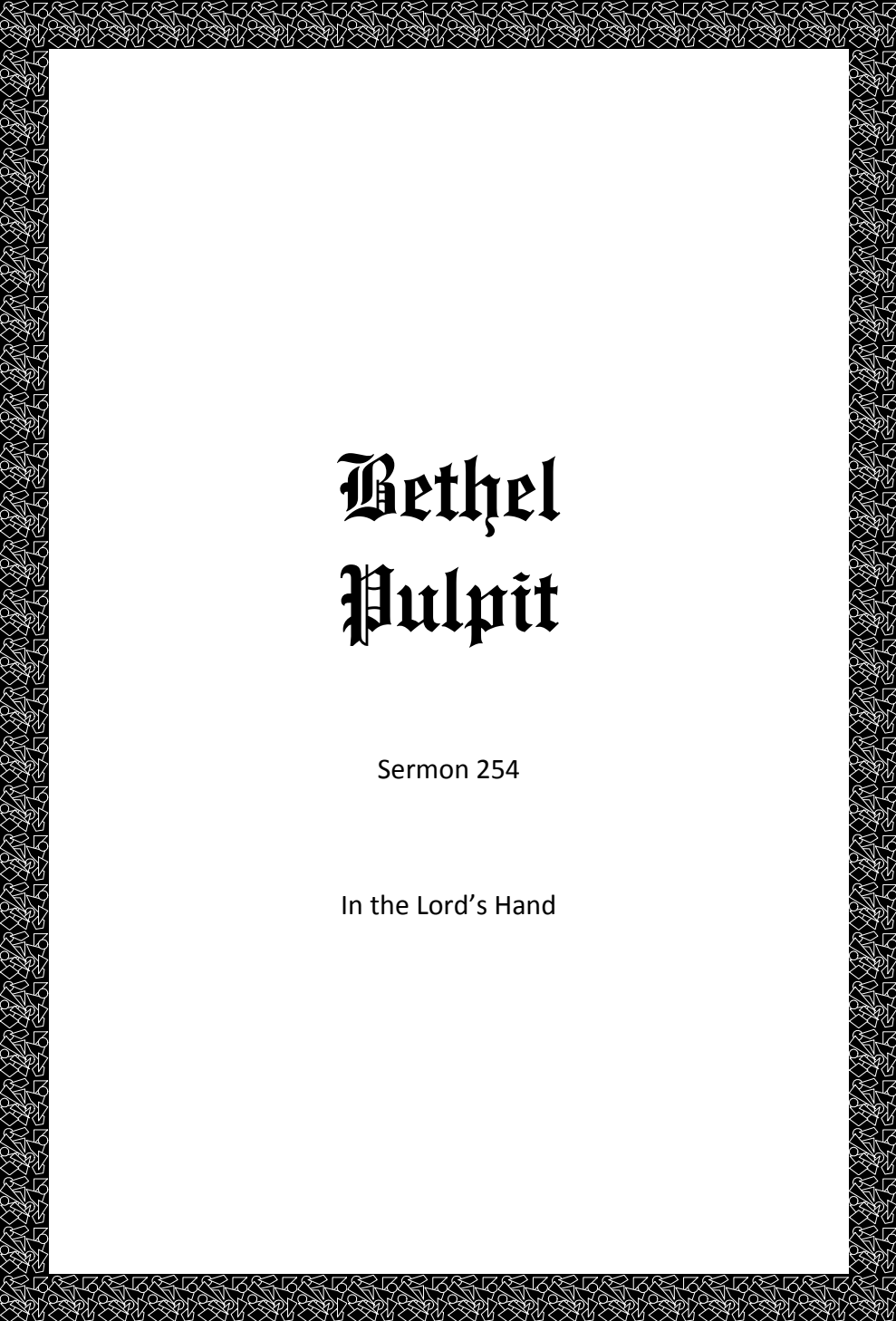




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 254

In the Lord's Hand

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day morning, 27th August, 2006**

Text: “*In His hand*” (Isaiah 53. 10).

