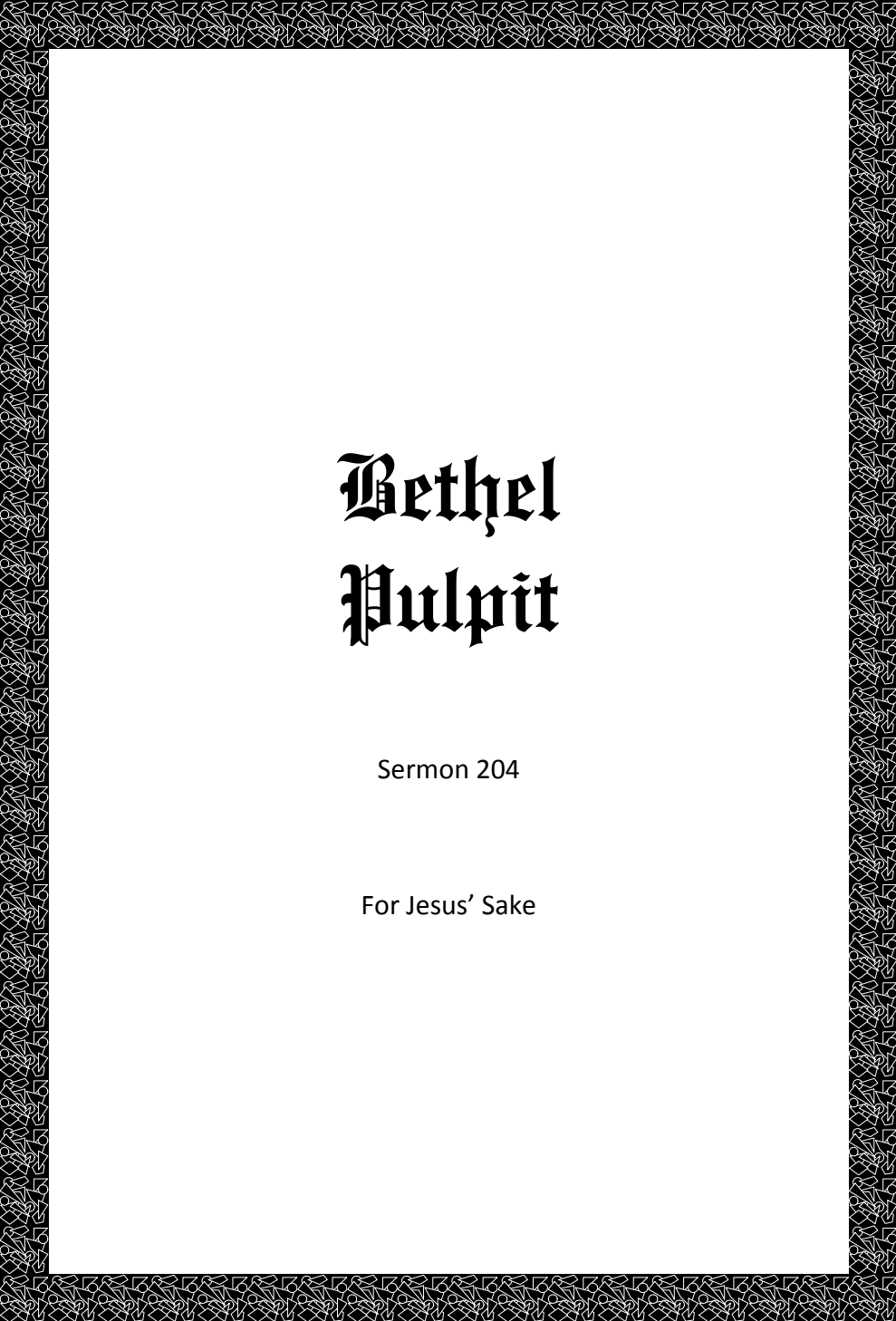




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 204

For Jesus' Sake

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day evening, 19th May, 2002**

Text: “*For Jesus’ sake*” (2 Corinthians 4. 5).

