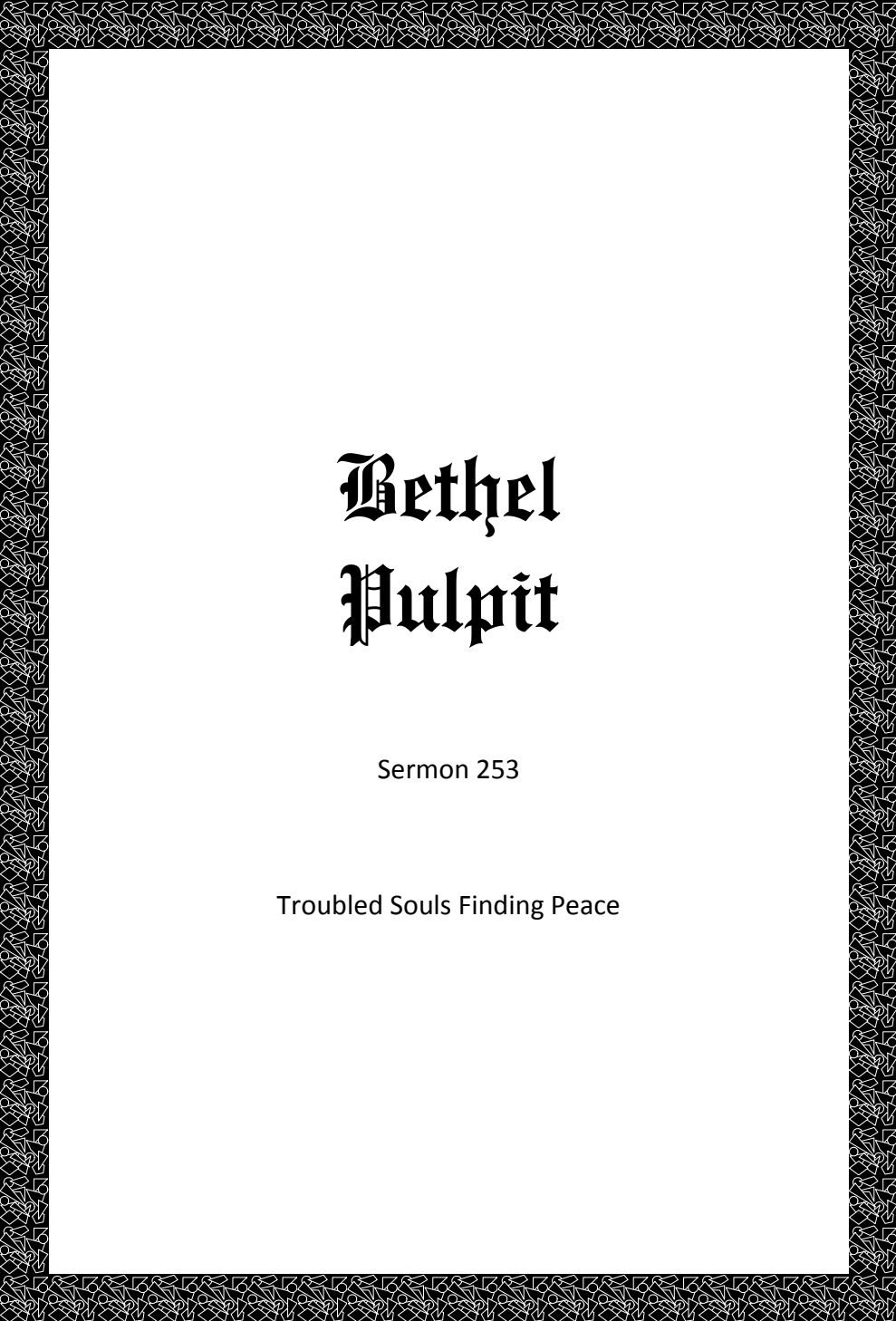




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 253

Troubled Souls Finding Peace

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day evening, 30th July, 2006**

Text: *"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4. 6, 7).*

In one way this word is a loving rebuke; in another way, gracious counsel; in yet another way it is sweet comfort. "Be careful for nothing." Because people have so many burdens and sorrows and difficulties and problems and cares, and they always will have. We should like to be without them, shouldn't we? But then there would not be much prayer, would there? There would not be much dependence on the Lord. So the Lord has seen to it that the way His people travel to heaven will have these various problems and difficulties and concerns, that here He calls *cares*. "Be careful for nothing." The warning is against being too much swallowed up with them, being overpowered with them.