You all realise this is not my usual way, taking a text with just one or two words in it. But beloved friends, it seems to me more like a subject, a wonderful subject, a glorious subject, that *everything* is in the hands of God – almighty hands, all-wise hands, and everything in His hands. He is in complete control. He does according to His own will. “None can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?” Even the wicked are in His hand. They can do nothing apart from His divine permission. But the Lord's people and all their ways and all their concerns – this wonderful truth that *everything* is in the Lord's hand.

So in a sense this morning it is a subject rather than a text. But as I am sure all of you expect me to do, the right thing first of all is to set this word in its context, speak about it in its context, what the word means as it appears in this verse. And beloved friends, it is a glorious context, isn't it! This word, “In His hand,” comes in Isaiah chapter 53, that wonderful chapter on the sin-atonement sufferings and death of the dear Lamb of God, which points forward to Calvary, to a dear, almighty Saviour, to His sufferings and His death, to sin for ever put away in the atonement. “Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid *on Him* the iniquity of us all.” Now that is the context in which this word comes: “In His hand.”

And so the whole verse 10 reads: “Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief: when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper *in His hand*.” Now what is all this about? The eternal good will and pleasure of the Father, His eternal purpose in the everlasting salvation of a multitude that no man can number, all of them by nature lost, ruined, guilty sinners, and yet as He chose them and He loved them, it was His pleasure that they should be with Him for ever and ever in

heaven. And so it was His pleasure that a way of salvation should be made. Now this is the point: He put it all in the hands of His beloved Son. That is the meaning of this word in this context, in this verse. From all eternity the everlasting Father in the plan of salvation put all in the hands of His beloved Son. “And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.” There was not any possibility it could fail, it could miscarry. It was in good hands. It was in safe hands.

So we see the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ here as the Surety of His people. You know what a Surety is. He is a person who makes himself completely, absolutely responsible for someone else. If you set out on a project and you laid out a lot of money and I became surety for you legally with a suretyship bond, and you went into debt, you would not have to pay the debt; I would have to pay the debt. In the covenant, *everything* was in the Lord’s hand. He was set up as the Surety of His people, and He lovingly, willingly undertook to be the Surety of His people, knowing what it would mean, knowing what it would cost. The whole of this chapter Isaiah 53, the Son of God must become “a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief”; the Son of God must suffer, bleed and die; the Son of God must be “despised and rejected of men.” But the Lord Jesus as the sinners’ Surety willingly undertook, willingly accepted this, and it was all in His hand. So the work of salvation was as secure in eternity past as when the Lord Jesus finished it. That is what it means: “The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.”

So He came. He was born at Bethlehem. He became incarnate. The angels sang over Bethlehem, “Glory to God in the highest.” The announcement was made. Let me just put a little aside in here. We tend to think of this verse on Christmas day, but the old divines, the godly Puritans considered it one of the most important verses in Scripture and they brought it in continually. “Fear not.... For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” And there as you see that helpless Babe in the manger at Bethlehem, a helpless Babe, but true almighty God, the whole of redemption is in His hand. That is why Satan sought to kill Him. That is why the little children were massacred by Herod. But He could not perish; He could not be slain; He could not die until the appointed hour came. “Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee.” The whole of salvation work, redemption work, in His hand. Part of it was working out an everlasting

righteousness in His obedience to the law. Now the pleasure of the Lord prospered in His hand.

