to be: that righteousness of your own, you were satisfied with it. It is slain now; it is gone. O these arrows are sharp! They kill; they slay. And they will slay all your prayerlessness. Well, you did not pray, did you? Perhaps if you were in trouble, you prayed to get out of it, like Cain did. He was an ungodly man, but he prayed and God answered his prayer. You perhaps pray if you are taking an exam that you might do well. You perhaps pray if you are ill to get better. But concerning eternal things, your soul’s salvation, there is no prayer. You do not say, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” You do not say, “Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.” You do not say, “Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that

Thou bearest unto Thy people: O visit me with Thy salvation.” But if one of these arrows enters your heart, then your prayerlessness is gone for ever. You have to pray; you must pray. Like the Apostle Paul, “Behold, he prayeth.” You have to pray for mercy, for help, for salvation, for forgiveness, to be made right, to be made fit for heaven, to be washed in the blood of Christ. Your prayerlessness is gone and it is gone for ever. O these sharp arrows!

“Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the King’s enemies; whereby the people fall under Thee.” But especially, above everything else, they slay the enmity, that enmity there was against this King. When you have these arrows in your heart, they slay you and they slay all that enmity, all that opposition, all that unconcern, all that self-righteousness, all that prayerlessness, and so you are brought to fall at the Saviour feet. “Whereby the people fall under Thee.” That is the end of it all. That is the love; that is the mercy; and that is the conquest of grace; and Christ is determined to get the conquest. And sinner, if the Lord is dealing with you and you are fighting against it, be sure of this: that He will have the last word. O but this sinner, weakened – “He weakened my strength in the way” – and wounded and sore and slain, especially the enmity slain, the rebellion slain. Now he is taken captive. The King has conquered him. He is taken a captive and there he falls down at Jesus’ feet. It is a full surrender. His rebellion is gone. There are no terms, no conditions. Now this is the word of the gospel: free forgiveness, pardoning mercy. And not only that, but this rebel made a child, brought into the royal family, to be among the King’s children. Occasionally there has been a king who has been merciful and when his enemies have been brought in submission to his feet, he has most kindly forgiven them, but he has not adopted them into his family. He has not made them princes. He has not made them to sit at the king’s table. “A foe received a favourite, a rebel made a child.” You see the love in it, the mercy, the conquest of grace.

“Whereby the people fall under Thee.” There was an eminent monarch on one occasion and he said to his advisers, “Today I am going to be rid of these enemies for ever.” They trembled, but he went forth to these enemies and gave every one of them a free pardon. His advisers said, “Your majesty, you said you were going to destroy your enemies.” He said, “*I have* destroyed my enemies; they are all my friends now.” That is the way the Lord Jesus works. You remember that case of Elisha and

the Syrians when Elisha looked out one morning in Dothan and the whole city was surrounded with Syrians, and they had come to capture him. He prayed that they should be smitten with blindness. They led them to the king in Samaria, and he said, "Shall I smite them?" Elisha told him to feed them, that they might go back rejoicing. That is just a faint picture of how this great King, Zion's God and King deals with these poor, wretched rebels who are conquered, who are brought low, who are slain by these sharp arrows and who fall at His feet.

In a word it is this:

"My dear, almighty Lord,
My Conqueror and my King,
Thy sceptre and Thy sword,
Thy reigning grace I sing;
Thine is the power; behold, I sit,
In willing bonds at Jesus' feet."

Now that is the end of all these purposes of love and mercy, these sharp arrows that wounded you, that distressed you, that made you sore, that caused you many an anxious moment, that slew you and yet brought you in humility and subjection and full surrender to the feet of Jesus. And then how lovingly and how graciously He received you, but not till brought to that point of repentance and separation from the world and the slaying of the enmity and your rebellion conquered, and the laying down of all your arms. That is it. You have to lay down all your arms. You have heard me mention this, that occasion when our navy defeated the French navy and there at the end of the battle the French admiral met Lord Nelson on board his ship, and the French admiral came forward quite proudly to make the surrender, and he held his hand out. Nelson kept his hand behind his back. He said, "First, sir, your sword." The Frenchman drew out his sword and laid it down at Nelson's feet. "Now," said Nelson with a smile on his face, "give me your hand."

May there be many of you here through love and mercy who know these sharp arrows in your heart, and yet they bring you as sinners to the Saviour's feet. If you do not remember anything else tonight, remember this: "There humbly fall before His feet, for none can perish there."

“Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the King’s enemies;
whereby the people fall under Thee.”