You all well know that it is not my practice to speak from just odd words of Scripture, but rather to seek to open up a verse from the Word of God with the Spirit's help. Now I do not make any apologies for saying this is different – for one or two reasons. First of all, no words are spoken more frequently in our public services than these, except it be for the benediction, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with us for ever,” at the end of every service. But, then, this is at the end of every prayer: “For Jesus’ sake.” And then also, because it is so vital. It embraces the whole of the mediatorial office and work of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the one Mediator between God and man; Jesus our only hope, our only foundation, our only plea; Jesus, truly God, truly Man; Jesus standing between in garments dyed in blood; Jesus, like Jacob's ladder joining together heaven and earth, and earth and heaven. It is one of the most beautiful, one of the most profound words in Scripture. Salvation is in it. Heaven is in it.

“For Jesus’ sake.” With the Lord's help, I want to speak of one or two of the vital aspects of this beautiful word, “For Jesus’ sake.” First of all, this is *the ground on which every blessing comes to a guilty sinner*. Every blessing that God ever gives to His people is “for Jesus’ sake.” That means no sinner can ever deserve it, can ever deserve any blessing, can ever deserve any favour. If a holy God condescends to bless a sinner, it is because He views that sinner in His dear Son. It is because of the name of Jesus. It is because of who the Lord Jesus is. It is because of what the Lord Jesus has done. It is on the ground of His death and resurrection. It is because of His finished work. It is through His precious blood. It is “for Jesus’ sake.” “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” And every single blessing is “for Jesus’ sake,” which means we do not deserve them, and yet we receive them. For, “Every grace and every favour comes to us through Jesus’ blood.” Now this belongs to every blessing, every blessing that a God can give or a sinner receive.

But there is one particular blessing, one out of the thousands of blessings God gives, one particular blessing which is specially mentioned in the New Testament as being “for Jesus’ sake,” and that is the blessing of pardon, the blessing of forgiveness. I know that is the blessing that so many of you long for, so many of you seek. Why? Because you know that God is holy. Why? Because you know that you have sinned against that holy God. Why? Because you know you are guilty, you are deserving His wrath. But why? Because you have heard in the gospel that He is a sin-pardoning God. “Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity?” Has that word ever meant anything to you: “If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared”? And when God forgives a guilty sinner, it is always “for Jesus’ sake,” for no other reason, on no other ground.

So the Holy Scriptures speak like this: “Be ye kind one to another.” A child of God should never, never, never be unkind. “Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another.” Now this is it: “Even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” There is no other ground for pardon. There is no pardon, there is no forgiveness, outside Christ. It is “for Jesus’ sake.” It is because “He took the dying sinner’s place, and suffered in his stead.” It is because in His death He satisfied divine justice, paying the price so there might be a just and righteous pardon. It is because love can flow through the cross of Christ. “Even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us.” O but this great blessing of pardon and forgiveness! Don’t we sing of it: “Peace and pardon from the skies come down through Jesus’ blood.” The great Mediator. The channel through which the blessing flows.

Now it is every blessing. It is mercy “for Jesus’ sake.” The eternal God loves His people “for Jesus’ sake.” When they are quickened into newness of life, it is “for Jesus’ sake,” because He died for them and rose again. When He blesses with peace, it is “for Jesus’ sake.” There is not any other ground on which a sinner can ever be blessed. So in its simplicity it means this, that if there is any blessing you are seeking after, if there is any blessing you need, you must seek it “for Jesus’ sake.” That is confessing that you are not worthy of it, you do not deserve it, but because of what Jesus has done in the sinner’s place, because of grace abounding in Christ, because mercy flows through Jesus’ blood, then to

seek forgiveness, pardon, to seek every blessing, to seek every favour “for Jesus’ sake.”

