

Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 255

The Work of the Trinity in Salvation

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day evening, 3rd September, 2006**

Text: *"And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken" (Isaiah 62. 12).*

This beautiful promise looks forward to gospel days. The prophet has a view of the church of God in all its glory, "saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation." Here very clearly we have the distinct work of the three Persons in the Trinity in the work of the salvation of sinners. Let us be very clear, beloved friends, we believe in the Trinity; we are Trinitarians; we believe there are three Persons, one God: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost – one God. So we are Trinitarians, but not just as a doctrine, not just as a dogma, not just because the church of God has always believed it, not even merely because it is in holy Scripture, but because it is:

"That truth from nature never learned,
That Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
To save our souls are all concerned."

So in this beautiful description of the church of God, we have the work of the holy Trinity. First of all, *the work of God the Father*. "They shall call them, The holy people." The eternal Father from everlasting chose a people for His praise. He chose them out of the ruins of the Fall. He saw them there dead in trespasses and sins, lost and ruined. He loved them with an everlasting love. He determined they should be saved by His grace, that at last they should be in heaven with Him for ever and ever. And so we read – the apostle puts it right at the beginning of that catalogue of blessings: "He hath chosen us in Him" – in Christ – "before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love."

"They shall call them, The holy people," in this way: a holy people separated from the world, from everlasting separated to God Himself, separated for the honour and glory of His name, not to be left to perish in their sins. The eternal Father's work. "They shall call them, The holy people." And then as the Father viewed them as they stood complete from everlasting in His dear Son, He saw them on the grounds of the work of

Jesus; He saw them in Him, a holy people, “not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” “They shall call them, The holy people.” The work of God the Father. And then He saw them as in time they would one by one be sanctified; they would not be left in sin; they would not be left in unholiness; they would die to sin; they would live to God. “They shall call them, The holy people.” And then the eternal Father saw them – the end of His everlasting purposes – as at last He would have them, all of them, every one of them, saved eternally in heaven with Him for ever and ever. “The holy people” – not in themselves, but through the work of Father, Son and Holy Ghost for them.

So really the point here is the everlasting blessedness of the people of God. But pondering over this, beloved friends, I felt one or two desires. One is that you might have a little glimpse by faith of the glories of the church of God as they stand from everlasting to everlasting in all their blessedness, “saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.” And further, my desire is that some of you might have that sweet assurance, the witness of the Spirit Himself, that through mercy I am one of them. I do not deserve it; I never can deserve it; but I believe through mercy I am one of them. I dare not deny it. And then my desire is that there might be others of you and your desire shall be like that of Ruth: O may this blessed people be my people and may their God be my God. It is a sad, solemn thing if the preaching this evening leaves you completely out and passes you completely by. May there be either the sweet hope or the concern about it or the longing for it. “They shall call them, The holy people,” separated from the world by God the Father from everlasting in His eternal purposes that they might be a holy people.

Then we have a second description of them: “The redeemed of the Lord.” So now we come to *the work of God the Son*, the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, because though the Father had loved them eternally and though He had chosen them and though He had ordained them for heaven, they needed to be redeemed from sin and guilt and shame and death and hell. That is why, as they were chosen, as the Father chose them as a holy people, as it was His purpose that they should be redeemed by Christ, the Son of God from all eternity was set up to be the Redeemer. That does touch a chord, doesn’t it? I know there are one or two of you here and you have to say, “Thou dear Redeemer, dying Lamb, we love to hear of Thee.” What does it mean, the Redeemer? It means that He must die, die to put away sin, die to pay the ransom price, die to redeem His people from all

iniquity. “They shall call them ... The redeemed of the Lord.” A price had to be paid, and the medieval scholastics used to debate to whom the price was to be paid. It certainly was not to be paid to Satan. I take it the price was to be paid to God’s eternal justice and His holy law. That must be satisfied. And the ransom price fixed from everlasting, His own heart’s blood. “They shall call them ... The redeemed of the Lord.” That is why the Lord Jesus came, the dear Redeemer, to Calvary to suffer, bleed and die. There at the cross the ransom price was paid. “Not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold ... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” “They shall call them ... the redeemed of the Lord,” because “Christ *hath* redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” The price of redemption.

But to see the blessed accomplishment of redemption when the dear Redeemer cried with a loud voice, “It is finished.” Then, “They shall call them ... The redeemed of the Lord.” The eternal Father looked down from heaven. He saw His purpose fulfilled. They *were* the redeemed of the Lord, all their sins for ever washed away in His precious blood, all their guilt atoned for, all their iniquity removed and removed for ever. “They shall call them ... The redeemed of the Lord.” This was the hope of the church of God right from the earliest days and it will be the hope of the church of God right to the end of time. So Job amidst all his sorrows in those very early days of the history of this world could say, “For I know that my Redeemer liveth.” I need a Redeemer; He is my only hope. Without Him I must perish eternally. O but, “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.”

“And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord.” But of course the great question with living souls has always been this, and it will be to the end of time: I see the beauty, the blessedness of all these things; I see what salvation is; I see the church of God in all its bliss and blessedness; but how may I know I am personally interested there? How may I know I am one of them? How may I know I am included? “How can I bear the piercing thought: What if my name should be left out?” How can these things be known?