But then He must die, shed His precious blood, that sin might be atoned for. He did not fail in this. The pleasure of the Lord prospered in His hand. And so this mysterious word: “Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief.” Because it was the Father’s eternal good pleasure that a way of salvation might be opened up and His beloved people saved with an everlasting salvation. So the pleasure of the Lord did prosper in His hand in the work of redemption, at Calvary, as He cried, “It is finished,” as He opened a fountain for sin and for uncleanness, and He died and He was buried. Some people say you do not have the resurrection in the Old Testament. What about this verse if there is no resurrection – that the Lord Jesus *died*, but, “the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand” – after He has died? There is a resurrection here, and this is what it means: He is still the sinners’ Surety. He has that responsibility still laid on Him that was laid on Him in the covenant of grace, that the work of redemption He accomplished is still in His hand, to find this one out, to seek this one, to put His fear in that one’s heart, to call another one by grace.

It means that the work of redemption can never fail, that the death of Christ is not in vain. “He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.” The work is in His hand,” says our hymnwriter.

“His gracious purpose He will do.
And all His word shall stand.”

And this work is still going on. It has been going on, it will go on until the end of time. The pleasure of the Lord in gathering out His people shall prosper in His hand until that great day when salvation’s work is complete, the whole blood-bought church of God gathered safely into heaven, and then this word will be completely fulfilled, eternally fulfilled: “A glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing,” and not a limb missing from His mystical body, and not a sheep, a lamb from His fold, and not a jewel from His crown.

O the wonders of Isaiah 53 and the wonders of this verse and the wonder of wonders if you and I have an interest in it! “He *shall* see His seed, He *shall* prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper *in His hand*.” So I have tried to set these three words in their context and

the meaning of them – it is a glorious meaning – when they were first written by Isaiah through divine inspiration.

Now I would like to try to speak to you about this word in a more general sense. Coming to this: the whole of providence, the whole of our concerns are in the Lord's hands. When trouble comes, it is in the Lord's hand, and, "All must come, and last, and end, as shall please my heavenly Friend." Everything, every detail, the great and the small, every concern in His hand. The evil day in which we live, the awful happenings in the world, the conflict in the Middle East, the affairs in our own country, the chaos that there has been – it is in His hand in this sense: it is all in His sovereign, almighty control. What about that word – I often think of it – "The wrath of man shall praise Thee: the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain"? That is, all the awful happenings in the world, the evil things that are taking place, the Lord has power to prevent them, or if He chooses not to prevent them, in a mysterious way, though we cannot see how, He will make them all work together for His honour and glory. "The wrath of man shall praise Thee: the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain." It is a wonderful thing if at times we can realise that God is our God, and that God is on the throne, and that God is almighty.

"Thy throne eternal ages stood,
Ere seas or stars were made;
Thou art the ever-living God,
Were all the nations dead."

And you see everything beneath His control. Nothing can ever touch you apart from God's permission. The mighty happenings in the world are beneath His control, and the minutest circumstances in our lives. But the difference – with the world it is in infinite wisdom; with His beloved people it is in infinite love. And says Paul, "We know." Why? Because all things are in His hand. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." Well, often we cannot see it, and often we do not feel it, but we know it. All things – the falling of a leaf as much as the movement of a planet – in His hand. But you see, the little details of our lives and the important things of our lives and our sorrows and our joys and our troubles and our circumstances.

"In His hand." I could not help but think of a number of you younger ones here this morning. You have been receiving your

examination results. It has been an important time in your life. Some of you are perhaps pleased with them. Some of you are perhaps disappointed with them. Some of you may be sad. With some, they may be mixed. Now do you believe this word: “In His hand”? If you have done well, “in His hand,” and do not forget to thank the Lord for it. There is so much base ingratitude about all of us. Good William Tiptaft said, “The Lord loves people thanking Him because He gets so little of it.” If you have done well, then do not forget to thank Him for it, and if it is in answer to your prayers, perhaps you will be able to say, “Lord, Thou hast answered my prayers concerning exams. Well, what about the more important thing: my never-dying soul and my sins, and eternity?” Now it is “in His hand.”

But then perhaps there are disappointments. And going just beyond examinations, perhaps there are various ones of you and you are disappointed in various ways. Do not forget, disappointments are “*in His hand*,” and how often God makes a disappointment work for good. “God having provided some better thing for us.”

