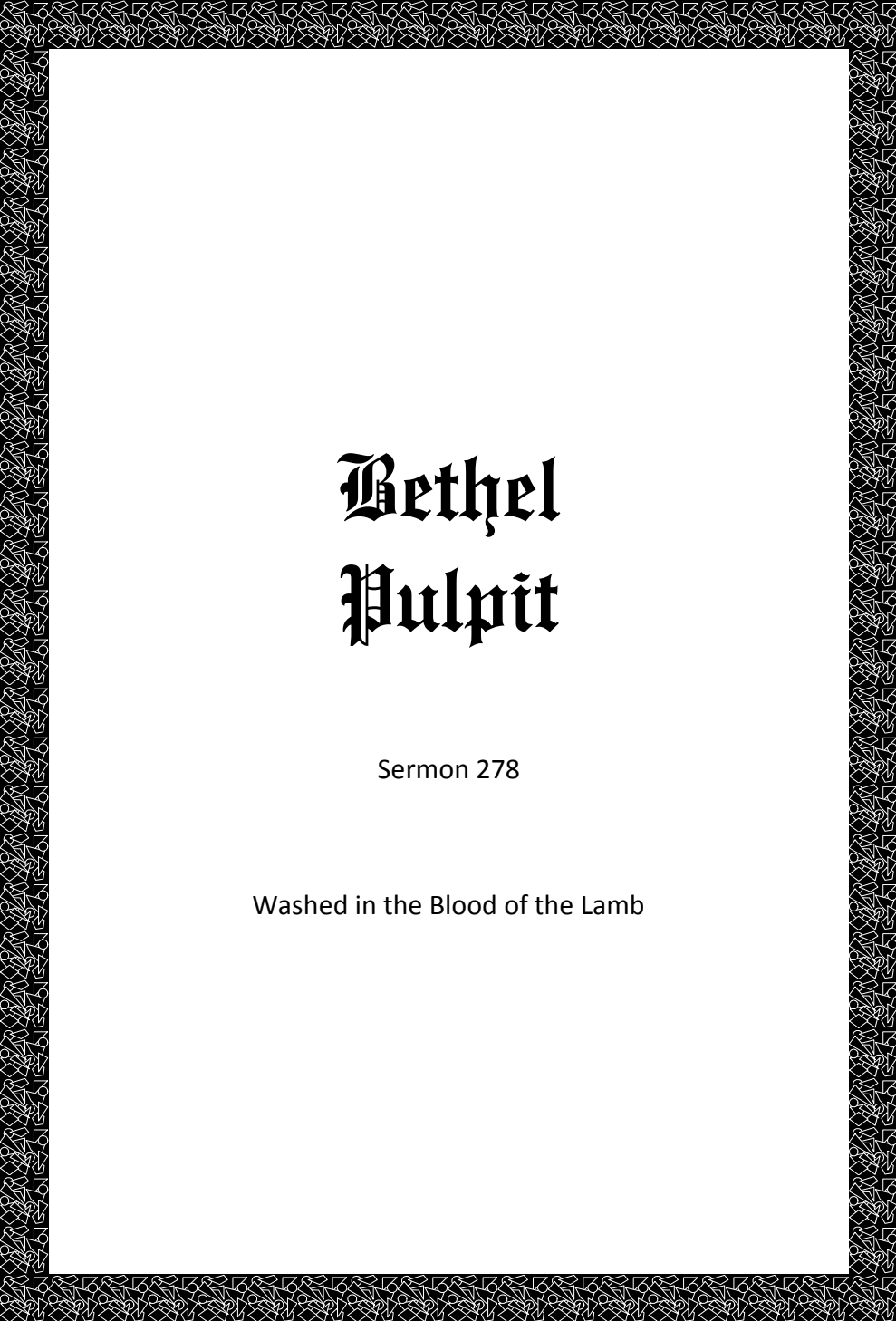




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 278

Washed in the Blood of the Lamb

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day evening, 13th July, 2008**

Text: *“And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 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” (Revelation 7. 13-17).*

Here, the Apostle John was sweetly favoured to view the whole blood-bought church of God safely landed in heaven and to hear them singing, “Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever.”

“And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these?” We do not read that John said a word, asked a question, but, “One of the elders *answered.*” Sometimes you have not said a word or asked a question and the Lord answers, for He knows what is going on in your mind, in your heart. He knows the thoughts that are passing through your mind. “And one of the elders answered.” He answered John because John had many questions. “He answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes” – the white robes of purity, the white robes of victory – “What are these... and whence came they?” Let us be clear, beloved friends, the question was not asked because there was any doubt or any uncertainty. It is clear this is the blood-washed host, the whole church of God safely landed in heaven. Why then did the elder ask this question, “What are these?” To draw the apostle's attention in wonder, in admiration. “What are these?” The church of God in heaven safely landed.