That brings us to the third thing here: *the work of God the Holy Ghost*. “Thou shalt be called, Sought out.” There is redemption planned; there is redemption accomplished; but this is redemption applied. “The holy people” – the work of God the Father. “The redeemed of the Lord” – the work of God the Son. Now this is it: “Sought out” – the work of God the Holy Ghost. That is how any sinner knows that he has an interest in these eternal blessings and knows that he has a part and interest with the despised but eternally-loved people of God. “Thou shalt be called, Sought out.” O these holy people, O these redeemed of the Lord are born into this world, born in sin, shapen in iniquity, and they go forth, their carnal minds enmity against God. But in the case of every single one of them, they shall be made willing in the day of God’s power, and they shall be called by His almighty grace.

So if the work of the Father was to choose them and love them eternally, and the work of the Son was to redeem them on the cross at Calvary, the work of the Holy Spirit is to seek them out one by one and find them, and bring them to a knowledge of the truth, and make them willing in the day of His power, and make them feel their need, and bring them to seek and find a Saviour.

“Thou shalt be called, Sought out.” So this work of the Spirit of God has been going on ever since man fell. The first one he found out was Adam himself in the Garden of Eden when the Lord said, “Where art thou?” and clothed him with a coat of skins. The Holy Spirit sought him out after the Fall and He found him and revealed his need to him. And then Abel, the Lord sought him and found him out. And the great point this evening is if the Lord has ever sought you and me and found us out. Perhaps some of you can go to the place. Perhaps other do not know the place, yet you have a sweet hope that the Holy Spirit in love and mercy did seek you out and did find you. Why? Because there came a difference in your life. You were not concerned but then you became concerned. You loved the world but then you had to leave the world. You were satisfied but now you are completely unsatisfied. You now had to begin to pray. You now had to look to the Saviour. You now had to seek Him. “Thou shalt be called, Sought out.” And that is the point for you and me this evening personally and experimentally: are you, am I amongst these who have been sought out? Because if we have not been sought out, we are not the redeemed, we are not the holy people.

Now you have it with Jacob. There was Jacob. He deceived his old father and he had cheated his twin brother. He was fleeing from home. He had guilt on his conscience. He lay down in the wilderness with a stone for his pillow. And what do we read? “He found him.” This is Almighty God the Spirit. He sought him. He knew where he was. He knew where he was going. He knew that here was one of the holy people, one of the redeemed. He knew this was the appointed time and there He sought him and He found him. Now the Holy Spirit never fails to find them.

The dying thief was one of those holy people. He was one of the redeemed. He was sinking into hell, and not just his last hour but his last moments were running out. “Thou shalt be called, Sought out.” The Holy Spirit knew where he was. The Holy Spirit knew what His work was. The Holy Spirit knew He could not fail in His work, and this hard-hearted, dying sinner – listen to him pray: “Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.” “We indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man hath done nothing amiss.” What has happened? “Thou shalt be called, Sought out.”

Jacob, “He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness” – naturally and spiritually, and that is where He found you, in a desert land, a waste howling wilderness. “He led him about, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye.” “Thou shalt be called, Sought out.” One thing is very, very true. If the Lord seeks you, the Holy Spirit seeks you and finds you, the clear mark that He has found you will be that you will be seeking after Him, after Christ, and you will not be satisfied until you find Him. O have we sinners here this evening seeking after Christ, as a sweet evidence that the Holy Spirit has been seeking after you?

“Thou shalt be called, Sought out.” Sometimes the people of God backslide, but still, “Thou shalt be called, Sought out.” As the shepherd went after the lost sheep in the wilderness, he sought it out until he found it. And this is the mercy of it: when he found it, he did not reprove it, though it deserved reproof; he did not punish it; he did not beat it. He put it on his shoulders with rejoicing and he took it back to the fold. Now that is how the shepherd seeks the sheep. Some of you will remember that Gadsby was preaching on that subject once to a large congregation and he knew that in that town a well-known, free-will minister kept a few sheep to help with his income. It was almost a scandal in the district, because one

had run away and he went after it and he was so angry with his sheep for running away, that when he found it he beat it over the head with his stick and injured it. Gadsby in his quaint way compared the Good Shepherd with this Arminian shepherd – the love, the kindness, the mercy when the Lord finds the sheep. “Rejoice with Me; for I have found My sheep which was lost.”

“Thou shalt be called, Sought out.” Now if the Lord has sought you and found you and brought you to the fold, led you to the throne of grace, taught you to pray, brought you to confess your sins, enabled you to rest your hope on Jesus’ precious name, then that is the evidence of being among the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord, “saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.” There is no disunity in the Godhead. Those the Father chooses – “The holy people” – the Son redeems – “The redeemed of the Lord.” And those the Son redeems, the Holy Spirit seeks out and finds and saves and calls by grace. “Thou shalt be called, Sought out.” I wonder, and I draw the bow at a venture, if there is one person here this evening who can put your hand on your heart and you can say,

“Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God;
He, to save my soul from danger,
Interposed His precious blood.”