Do not misunderstand this word, when the Lord says we have not to be careful. Of course, in one sense we have. In a special sense we have to be careful about our sins and our never-dying souls and eternity. That should be our chief care, our chief concern. Mothers have to have care for their children. Fathers have to have care in providing. All have to have care in planning rightly for tomorrow and the unknown way. So do not misunderstand it. The warning here is against being *over-anxious*, being *over-concerned*.

All God's people will have these cares and these concerns, and really they can work in two completely different ways. In that solemn parable of the sower and the seed, when the Lord Jesus warned against those thorns and briars that choke the growth, choke the good seed lest it be fruitful, He mentions "the cares of this world." And do not forget, He puts them with pleasure, lust, searching after riches. "The cares of this world." They can be like those thorns and those briars, thistles that stifle the growth and make us unfruitful, make us barren. But then there is the opposite way they can work: we have our cares, but God uses them to drive us to Him in prayer, to make us prayerful, to make us careful in this sense.

Now this is the whole point of this verse. We have these cares. We will always have them, greater or smaller, grace or providence, today or tomorrow. But this warning against being swallowed up with them, overwhelmed by them. “Be careful for nothing.” In other words, you will have these things, but do watch your spirit, that you are not so taken up with them that you forget the state of your soul; you forget the things of God; you forget there is a God of providence; you forget that the very hairs of your head are numbered; you forget there is a God in heaven who lives and reigns; you forget there is a God on the throne; you forget that your life’s minutest circumstance is subject to His eye. That is the meaning of it. “Be careful for nothing.” What a word that is that closed the hymn we sang just now:

“Live in a calm and cheerful mood,
And find that all things work for good,
Which Jesus kindly sends.”

“Be careful for nothing.” I know that some may say – or if they do not say it, may feel it – “But what about me? I have so many things. I cannot help being burdened with these cares. Other people seem to be having more of a smooth pathway, but I have things that really trouble me. I have things in my family. There are things concerning my health. There are things concerning the health of those I love. We have the unknown way. There are things before us. There are mountains.” You may say, “Some of us have long-drawn-out troubles,” and you may say, “Some of us have difficulties that no-one really knows about.” And the Lord still says, lovingly, kindly, “Be careful for nothing” – not so much as a reproof, but, “Leave everything with Me. Can you not trust Me? Do you not believe I am gracious? Do you not believe I am all-wise? Can you not see My purpose in it? Leave everything in My hands.” “Be careful for nothing.” That is the point here: *the wonderful provision of the throne of grace.*

“Be careful for nothing.” Now here is the remedy; here is the answer: “But in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” So the apostle here to the church at Philippi and to us in this later day recommends the throne of grace. Do not forget it is a throne of grace. Sinners are welcome. Do not forget it is a throne of grace. The One who sits on the throne is gracious. And the throne of grace is specially provided for those who have these cares which otherwise would slay you. So these cares come in your life.

The Lord permits them; the Lord orders them, not to slay you, but that you might know more of the throne of grace, more of the privilege of prayer, more of answers, more of the Lord's upholding, more of the Lord's gracious support.

"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." The throne of grace was provided that we might "find grace to help in time of need." That is why you are careful; that is why you are burdened – because it is a time of need. You know what your time of need is. The Lord knows what your time of need is. But it is a beautiful word: "Grace to help in time of need." Well, is it a time of need with any of you here this evening? I am sure it is with some; I am sure it is with many. "Let us *therefore*" – because we have all these cares and concerns – *therefore*. "Let us *therefore*." But *therefore* because there is a great and glorious God and Saviour on the throne. "Let us *therefore* come boldly." Do not misunderstand it: with humble confidence, with that liberty that the gospel affords. "*Boldly*." "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." We are just reminded, "That we may obtain *mercy*, and find grace to help in time of need." Mercy, because in the New Testament the place of prayer, the privilege of prayer is spoken of as the throne of grace. But in the Old Testament it is spoken of as the mercy seat, the mercy seat sprinkled with blood, the place where the Lord says, "There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee" – in other words, answer your prayers; in other words, deal with your cares and concerns. "There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat."