Now the next thing in this beautiful word, “for Jesus’ sake”: *the ground and foundation of prayer*, the only ground, the only foundation of prayer. When we say at the end of our prayers, “For Jesus’ sake,” it is not vain repetition – at least I hope it is not. I am sure it is not with me. It is the awful, solemn realisation we do not deserve our prayers to be answered, that we have no claim on a holy God. Rather because of our sin and our defilement and our guilt, we do not deserve that He ever should, ever can answer our prayers. Yet pray we must, and yet when we pray, that awful realisation, something that seems to nag you in your conscience. Satan will nag you in your conscience. It is such a poor prayer. How can you expect it to be answered? What about your hard heart? How can you expect it to be answered? What about all that fresh- contracted guilt on your conscience? How can you expect it to be answered? You have not been praying very much recently. How can you expect your prayers to be answered? O to pray “for Jesus’ sake.” I do not deserve it, O but I plead the Lord Jesus, His wonderful name; I make it my plea. His wonderful work in the sinner’s place. The wonderful love and affection He has to His beloved Son. For His sake, do hear, do answer my prayers. Now it is the only plea, but beloved friends, we do not need another. It is an all-prevailing plea. “I can no denial take, when I plead for Jesus’ sake.”

Let me try to explain it very, very simply, what it is for the Lord to do something for a sinner for Jesus’ sake. I was once walking down a most beautiful country lane in Shropshire with my mother when I was a boy, and we were going along this beautiful lane, and we passed a lovely old cottage. As we passed the cottage, a little old lady came running out. She said, “Are you Mr. France’s daughter?” My mother had never seen the lady before. She said, “Yes.” “O,” she said, “I thought you were. I knew him well. I did like him. I saw you passing and I thought it must be you.” She brought out a box of fruit, and said, “Please accept this for your father’s sake. I did like him.” My mother had never heard of the lady before, but she received this beautiful present because the old lady had known my old grandfather and liked him. That is just a simple illustration.

The Lord hears and answers prayer, not for anything we have done, not because we are worthy, not because we are attractive, but “for Jesus’ sake.” Now this is the ground, the foundation of our prayers. I am not just

speaking of a doctrine here. There is everything in it. There is salvation in it. There is heaven in it. There is the blessed experience of it. Surely, surely beloved friends some of you know what I am talking about. In your prayers, your poor prayers, your fearful prayers, you are just enabled by a little faith in your heart to lay hold on this: the name of Jesus, the Person of Jesus, the work of Jesus, and you are able to plead it, and then your prayers, O they have good access at the throne of grace.

“This is the name the Father loves
To hear His children plead;
And all such pleading He approves,
And blesses them indeed.”

So it is not just a doctrine. It is when you are struggling in prayer, when you come to the end of your prayers and feel they are so poor, when you feel so unfit and unworthy, and you do not deserve an answer, and all these things are true. But the mercy is they are not the point. If the Lord were to hear and answer our prayers because of whether they were good prayers or not, we would not fare very well. I have seen this and I have proved it: the poor prayers, the very poor prayers that receive blessed answers, answers which are *not* poor, “for Jesus’ sake.” I learnt that lesson years ago, and it will be a good lesson for some of you younger ones to learn concerning your prayers:

“When prayer or praise attempts to rise,
And fain would reach Jehovah’s ear,
His all-prevailing sacrifice
Perfumes, and makes it welcome there.”

O the Mediator! We do not go directly to a holy God. Out of Christ our God is a consuming fire. To come to God out of Christ is to perish. There can be no answer to our prayers out of Christ. To venture as a sinner, and feeling to be a sinner, unworthy, not deserving our prayers to be answered, and then just to have a little glimpse, laying hold by faith of this wonderful, precious name of Jesus, and, “I can no denial take, when I plead for Jesus’ sake.” O have you ever been able to pray like that in your extremity? “For Jesus’ sake.”

“Thou hast helped in every need;
This emboldens me to plead;

After so much mercy past,
Canst Thou let me sink at last?
“No; I must maintain my hold;
'Tis Thy goodness makes me bold;
I can no denial take,
When I plead for Jesus' sake.”

O this wonderful, all-prevailing plea!

Well then, beloved friends, you think of it tonight. Here you are with your sins and your sorrows, with today and tomorrow and next week, with your crooked things, with your mountains, with the death that one day you have to die, with a tempting devil, with the pains and sorrows, troubles and afflictions you have, and the pains and sorrows, troubles and afflictions that those you love have, and your hard things, your impossible things, your complicated things. Well may the blessed Spirit turn your eyes just for a moment tonight the other way, and may you see these three words written in gold: “For Jesus' sake.” May you be able to take all those things which are weighing on you tonight and put them in His almighty hands “for Jesus' sake.” Blessed be God, we can go to Him in prayer, a God who is almighty, who can do anything and everything; a God who is all-wise, who knows what should be done, what we ought to do; a God who is gracious, merciful, loving; a God who understands; a God who is full of compassion. To go to Him, and there “humbly fall before His feet, for none can perish there.” To tell Him all, commit all into His hands, leave it all there. And if you are able to pray “for Jesus' sake,” then those prayers will speed well at the mercyseat in heaven, at the throne of grace in heaven.