“Disappointment, His appointment,
Change one letter, then I see
That the thwarting of my purpose
Is God’s better plan for me.”

Now it is “in His hand.” Pray that the Lord will sanctify disappointments, whatever they are.

I remember reading a little account some time ago of a godly minister, and he became quite an eminent man in his own way. But really one of the great times in his life was when to his dismay he failed one of his important examinations completely. It drove him to the throne of grace and the Lord sanctified it, and what a blessing it was made to him. “In His hand.” So disappointments as well as joys, as well as successes, “in His hand.”

A remarkable case, not to mention names and times and details, but there was a girl who was moved – she did not want to move – from where she was working to nearly two hundred miles away. I remember that girl, she was almost heartbroken. She was away from friends, away from family. She did not know anyone there. She did not want to go, and yet she had to go. I remember writing to her at the time because she was so distressed, saying that perhaps the Lord had a purpose in it. I think it was

the first Lord's day she was there, she went to chapel and met a boy whom she had never met in her life, and some time after they were engaged, and later happily married.

"In His hand." If only we believed what we do believe! But it is this: everything is in the Lord's hand, but if the Lord is dealing with you, you *personally* will want to put your concerns in His hand. It will not just be a kind of doctrinal view: well, it is in the Bible, everything in the Lord's hand. It will be more like this: His hand, almighty hand, all-wise hand, gracious hand – "Commit *thy* way unto the Lord," which in the language of this text means, seek to put your way into the Lord's gracious hand, by faith, in prayer. It is that word: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication." That is committing your way to the Lord; that is putting all things into the Lord's hand.

Mind you, sometimes His answer will not be what you expect, and sometimes His dealing will not be what you expect, and sometimes He will call you to a sacrifice, and sometimes He will bring it close: do you *really* want to put things into My hand? Do you *really* want to leave it with Me? Can you *really* trust Me? Do you *really* believe that "God always gives the best to those who leave the choice to Him"? Now do you really believe what you do believe?

"Leave God to order all thy ways,
And trust in Him whate'er betide.
Thou'lt find Him in the evil days
Thy all-sufficient strength and guide:
Who builds on His unchanging love
Builds on a Rock which cannot move."

"In His hand." "Commit thy way" – that which is uppermost in your mind this morning, that which lies heaviest upon you this morning, that which concerns you most this morning – "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass." Not just that everything is in His hand, but in *your* concerns, whatever they are, seeking to draw near in prayer. And do not forget that all-prevailing plea, "For Jesus' sake." I spoke it at the baptismal service, and it has been with me ever since, the sinner's all-prevailing plea: "For Jesus' sake." Urge it; plead it. "Fear not, His merits must prevail." "For Jesus' sake."

Now, “Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you.” O but to be sweetly enabled to put things in His hands and to leave them in His hands! Do you remember Ruth the Moabitess? Well, she went in softly by night. O she had such a burden. She fell down at Boaz’ feet and she put the burden completely in his hands, but then she left it there. Sometimes we seek to put things in the Lord’s hands and then bring them back and manage them ourselves. Can you trust the Lord to manage it for you? “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.”

“In His hand.” So your prayers, the things in your family, can you commit them into His hands, leave them in His hand? Those you love, can you seek to commit them into the Lord’s hand and leave them there? Things in the church of God today, can you, do you, must you, commit these into the Lord’s hand and leave them there? “It is time for Thee, Lord, to work: for they have made void Thy law.” And then to see, “The work is in His hand.” That word has been very much with me during recent weeks:

“The work is in His hand;
His gracious purpose He will do.
And all His word shall stand.”

When the Lord works, no-one can stand in His way. When the Lord works, no-one can overturn it. When the Lord works, it does not matter how impossible it is when it is in His hands; they are almighty. O to commit everything into His hands.