In the Old Testament we have a similar question: “Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?” The very same people, the identical people. In the Old Testament, the prophet saw them

here on earth in their longings, their desires, as led by the Spirit of God they fled for refuge to Jesus. They sought, they found a hiding place in Him. “Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?” John saw them all safely landed, the church triumphant in heaven, but the identical people, the very same people. O beloved friends, the one is the preparation for the other, and are you and I amongst these who, led by the Spirit, feeling our need, of necessity flee for refuge to Jesus? Now the one is the preparation for the other, but it is the identical people. “Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?”

“What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest.” You notice it with all the apostles: their wisdom and humility. They do not think they know everything. They do not feel they have attained. They do not know all the answers. They want to be told; they want to be taught; they want to be led. It is a good spirit to be in. “That which I see not teach Thou me.”

“I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation.” Every sinner saved by grace in greater or less measure will know tribulation. The Lord Jesus told us no less. “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” But the blessed point here is this: they came out of it. Every one of them, every sinner saved by grace from Adam’s day right to the end of time, they all were brought safely through; they all were brought safely out. There was not a single one left to sink in the tribulation. There was not a single one that perished in the tribulation. “These are they which *came out*.” “They ... came out of great tribulation.” And beloved friends, some of you here this evening are in sorrow, and some of you in deep sorrow, but the Lord will never leave you to sink in it. As sure as His word, as sure as His own being, He will help you through and He will bring you out.

“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.”

They “*came out*.”

“And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Now let us be very, very clear here. These robes that the redeemed washed in the blood of the Lamb are not the robes of Christ’s imputed righteousness. The robes of Christ’s righteousness do not need any washing, any cleansing; they are pure, white, spotless robes. These are the robes of a sinner’s life and walk and profession that are soiled and tarnished and defiled and which need to be washed. O to be clear on that point! “They ... have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. *Therefore* are they before the throne” – on no other ground, for no other reason; not because they were in tribulation; not because they were brought out of tribulation; for this reason and this reason alone: “They ... have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. *Therefore* are they before the throne.”

So beloved friends, the subject this evening is not just an important one; it is a vital one. And really it is this: *the only reason, the only ground upon which any sinner can ever get to heaven*. We have here the glories of heaven. We have here the song of the redeemed. We have here their everlasting blessedness. Now how can you and I reach heaven? And this is the secret. There is only one way: to be washed in the blood of the Lamb. And if you and I are not washed in the blood of the Lamb, then our sins must rest upon us to all eternity and sink us in hell to rise no more. We are *all* sinners; we are *all* defiled; we *all* need our garments to be washed. Heaven is that holy, holy, holy place where nothing that defileth can ever enter. How can you and I then, whose garments are defiled through sin and guilt and faults and failures, how can you and I ever reach heaven, ever enter that “holy, happy place where sin no more defiles”? And the answer here is clear: it is to be washed in the blood of Christ, and there is no other way; there is no other hope; there is no other salvation. So the subject here is simple, solemn, vital: the only way in which a sinner can ever reach heaven, the only way you and I can ever reach heaven. “They ... have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

So let me try to speak to you simply this evening – and may it be under the influence of the Holy Spirit – of this vital subject. May it be made attractive to you. But above all, may the Holy Spirit the divine Comforter seal the word with divine, almighty power in your conscience, and may some of you even this evening under the Holy Spirit’s teaching

feel the efficacy of the blood of Jesus Christ God's Son that cleanseth from all sin. "They ... have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." All of them, not just one or two favoured ones like Peter and Paul. All of them, every sinner saved by grace from Adam to the end of time. All of them.

"They ... have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne." The first thing we notice is that the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ here is spoken of as the Lamb, the Lamb of God. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." It is a beautiful title. All the titles of the Lord Jesus are attractive, but none more so than this: the Lamb of God. It speaks of His innocence; it speaks of His meekness; it speaks of His spotless purity; but it speaks especially of the Lord Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. When that unknown Stranger appeared on the banks of the River Jordan among the crowd and John the Baptist saw Him, and pointing to Him cried, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," his hearers knew what he meant. Every Jew was well schooled in that. They knew the lamb, the daily sacrifice, the sacrifice on the day of atonement. They knew that the lamb must be slain. They knew that salvation was only through the blood. They knew the passover lamb. They knew that first passover night. They knew the annual keeping of the passover. They knew the services of the temple. They knew what it meant: "Without shedding of blood" – the blood of the lamb – "is no remission." And the gospel down the ages has pointed sinners to the Lamb of God, our only hope, our only plea, our only foundation.