“Thou shalt be called, Sought out.” And if sought out, now therefore you are no more a stranger. “Jesus sought me when a stranger,” but, “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners,” as you were by nature before the Lord sought you out. “Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.” I take that not to mean that Peter, James and John were the foundation. It is the foundation the apostles laid in their preaching. “Ye ... are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone.” That is the end of being sought out and that is the mark of it and that is the evidence of it. Your hope, your only hope will be built on Christ the eternal rock, no other, nothing else. “Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone.”

“And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord: and thou shalt be called, Sought out” – the work of God the Father,

the work of God the Son, the work of God the Holy Ghost in salvation; this three-fold cord that cannot be broken, these immutable things that can never be overthrown, never be destroyed.

What about this final piece: “A city not forsaken”? Of course, here he is speaking of Jerusalem as a glorious type of the church of God in all ages. “Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God.” Well, this is the fourth name given to the Lord’s beloved people: “A city not forsaken.” You say, Does this belong to the Father, or does it belong to the Son, or does it belong to the Holy Ghost? Well, I take it it belongs to the whole of the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Ghost – all united in this: “A city not forsaken.” This word seems to confirm the bliss, the eternal blessedness of the people of God. They have these blessings in Christ. These blessings are secured to them in Christ, but they are brought into the blessings as the Holy Spirit seeks them out. But this: they are not forsaken and they never can be forsaken.

Now then, let me appeal to you, those of you who have a sweet hope you know and love the Lord. Has He ever forsaken you? Look back over your life – that sore bereavement, that deep trial, that bitter disappointment, or when you fell so sadly and dishonoured His name. Did the Lord forsake you? “The Lord will not forsake His people for His great name’s sake” – Samuel’s farewell to Israel. They had sinned against God. They had sinned against His servant Samuel. They deserved to be forsaken. “The Lord will not forsake His people for His great name’s sake: because it hath pleased the Lord to make you His people.” “Thou shalt be called ... A city not forsaken.” What about those you have loved? What about those who die in the Lord? What about those who come through trials and sorrows? Did the Lord forsake them? Couldn’t they sing,

“His love in time past forbids me to think
He’ll leave me at last in trouble to sink;
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review
Confirms His good pleasure to help me quite through”?

“Not forsaken.” There will be times when you feel you deserve to be forsaken, that if the Lord were strict to mark iniquity, He must forsake you. Yet mercy reigns. “The Lord, He it is that doth go before thee; He will be with thee, He will not fail thee, neither forsake thee.”

“The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavour to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake.”

“Not forsaken.” The trials come, the sorrows, the difficulties, the deep waters. “Not forsaken.” That was Paul’s testimony in 2 Corinthians 4. He speaks of all his trials. “Persecuted” – what bitter persecutions Paul knew! “Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.” O the wonder of it! “Be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” When a believer comes to die, that last step into eternity, that last step down into the swellings of Jordan, this is it: “*Not forsaken.*” O the blessedness, the eternal blessedness of the people of God! “The holy people ... The redeemed of the Lord ... Sought out.” And this sweetly to confirm it all, despite all their sins and sorrows, their weakness, their fears, their faults: “Not forsaken.”

Whenever I look at this word, I always think of that very godly woman we read so much about, Lady Lucy Smith. In the history of the church of God there have been quite a lot of most godly women belonging to the nobility, people like Lady Huntingdon, and those of you who read books about Philpot or Kershaw or John Grace will find this eminently godly lady, Lady Lucy Smith, often seems to be appearing. She was the one who arranged for John Kershaw to go to Scotland to preach. Godly men, whether they were Church of England, or our old ministers, or Church of Scotland, they all seemed to be welcome to her mansion. I was interested, when she came to die, who would take her funeral? Would it be Philpot, or Kershaw? I found it was the Lord Bishop of Carlisle. They said he was perhaps one of the most godly bishops that England had ever known. *This* was the text he took, and O how beautifully he opened up that point, a sinner being sought out by the Spirit of God. He spoke of this little girl living in a castle in Scotland, her father with the most distinguished earldom in Scotland, yet there was no godliness, and one day a poor servant tremblingly curtsied to her and said, “Lady Lucy, do you know you are a sinner and you have a never-dying soul?” It was unthinkable in those days. And the Lord sealed it home. One of the Lord’s chosen, one of the Lord’s redeemed, there she was living in high society in a castle with no influence for good. How is it possible? “Sought out, A city not forsaken.” The Lord has the blessed ability in the riches of His grace and mysterious sovereignty to know where His hidden ones are,

to seek them out, to find them, to call them by His grace, to bless them and never to leave them nor forsake them.

O what blessed truths, to be eternally chosen, to be redeemed by the blood of Christ, to be sought out by God's Spirit, and then never left, never forsaken! Now may it be a concern to you and me: have we an interest in these things? If you have not, "Think and tremble, death is now upon the road." If you have not, may you be blessed with grace to seek it and find no rest until you do. But may some of you have the sweet assurance that Jesus did seek you when a stranger wandering from the fold of God, and then may you be sweetly enabled to bless Him this evening and then one day bless Him for evermore.