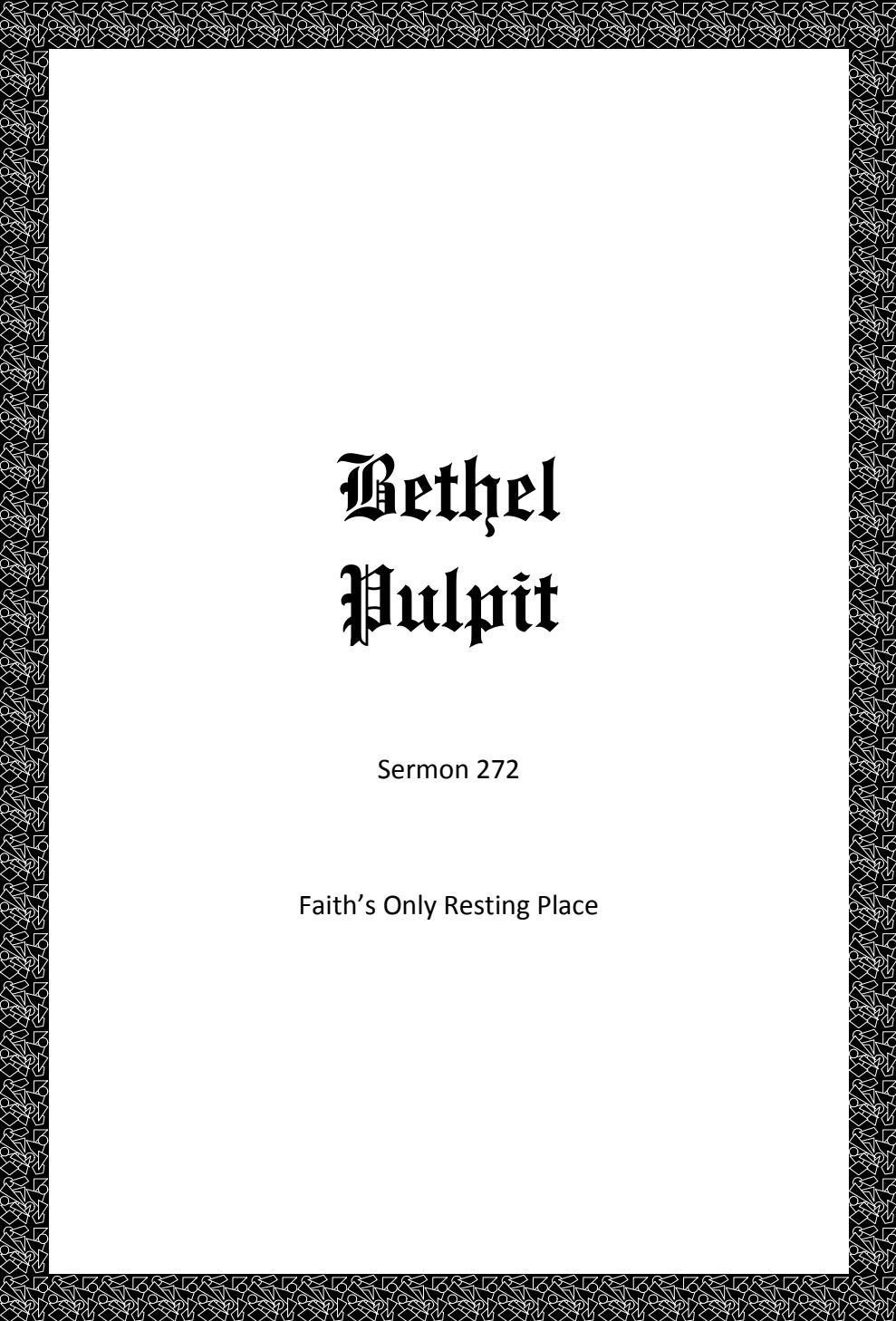




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 272

Faith's Only Resting Place

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day evening, 10th February, 2008**

Text: *"But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth: then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark" (Genesis 8. 9).*

There is only one resting place for living faith, and that is the Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus. A sinner can never find true peace, true rest, till he is brought by faith to the resting place which God has provided. We have to prove what Gadsby says: "I cannot rest without my resting place." And there is only one resting place for faith. The Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ came. He lived and He died that there might be both this resting place for the people of God in all their concerns and also that they might know the enjoyment of that inward peace, that inward rest. "There remaineth therefore" – in Christ – "a rest to the people of God." But O how the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ suffered that there might be this resting place for His people where they could find peace, forgiveness, satisfaction, the meeting of their needs, the preparation for heaven! It was necessary that the Saviour must suffer.