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." I do not know whether you have noticed, but through the Word of God there are so many different names and characters and offices given to the Lord Jesus, but when you come to the Book of the Revelation, the last Book of the Bible before the canon of Scripture is closed for ever, on almost every occasion the Lord Jesus is spoken of as the Lamb – as if the Holy Ghost would finally remind us that salvation must only be through "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

"They ... have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." The blood of Christ, the blood of the Lamb, was shed at Calvary when the Lord Jesus suffered, bled and died. And so we think of the sufferings He endured, the cruel death He died, and His wonderful

love to sinners, that “having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.” And there the Lamb of God was sacrificed. Willingly He was led “as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth.” The willingness of the Lamb of God to die!

“It were an easy part
For Him the cross to fly;
But love to sinners fills His heart,
And makes Him choose to die.”

“They ... have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” When we speak of the blood of Christ, we mean His precious life poured out in death. The Old Testament made it clear: without the shedding of blood, no forgiveness, no remission of sins. And the Lamb of God who suffered was God’s dear, eternal Son, and that gave the value to the precious blood that He shed. The blood of Christ is spoken of as “the fountain opened ... for sin and for uncleanness.” The ancient prophet spoke of it. He said, “They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced.” He speaks of Calvary. (John chapter 19 tells us that very word was fulfilled on the cross: “They shall look on Him whom they pierced.”) And immediately afterwards the prophet says, “In that day there shall be a fountain opened ... for sin and for uncleanness.”

Now what does it mean? The sins of God’s people were laid on the Lamb of God. The Lamb of God suffered in their place, what they deserved, the Just for the unjust to bring them to God. The weight of divine wrath fell upon the holy Lamb of God as He bore the sins of His people, as He was punished for them. God can never twice demand the same punishment, demand it twice for the same sin. So the sins of God’s people were atoned for, they were cancelled. When the Lord Jesus shed His precious blood, His people’s sins were for ever taken out of the way, just as filth is completely swept away, completely washed away by a fast-flowing fountain. So as the blood of Christ flowed, so the sins of all the people of God were for ever taken away. “Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it,” so that washed in His precious blood, sin for ever put away, “He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.”

And so the great theme of the gospel and the great theme of the epistles is the blood of Christ which cleanseth from all sin. Effectually it

cleanses away all the sin of all the people of God in that great day. The ancient promise: “I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.” But you and I must know something of it personally. The blood of Christ availed on the cross. It atoned for sin. It for ever washed the sins of the people of God away. Now if your religion is real, I believe there will be this great point: you will realise that you need cleansing, that in the sight of a holy God you are defiled and you need cleansing, and you cannot atone for your own sin, and you know and feel, “My best is stained and dyed with sin; my all is nothing worth.” Well, I cannot atone for my own sin; I cannot wash it away; I cannot cleanse it. And then the glorious gospel speaks of the Lamb of God: “Behold the Lamb of God.” It points sinners to the Lamb of God. It

“Points out the place where grace abounds;
Directs us to the bleeding wounds
Of our incarnate God.”

And it tells us that the blood of Jesus Christ God’s Son cleanseth from all sin.

Now what is it personally? Well, if ever a sinner felt the weight of his guilt, it was David in Psalm 51. He had been guilty of a great sin. Could it be forgiven? He felt the vileness, the filthiness of it, and his prayer was this: “Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.” And then a few verses later he says this: “Purge me with hyssop.” Whatever does that mean? In the Old Testament hyssop was that little plant which was used for sprinkling the blood, applying the blood – if you will, bringing the cleansing, bringing the atonement near. I believe David looked beyond all the types and shadows of the ceremonial law and he looked to Calvary. “Purge me with hyssop.” I know one day the blood will be shed and cleanse the vilest sinner from his sin. O but I am that sinner. Lord, do cleanse me from my sins. “Purge me with hyssop.” O may I feel the blood applied. It is my only hope. I have no confidence in self. “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.” “If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living

God?” Purge it, says David. Purge it, says the apostle to the Hebrews. That means the sin is deep, but blood can purge it away. “And I shall be whiter than snow.” Can anything be whiter than snow? In my native town, we used to have constant falls of snow in the winter and you could wake up in the morning and you had never seen anything so pure, so clear, so white, the newly-fallen snow. But when night-time came, with the smoke from the factories it was tarnished and there was a blot on it here and marks on it there. “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

“They ... have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” What is it personally, feelingly, experimentally? It is to be taught your need, your need of cleansing, to go as a sinner, in prayer, by faith, to the feet of Jesus – and sinner, you are welcome! – and there confessing your sin, and there pleading the blood of Christ, and there praying to be cleansed, and there trusting in the Saviour alone, once crucified, now risen, exalted, the sentence from heaven is that complete removing, that complete washing away of your guilt. Confessing sinners are forgiven sinners, cleansed sinners. But you want the sweet assurance of it in your conscience, and you want the witness on your spirit.