That is the wonderful thing. Your concern may be more than anything else that you are a sinner, and you have to die, and you are not ready to die. Well, "in every thing" – especially in the great matter, the great concern – "in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." There is mercy there. There is precious blood there. That means there is forgiveness. That means there is cleansing. That means there is access for a sinner. That means there is welcome for a sinner. It is a throne of grace. It is a

mercy seat. “Let us therefore come,” with all our cares and all our burdens and all our concerns, and especially that great burden of our sin and our soul and a never-ending eternity. “Let us therefore come,” because the Lord has bidden us. There is a welcome for sinners who feel their need. “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

“Be careful for nothing.” So these cares, these burdens, these problems, these concerns, great and small, providence and grace, today and tomorrow. And here is God’s own remedy, the Lord’s own remedy: “Let us therefore come”; “in every thing by prayer and supplication.” That is the answer. “Be careful for nothing.” And if Paul puts it like this, the Apostle Peter puts it another way: “Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you.” It is exactly the same point. “Be careful for nothing.” “Casting all your care upon Him” – in prayer, by faith, as a sinner, in all your felt need, at the mercy seat sprinkled with blood, at the throne of grace. I like the way Peter puts it. He does not say, you have got to cast, or you have to cast, or you should cast; he says, “*Casting*.” It is a kind of present participle. In other words, it is something that is always going on. It is not just yesterday and you are not welcome tomorrow; it is something that is always going on. It will be until you draw your latest breath. “Casting all your care upon Him.” You have to keep on coming. You have to keep on by faith in prayer, casting your care upon Him.

And do not forget, He says, “All your care.” Be careful for nothing.” “Casting all your care upon Him.” Sometimes we cast some of our care on Him. “All your care.” Sometimes we think we cast all our care on Him, and then we bring it back. “All your care.” “Casting all your care upon Him.” It is that very beautiful word: “For He careth for you.”

“‘Cast,’ He said, ‘on Me thy care;
'Tis enough that I am nigh;
I will all thy burdens bear;
I will all thy needs supply.’”

“Be careful for nothing.” “Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you.” “In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known *unto God*,” which in simple language means go and ask Him for something. Tell Him you are a sinner and ask Him for forgiveness. He will not be offended. Ask Him for the things you feel you need. There is nothing too small, nothing too great.

“Let your requests be made known unto God.” But sometimes faith rises to this: “And can my heart aspire so high to say, ‘My Father, God’?” He is “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” He is the God and Father of all His people in Christ. If only we could see Him as *our* Father and know, “Be careful for nothing.” Why? Well, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” A father’s loving, watchful eye upon us at all times, in all places. And that beautiful word we read this evening: “Your heavenly Father *knoweth*.” If your religion is real, you have a Father, and that Father is in heaven, and “your heavenly Father *knoweth*.” “Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.” He knows you need all these things. A few verses after this word I have read to you this evening, there is that beautiful promise: “But my God shall supply *all your need* according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” “Let your requests be made known unto God.” God the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; God the Father of all His people in Christ.

“Your heavenly Father ever lives,
And all His choicest treasure gives
To you, the favourites of His heart,
Nor will He ever with you part.”

“Let your requests be made known unto God.” “Be careful for nothing.” It is, “Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you.” And the psalmist speaks of it as a burden, and he says, “Cast thy burden upon the Lord,” in prayer, by faith. “Cast thy burden upon the Lord.” “Be careful for nothing.” Do not carry it yourself. “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.” Now what is your burden, what is your care this evening? Well, I hope with all of you your chief care, your chief concern is your soul, your sin and eternity. And then there are all these other cares. Now what is your care tonight? What is your burden? Now the Word of God says, “*Thy* burden,” that which lies next to your heart. “Thy burden.” “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.” “Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass.”

“Be careful for nothing; but *in every thing* by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” Nothing too great, nothing too small. “In everything” – that thing you dare not tell to anyone else. “In everything” – that thing that does not

seem too hard, too difficult, you think you will be able to manage it yourself. Well, you won't; you cannot. "In every thing by prayer and supplication." It is a wonderful word, "*In everything*." And O that there were more secret prayer. "In everything" – the things of the church of God, the things of the world, the things of the nation. "In everything" – the things of your family, the things of your business, your health, the health of those you love, the unknown way, what lies before you tomorrow. "In everything."

"Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." And of course we do need the Holy Spirit to enable us to walk out this loving word. You would think we would delight in it, yet our wretched hearts have an awful aversion to prayer and our wretched hearts want to manage things ourselves. "Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication *with thanksgiving*." Do not forget to thank the Lord for His mercy. When He does hear and answer your prayer, do not forget to thank Him for it. Do not forget to thank Him that there is a Saviour, that there is a throne of grace, that there is a fountain filled with blood. "With thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

Here we are told to pray with "prayer and with supplication." Now what is the difference? As I understand it, they are the same except one has more reality and more weight and more vigour and more force. You see that little, trickling stream, and then there is a heavy rain and it is the same stream, the same water, but it is now a fast-flowing stream. It is carrying everything before it. "Pray, if thou canst or canst not speak; but pray with faith in Jesus' name," for Jesus' sake. See what your poor prayers can do. But it is a wonderful thing when you have a spirit of supplication. Jacob at Bethel: "I will not let thee go, except Thou bless me." "Do not turn away Thy face; mine's an urgent, pressing case." That is supplication. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." That is supplication. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." That is supplication. But do not, beloved friends, let Satan trip you up on this: to wait until you have a nice feeling and a soft heart and a spirit of prayer.

"Go just as thou art, with thy woe,
Fall down at the feet of the Lamb,
He will not, He cannot say, Go."

“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing.” “Suffer the word of exhortation.” The apostle gave it in love. “In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” What wonders the Lord can do! What wonders He has done! And how He delights to do these things in answer to the poor prayers of His people! What impossibilities He performs, what needs He supplies, what deliverances He grants, what help He gives!

“Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Well, beloved friends, when you and I are careful for everything, bothered, troubled, anxious, there is not much peace, not much peace in our hearts, not much peace in our minds. We have not the ability to create peace any more than those poor disciples had when they were careful and troubled. The Sea of Galilee in a rage, in a turmoil, and they felt the next moment would be death, destruction, that they would be wrecked, that they would be drowned. “Master, carest Thou not that we perish?” They had not any peace and they were careful for everything, yet however badly and feebly they did it, they did make their request by prayer and supplication. There was a lot of unbelief, but there was still the supplication in it. They did make their requests known to Almighty God and they knew something of this wonderful peace. “He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.” “The peace of God, which passeth all understanding.” They could not understand it, how this Man could do it. “What manner of Man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?” And if you are all of a turmoil and the Lord blesses you with peace, then you will not understand it, but you will be thankful for it and you will rejoice in it.

What is this peace? Being enabled to leave everything in the Lord’s hands. Like Ruth: “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.” And Ruth went to bed that night in peace. “The peace of God, which passeth all understanding.” The whole work is in His hand, not yours, not mine, and He is almighty, and He is all-wise and all-gracious, and He undertakes to do everything, and He will not mis-handle it, and He never makes a mistake, and He is on the throne; He is in control; He is almighty. The government is upon His shoulder.

Well then, to know that peace, leaving it all in His hands. “My times are in Thy hand.” “All must come, and last, and end, as shall please my heavenly Friend.” The peace of God, the Lord has promised it. To these careful, troubled ones the Lord has promised it in answer to their poor prayers. “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” The Lord has a most blessed ability to give peace. That beautiful word: “And this Man shall be the peace.” And haven’t we proved it! “This Man” – this glorious Man – “shall be the peace.” For when He gives peace, who can give trouble? “He stayeth His rough wind in the day of the east wind.” “The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” And then where are your cares and your burdens and your perplexities? But especially the peace He made by the blood of His cross at Calvary. He is the Prince of Peace.

“There is a peace which passeth others by,
A peace by blood in covenant promise laid,
Which lives when other mortal peaces die,
Because ’tis sealed eternally, and paid.”

“Peace by His cross has Jesus made.” O but that poor, troubled conscience! You have not got what you want. That is your chief care. You are getting older. You have to die. You have sought it. You are careful. And the Lord directs you to Himself, the Prince of Peace. O that you might find that sweet joy and peace at the Saviour’s feet in believing. “The peace of God, which passeth all understanding.” It is not nature. We do not do it ourselves. It is grace. It is God’s work. But,

“The peace which Jesus’ blood secures,
And fixes in our hearts,
To all eternity endures,
Nor finally departs.”

You will not always have the sweet sense of it; the reality of it you can never lose. It ends in eternal peace in heaven.

“The peace of God, which passeth all understanding.” Well, many know the one side – the care and the turmoil and the trouble. O may we be sweetly favoured to know the other side – this wonderful peace – and also may we be sweetly enabled to walk out the pathway to it, that well-beaten track to the throne of grace, to the mercy seat sprinkled with blood.

“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”