You remember when Bunyan's Christian came to the cross and there he lost his burden. That is the place where burdens roll away, Calvary. When he lost his burden, when he felt it roll from off his back, he said this: "He hath given me rest by His sorrow" – *rest by His sorrow* – "He hath given me rest by His sorrow, and life by His death." And some of us have joined in the Pilgrim's song in former days:

"Blest cross! blest sepulchre! blest rather be
The Man that there was put to shame for me!"

O but there was no rest when the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was agonising, dying on the cross. We are reminded of the words of Naomi to Ruth when Ruth had sought to put her concerns in Boaz's hands; she had left her burden at his feet. "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." Now look beyond Boaz to Christ. Go to Calvary. Boaz went forth literally to perform the work of redemption, to redeem Ruth's lost inheritance, to pay the redemption price. Now look

beyond Boaz to Christ. Go from Bethlehem to Calvary. “The Man will not be in rest, until He have finished the thing this day.” There was no day like it. It was in fulfilment of the ancient prophecy: “And I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.” But what a day! The sun refused to shine; darkness covered the people; the earth itself shaking; the horrors of Calvary. And the Man was not in rest. There was no rest for the dying Saviour “until He have finished the thing this day.” And blessed be God, He did finish the thing that day, and *the thing*, as with Boaz, was the whole work of redemption. And then that cry: “It is finished.”

“It is finished!” – O what pleasure
Do these charming words afford!
Heavenly blessings, without measure,
Flow to us from Christ the Lord.”

Now this is faith’s resting place, and it is the only resting place.

So I read to you this evening concerning Noah sending forth the dove out of the ark, and “the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot.” And neither did it find any rest until it returned to the ark. There was rest only in the ark. And then Noah reached out his hand and pulled her in. And beloved friends, this is really a beautiful illustration of the work of grace in a sinner’s heart. When the Lord begins a good work of grace in your heart, then you will be seeking a resting place and you will not be able to find it. One of our hymnwriters puts it like this: “Still seeking rest, but finding none.” You will be like Noah’s dove. We have here this beautiful illustration of God’s work in a sinner’s heart in salvation. The great, the vital point is to find a resting place, and a true resting place, not a false resting place.

“He sent forth a dove ... to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground; but the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot.” By nature we have all kinds of resting places, don’t we? Some rest in a take-it-for-granted religion. They take it for granted they are right. I hope none of those here this evening are just taking it for granted you are right because you come to chapel and perhaps even because you like coming to chapel. Thousands have perished through a take-it-for-granted religion. There is no resting place here.

Some rest in the good opinion that other people have of them. It is nice if people have a good opinion about us, but they can be very much

deceived. Some of the most eminent, godly people have been deceived in other people. It seems that John Kershaw was deceived in the person he thought would follow him as pastor. Do not rest in the good opinion other people have of you. There is no resting place here.

And there are some who rest in this: that there will be plenty of time. They know what we say is true; they believe the gospel; they know there is a heaven, a hell, a judgment day. But there is plenty of time; they can leave it till later. There are many who do not have a *later*, and there are many who do have a *later*, but when it comes there is no thought, no concern about these things. You cannot create a concern; you cannot give yourself repentance. You cannot give yourself faith in those coming days to which you are leaving it all.

O these many false resting places! Of course, those in the world rest in this: they say there is not any God. And some professed religionists rest in this: they say everyone is going to heaven. Or some rest in this: that there is not an after-life. Many rest in the general goodness of God, and some rest just in the forms of religion. None of these are resting places. There is only one resting place for faith, and that is Christ.

“The dove found no rest for the sole of her foot.” Why could she not find any rest for the sole of her foot? Because that terrible flood had covered every resting place. There might have been those places where once she did rest the sole of her foot, where she had her little dovecote or her hiding place in the cleft of the rock, or where she could build her nest. But all these were now covered by the flood. She could not find a resting place there now. There was not a resting place there any more. And that is the work of the Spirit of God when He deals with you and me in the new birth. With some it is sudden; with some it is more gradual. With some it is very deep; with some it seems more shallow. With some it is “here a little, and there a little”; some can hardly discern it. O the sovereignty of God in the way He deals with sinners in the new birth! But I believe all of them come to this: no resting place out of Christ. You will find all your old resting places are covered by the flood. You seek them, but you cannot find them. It may be you want to go back to the world, your old friends, your old pleasures, your old sins, but you cannot find any happiness in the world, any happiness in your past life.