And the unknown way, we often talk about it, often think about it. It is in the Lord’s hands. Tomorrow, next week, the unknown way, those things before you, perhaps things you are afraid of, perhaps things you shrink from. They are in His hand. He is in control. He holds the whole of the unknown way in His hand. He holds the whole of the future in His hand. The almighty, all-wise, all-gracious God.

“In His hand.” But then to come to this – very precious, very vital – all His people are in His hands, all of them, whether they feel it or they do not, whether faith is weak or whether it is strong. All God’s people are in His hands, and there they are safe, and there they are eternally secure. If ever a hymnwriter wrote a good word, Dr. Watts did when he wrote,

“If I am found in Jesus’ hands,
My soul can ne’er be lost.”

O to be found safe in His hands! We have it of old: “Yea, He loved the people; all His saints are in Thy hand: and they sat down at Thy feet; every one shall receive of Thy words.” And then you have it in the New Testament, especially the Lord Jesus as the great Shepherd of the sheep: “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand” – the safety, the everlasting security of the people of God. “Safe in the arms of Jesus.”

“In His hand.” Now the people of God were in the hands of Jesus from everlasting. They were in the hands of Jesus when He came to earth to suffer, bleed and die. They are in His hands now as He is risen, exalted, glorified in heaven. But personally, experimentally, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, when the new birth takes place, they do not know they are in His hands. All they know is that they are sinners who need a Saviour. All they know is they have an aching void the world can never fill. All they know is they are not right for eternity and they cannot make themselves right. All they know, it is only the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who can make them right and keep them right. So really the work of faith is, as enabled by the Spirit of God, to commit the welfare of our immortal souls, and our sins and a never-ending eternity into the hands of Jesus. That beautiful hymn:

“My soul into Thy arms I cast;
I trust I shall be saved at last.”

David once was given three choices and he would not give an answer. He said, “Let me fall now into the hand of the Lord.” There is that in providence and there is that in sorrow and in distress and in disappointment, as Peter says: “Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.” But there is that spiritually, if you are beaten away from every false hope, every vain hope, every confidence in self, and you see the suitability of the Saviour, and His preciousness, and His ability to save even to the uttermost, and His matchless love, and the value of His blood, everything you seek for, everything you long for, everything you need. And what is it? As if you are beaten away from every hiding place, everything you can hold, and you fall, but you fall right into the arms of

the Saviour. “Fall into His arms outright, lose myself in Jesus quite.” “In His hand,” by precious faith.

Really, that is what trusting in the Saviour is. Really, that is what believing in the Saviour is – not a nominal thing, not a notional thing, not a freewill thing, not an Arminian thing; but feeling your need, and the loving welcome the Saviour gives to that soul that feels its need, to receive it into His almighty arms.

“My soul into Thy arms I cast;
I trust I shall be saved at last.”

This is solid ground.

“The ground feels firm and good;
And, lest we should mistake the way,
He lines it out with blood.”

So in the Psalm I read this morning (31) we have, “My times are in Thy hand.” But then earlier in the chapter we have this: “Into Thine hand I commit my spirit.” A sinner deserving eternal death, but Thou art merciful and Thou art gracious. “Into Thine hand I commit my spirit.” And of course there are two ways in which that prayer is worked out. First of all, in the work of faith in believing on the Saviour. “Into Thine hand I commit my spirit: Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.” And then a dying sinner coming down to the swellings of Jordan, and O how many a dying sinner has used these as their dying words: “Into Thine hand I commit my spirit”! Of course, in a much higher and more glorious sense the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ did at Calvary. He quoted from Psalm 31: “Into Thine hands I commend My spirit.” That was returning to His eternal Father. But you and I coming to the end as lost, ruined, guilty sinners, but to see the almighty arms of a gracious Saviour. What a mercy! What a hope! And it will land you safe on Canaan’s side, to be found in His hands and safe for ever.