“These are they which ... have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” But you know, sinners are invited to the open fountain and sinners are welcome on mercy’s ground.

“Fly, then, awakened sinners, fly;
Your case admits no stay;
The fountain’s opened now for sin;
Come, wash your guilt away.”

“These are they which ... have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” You remember the case of Naaman the Syrian, and what an eminent type this is of cleansing in the blood of Christ! His leprosy was a type of sin. He was unclean, and he heard there was hope in Israel concerning this thing, so he went and took his present, all these talents of gold and silver and all this raiment. He was offended when the prophet did not even come to see him. He said, “Go and wash in Jordan seven times ... and thou shalt be clean.” He was offended by it, and our carnal nature *is* offended at the simplicity of the gospel. It always has been and it always will be. He said he thought the prophet would have done some great thing. He thought he was going to come down and do all kinds of performances.

“Go and wash in Jordan seven times ... and thou shalt be clean.” But Naaman said, “Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?” Well, they might be; perhaps they were; but it was not God’s appointed way. “Go and wash in Jordan seven times ... and thou shalt be clean.” It was a strange method, but it was God’s method, and it was the only method, and it availed. And at length, encouraged by his faithful servants, he went, and he dipped himself seven times in Jordan, and when he came up his flesh was like the flesh of a little child. “Not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.”

All this prefigured Calvary, the cross of Christ. All this was an eminent type of it, just as leprosy was a striking type of sin. There is only one way of forgiveness, one way of salvation, one way of cleansing, and that is the Lamb and His precious blood, and every sinner who ever came to heaven came by the way of the cross. Some have greater revelations of it; some have it made over more clearly to them; some more powerfully feel it; but each sinner saved by grace must be brought to rest on Christ and what He has done, to trust in His death, to trust in His precious blood. “Wash me, Saviour, or I die.” Each sinner saved by grace will flee for refuge to Calvary, to the dear Lamb of God, to His precious blood. Joseph Hart says,

“Fly, then, awakened sinners, fly;
Your case admits no stay;
The fountain’s opened now for sin;
Come, wash your guilt away.”

And may the Holy Spirit apply the Word and apply the blood and enable you to flee for refuge to the cross, bless you with repentance and with living faith. O to say this, as some of us do have to say:

“My only hope is in Thy blood;
Remember me, O Lord, for good.”

“These are they which ... have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” It just remains to speak of their eternal blessedness in heaven here set forth. “Therefore are they before the throne of God,” in His immediate presence, seeing the King in His beauty without a veil between. “They ... serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.” There is no more pain, no more sorrow, no more suffering. They are safely landed. It is for ever

and ever. “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.” This is their eternal blessedness in heaven, on the grounds of grace, through the Lamb of God alone, through undeserved mercy.

“For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them.” In our earlier reading this evening (Revelation 5) we saw the Lamb in the midst of the throne and we were told that He appears “a Lamb as It had been slain.” He appears in heaven not just as the Lamb of God, but a Lamb as It had been slain. And the whole host of the redeemed for ever sing, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain ... and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood.” But “a Lamb as it had been slain” – the merit, the efficacy of His precious blood, the same now as when He hung bleeding, dying on the cross.

“Dear dying Lamb! Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved, to sin no more.”

“For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters.” O the beauty of this: “And God shall wipe away *all tears* from their eyes.” Just like a loving mother with a tiny child who is full of sorrow, wiping away that little child’s tears, “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” On earth they knew many a sorrow, many a tear, but now all those tears are wiped away from their eyes.

There was one of our godly ministers, when he was a young boy at Sunday school it was his delight to make a nuisance of himself to his godly teacher, and week by week he plagued this poor old man and wearied him, and the poor old man shed many a tear because of this boy who was being so troublesome to him. When that boy grew up and the Lord began to work in his heart, one of the first sins He convicted him of was the way he treated his old Sunday school teacher, and he begged the Lord for forgiveness, and in measure he found it. But he had just one desire: if only he could go to the poor old man and say sorry, but he had been long dead. It preyed on his mind for so long, the sorrow and tears he had caused that poor old man, and if only he could go and say how sorry he was. In the end the Lord comforted him with this word: “God shall wipe away *all tears* from their eyes.”

Well, beloved friends, here is the blessedness of the redeemed in heaven to all eternity and here is the only ground of reaching it, through the blood of the Lamb, to be washed in the blood of Christ. I am sure many of you can echo my desire:

“O may my blood-washed soul be found
Among that favoured band!
And I, with them, Thy praise will sound
Throughout Immanuel’s land.”