It is really as if you were outside a palace and you did want to send a letter to the king or queen. You have this letter, and how can you get it in? And if you did, you do not know whether the monarch would ever see it. O but if it should be the king's son, the queen's son, were to pass by and ask your trouble and take that letter, and say he would deliver it, wouldn't you feel happy as you saw it in his hands? You knew it would speed well, it would certainly be delivered, and the one who was going to deliver it was one that the king, the queen dearly loved.

O this wonderful plea to our prayers! It is not just some hard doctrine, some dry doctrine. Surely you are a praying people, you have to

pray, you must pray, day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment. O but if the Holy Spirit tonight would just give you this glimpse by faith, enable you to lay hold of it, to take it home with you, use it in your prayers, “For Jesus’ sake.”

Now the next thing I would speak from in this beautiful word, “For Jesus’ sake,” *the ground of a sinner’s acceptance with God*, because really the great point in religion is this. You and I must have dealings with God. He is our Creator. We are responsible to Him. One day we shall give an account. How can I find favour with God? How can I find acceptance with God? Well, by nature I am a rebel, by birth, by nature, by practice. By nature as a sinner I do not deserve acceptance with God. What about my soul concerns now? What about the end when I stand before the judgment seat of Christ? O the wonderful thing then will be to find acceptance. Now it is a great question: how can I, a sinner, find acceptance with God who is holy, with God against whom I have sinned? Now there is only one way, and there never will be another, that a holy God accepts His people despite all their sins. He accepts them “for Jesus’ sake,” because of what Jesus has done for them, because He has laid down His life for them, He has shed His precious blood for them, because of the righteousness He has wrought out for them, because He intercedes for them, pleads for them, because He views them standing in Him, by eternal union with Him, because He sees them fleeing for refuge to Him.

So our hymnwriter says, “These He accepts for Jesus’ sake, and views them righteous in His Son.” And the apostle takes it up: “To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.” It is a lovely word, isn’t it, “Accepted in the Beloved”? I think it is the only time in Scripture that name is given to the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. “The Beloved.” That is, beloved of His Father. That is, beloved of every sinner saved by grace. O He is the Beloved, isn’t He? To some of us this evening He is the Beloved, isn’t He? But whether He is or not, He is the Beloved of His Father. O but to find acceptance in the Beloved. Well, if not accepted, it is rejected. If not accepted, it is cast out. If not accepted, it is cast away for ever. O this sinner venturing. “All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Neither will the eternal Father in any wise cast him out. “These He accepts for Jesus’ sake,” – not for their own sake – “for Jesus’ sake, and views them righteous in His Son.” O these great and glorious, precious truths!

“For Jesus’ sake.” The fourth thing I want to speak to you about is somewhat different, and this is “for Jesus’ sake,” *the standard for the life of a believer*. In this sense more than any other the Apostle Paul uses this expression: “For Jesus’ sake.” What is the motive for his life? What is the reason for the way he behaves? Well, he says, it is “for Jesus’ sake.” The apostle would say, “Because I love Him so much, because He means so much to me, because of all He has done for me, because of all He has suffered for me, because of His great love toward me. Then “for Jesus’ sake” I leave all, I take up my cross, I serve Him, I follow Him. This is the reason. This is the motive. It is not legal. It is not just a duty. It is “for Jesus’ sake.” It is constrained by His love. And the Apostle Paul would continually say, This is the reason for my conduct, my behaviour.