You know how clearly the Word of God speaks of the believer’s death to sin, death to his past life, death to the world. And so with the ark,

everything outside was death. Whatever resting place there had been, whatever doves, whatever perches, there was death upon them all. “But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot.” You will find that ringing in your heart in the spirit of it if not in the letter of it: “Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted.” No rest short of Christ.

“But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto ... the ark.” Now that is both repentance and that is faith: leaving the former ways, the former resting places, your former hopes – that is repentance; and returning to the ark – that is faith. We have that beautiful word in the prophets: “In returning and rest shall ye be saved.” I repeat it; it is a simple word; it is a good word; it is a word not often mentioned, not often quoted: “In returning and rest shall ye be saved.” Now that is just what this poor dove found literally. She did not find any safety as she was flying hither and thither, but in returning and rest she found safety in the ark, and safety only in the ark, nowhere else. The flood had covered it all, slain it all, covered it all up. “But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot ... for the waters were on the face of the whole earth.” Wherever she looked, wherever she flew, wherever she went, “All cried out, It is not here.” “For the waters were on the face of the whole earth.” “And she returned unto ... the ark.” And there she found a resting place, and there she found safety, and there will you, and there alone.

“She returned unto ... the ark.” I suppose the raven was quite happy resting on some of those floating bodies, feeding on some of those floating bodies, but not the dove. You cannot find a resting place in the place of death. You cannot find a resting place where the raven is, where the world is. “In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.”

“The dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark ... then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark.” It seems the poor dove was weary and she was returning. O if only she could reach the ark; if only she could get there. It was an attractive place. It was so welcome to her. She knew there was rest there. She knew there was safety there. She knew there was provision there. But if only she could get there.

Unless I am dreadfully deceived, there are some of you here and perhaps many of you here this evening, and that is just what you need, and

just what you want, and just what you seek: a resting place in Christ. You have been brought away from your old resting places. You can find no peace, no satisfaction there. But you are like this restless dove, “Still seeking rest, but finding none.” You see a sweet attraction in Christ as the believer’s rest. You see a sweet attraction in the promises. “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” You see a sweet attraction in what we sing:

“What sweet invitations the gospel contains,
To souls heavy laden with bondage and chains;
It welcomes the weary to come and be blessed
With ease from their burdens, in Jesus to rest.”

O those sweet invitations to those seeking rest, those who are sad, those who are weary, those who are burdened with their souls’ concerns, and what precious promises, and what a loving welcome, and what willingness in the Saviour! O but the unbelief of our hearts, our carnality, and we are like this dove, seeking rest but not finding it. Sometimes there is a little hope of it in the promise.

“Rest in the promise God has spoke,
In all things ordered well for thee;
Whose sacred words He’ll ne’er revoke,
Nor alter His profound decree.”

You get a little rest now and again, but you know this: there is no real resting place short of Christ. Philpot puts it like this, the weary traveller going home, but it is a long walk and a cold night, and he is weary, so he loves to rest by that stile. It is such a help and he is so grateful for it, and he is comfortable for a few moments, but it cries out, This is not your rest; you cannot stay here all night; you have to press on until you reach home. You will be grateful for all these little helps by the way, that little touch, that token for good, that word in season, that good hearing time. All these things will help you, encourage you, but they say, Still press on; do not be satisfied.

But do not despise them. It was that great and godly man, usually known as “Rabbi” Duncan. He was not a Jew, but he was such a brilliant Hebrew linguist. Mr. Gosden used to quote what he said: “A *perhaps* of salvation” – just a *perhaps* – “let no one despise it; let no one rest on it.” So, “Cast not away your little hope.” If you have a *perhaps* of salvation,

do not despise it. The great point is the reality. But that *perhaps* of salvation, never despise it, but never rest in it. “Still press on to perfect day.”

“The dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark.” And it seemed as if she wondered if she could get there, if she was ever going to get there. There are some solemn things in the Epistle to the Hebrews chapter 4: “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.” Are you and I going to “come short of it”?

Then Noah “put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark.” That is beautiful, isn’t it! It fits in with that prayer that some of you have to pray: “Draw me, we will run after Thee.” It is that pull of the Spirit of God. It is that pull of an almighty hand. It is that pull of love divine that pulls you right into the ark. Let me tell you about a weary dove: the poor woman with an issue of blood. She had had it twelve years. It was a deep-seated complaint and it was a weakening complaint. O how weak and weary and helpless she was! And it rendered her ceremonially unclean. And then she had spent all her money on physicians, but she got no better, but rather worse. This is the dove, finding no rest for the sole of her foot. But she returned unto the ark. When she heard of Jesus, she came. “If I may but touch His garment,” if only I can get there, if only I have a place in His loving arms and His loving heart. “If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole.” O but like the weary dove, it seems she cannot get there; she cannot get near Him because of the press.

“Then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark.” Her case was desperate. That was driving her on. The Lord Jesus was her only resting place, her only hope. But there was that secret power that pulled her right through the crowd and she did touch the hem of His garment, and she did find the resting place, and she did obtain the blessing. That is it, you longing, seeking souls, those of you still seeking rest and finding none, those of you like the weary dove, those of you who want a resting place because you “cannot rest,” as Gadsby says, “without your resting place.” O but, “He put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark.” That is it. That is real religion. That is attraction in Christ. That is the drawing power. What does our hymn say?

“Draws us to His loving breast;
There we find the gospel rest.”

“He put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark.” I have often said this: how much I was struck with Mr. Foster at Haslingden years ago in prayer. He referred to this. He said, “O that is what we want: Pull, Lord; pull.” It is what we want. It might seem unorthodox language, but it is a good prayer if in reverence you can pray that to the Saviour: “Pull, Lord; pull.”

“Draw me to Thy loving breast;
There to find the gospel rest.”

“Then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark.” But this evening I have been speaking more of the beginning of a work of grace, a sinner being born again of the Spirit and that sinner being led to Christ, drawn to Christ. But it is again and again that the weary dove seeks a refuge in the Saviour. When the violent storm falls, to find that hiding place in the ark; when that savage bird of prey pursues, to find that hiding place in the ark, to flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us. Those sore temptations, when you are plagued by Satan and self and sin and unbelief, then to return to the ark. “Be Thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort.”

And then there are those times of deep sorrow. O how the sinner needs a refuge then! There is no resting place in the world. Not even the best can help now. O this deep sorrow. “Ye have not passed this way heretofore,” and you find no rest for the sole of your foot. Sometimes we come into sad, sore places, places of trouble and sorrow, but we can find a resting place. It could be different things. It could be a word of Scripture. We have a resting place, and that sanctifies it all; it relieves the burden. But there are times in our life when, look where we will, fly where we will, we can find no resting place. “I cannot rest without my resting place.” These are sad, solemn times when we are like the dove flying hither and thither, but she “found no rest for the sole of her foot.” But then that wonderful refuge that there is in the ark, that refuge in Jesus, that refuge in the Saviour.

“Dear Refuge of my weary soul,
On Thee, when sorrows rise,

On Thee, when waves of trouble roll,
My fainting hope relies.”

But it is that one place of refuge. It is a Person. “This Man shall be the peace.” Yet still our hearts will fly here and fly there, if they can find any help, any peace, any comfort, any refuge. O but to find every resting place in vain, until she returned unto him into the ark. “For the waters were on the face of the whole earth.” But in the ark she found a resting place, and in the ark she knew the blessed experience of rest and peace and provision and satisfaction. It is to find that resting place in Christ, in the Ark of grace, and not just to find a resting place, but to find the blessedness of that rest which remains in Christ for the people of God and which is a foretaste of eternal rest. For, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may *rest* from their labours,” eternally.

“She returned unto him into the ark.” There is safety there, safety in Christ, safety in the Ark of grace. There is peace there, peace made by the blood of His cross. “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you.” The world gives; the world takes away. The world gives, but it cannot give peace of heart, peace of conscience. “Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” O to find safety there, to find rest there, to find peace there, mercy, forgiveness, everything the weary sinner needs. And do not forget, there was a person there. It was not just the ark; there was a person, Noah, and he reached out his loving arms and he pulled her in, and wasn’t he glad to see her! But wasn’t that poor dove more glad to see Noah! It was that loving welcome. He had “pulled her in unto him into the ark.” “Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without?”

And then to see the blessedness of that peace of God, peace in the heart. “Peace by His cross has Jesus made.” “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee.” “The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

“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.”

O this peace, this hope, this joy, this rest in Christ the Ark of grace!

“She returned unto him into the ark ... then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark.”

* * *

Does the gospel-word proclaim
Rest for those who weary be?
Then, my soul, put in thy claim;
Sure that promise speaks to thee.
Marks of grace I cannot show;
All polluted is my breast;
Yet I weary am, I know,
And the weary long for rest.

Burdened with a load of sin;
Harassed with tormenting doubt;
Hourly conflicts from within;
Hourly crosses from without;
All my little strength is gone;
Sink I must without supply;
Sure upon the earth there's none
Can more weary be than I.

In the ark the weary dove
Found a welcome resting-place;
Thus my spirit longs to prove
Rest in Christ, the Ark of grace.
Tempest-tossed I long have been,
And the flood increases fast;
Open, Lord, and take me in,
Till the storm be overpast.

John Newton