In the verse from which I have read these three words, “We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord,” the subject is Paul’s ministry concerning Christ. “We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.” Willing to do, willing to suffer, willing to serve, willing to endure, willing to go the second mile. The motive: “for Jesus’ sake.” “I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” It is “for Jesus’ sake” I serve the churches. It is “for Jesus’ sake” I preach. Again later in the chapter (verse 11), “For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake.” Now that should be the motive, the standard for Christian behaviour. You do not want to grieve Him, do not want to dishonour that worthy name by which you are called. Why can you not do that thing? “For Jesus’ sake.”

“May we ever look to Jesus,
And the place where He has gone;
And may nothing ever please us
He would grieve to look upon.”

It is “for Jesus’ sake.” Why do we have to leave the world and leave it for ever, our former pleasures, our idols? Why do we have to give up those things we loved? “For Jesus’ sake.” Because they are grieving to Him, and if they are grieving to Him, we have to give them up, and give them up for ever. Why do we have to give them up and go without the camp? Why? Because “Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate.” Why have I to remove from me the way of lying? “For Jesus’ sake.” Why have I to live soberly, honestly and

godly? Not to merit salvation, not to win God's favour, but "for Jesus' sake." It is the great motive. An open profession of the Lord's name, coming to the Lord's table, it is "for Jesus' sake," constrained by His love, because of what He has done. And what about the shame? What about "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season"? What about "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt"? It is "for Jesus' sake."

"If on my face for Thy dear name,
Shame and reproaches be,
All hail reproach, and welcome shame!
If Thou remember me."

The apostle brings it concerning all the sufferings, all the trouble, all the dangers, all the perplexities he had to endure. He said, It is "for Jesus' sake." That was why he was willing to go even to the end of the earth. That was why he was willing to suffer stoning, shipwreck. "For Jesus' sake." So I read to you from the twelfth chapter as well as this fourth chapter. "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake." Perhaps you say, Paul, you are using a wrong word, or too strong a word: *taking pleasure* in them "for Christ's sake." "Did Christ, my Lord, suffer, and shall I repine?" "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong. I am become a fool in glorying." It is "for Jesus' sake." Whatever a child of God has to suffer, whatever a child of God has to do, "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men." O may this name, this precious name, this worthy name of Jesus be everything to us.

"O may the name of Jesus be
To us supremely dear;
Our only, all-prevailing plea,
For all our hope is there."

And then the gracious effect of it, the savour of it, the influence of it, the sweet constraining of it. Well, that choice you have before you, that decision – "for Jesus' sake." That thing you cannot give up – "for Jesus' sake." That way you shrink from walking, and yet feel you ought – "for

Jesus' sake." O what a principle! Why did those godly martyrs go to the stake and were burned to ashes, not accepting deliverance? It was "for Jesus' sake." They loved His name more than they loved their own lives and they were willing to lay them down "for Jesus' sake." There is a standard here, a principle here, to affect everything, the things we do, the way we speak, the way we act, the things we do not do, our behaviour in the church of God, before the world, in our own families. Now it is "for Jesus' sake." Dare you do that thing which would so dishonour the name of your Lord and Saviour? "For Jesus' sake." The ground of every blessing, the ground and foundation of prayer, the only way of acceptance, the standard in a believer's life.

Let me mention just one other thing, one concluding thing. "For Jesus' sake" – *the only way to heaven*. If you want to get to heaven, it must be "for Jesus' sake." A sinner repenting, a sinner confessing, a sinner trusting, a sinner fleeing for refuge to Jesus and to Jesus only.

"Self-renouncing, grace admiring,
Made unto salvation wise,
Matchless love their bosoms firing,
O how sweet their songs arise:
'None but Jesus!'
From His blood their hopes arise."

If you and I are ever going to get to heaven, it must be "for Jesus' sake," through His merit, through His merit alone. All who are now in heaven, all who have ever come to heaven, all who ever will come to heaven, it is on this one ground: "for Jesus' sake," through Him, through what He has done. Now, "What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?" In other words, why did they reach heaven? And the answer (though it is most beautifully opened up in a few verses), the answer simply is this: Why did they come to heaven? "For Jesus' sake." "These are they which came out of great tribulation" – they were not left in it; they did not sink in it. They have come "out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore" – "for Jesus' sake." "Therefore" – on no other ground. "Therefore" – for no other reason. "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb

which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” Heaven, “for Jesus’ sake.”