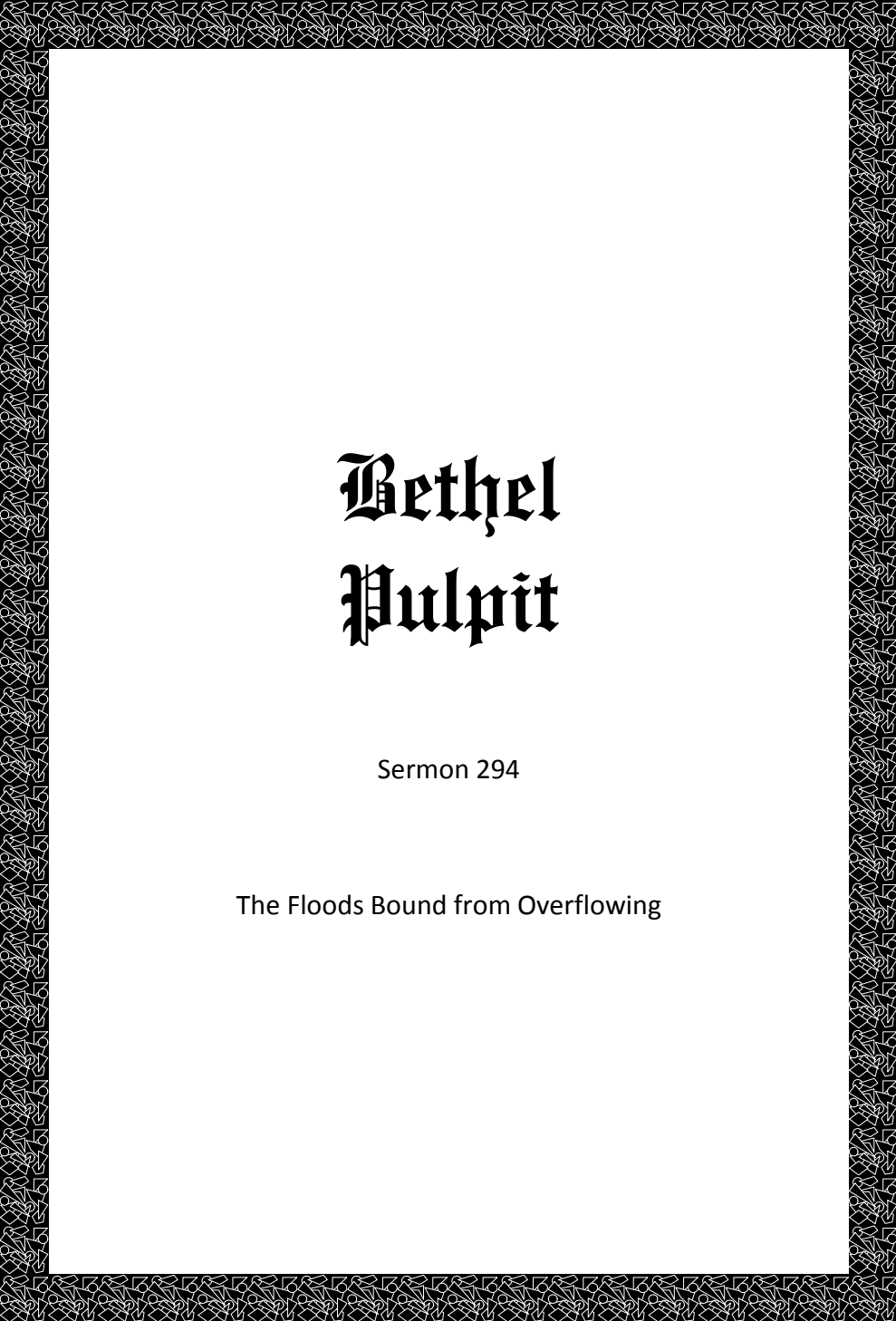




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 294

The Floods Bound from Overflowing

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day evening, 17th January, 2010**

Text: *"He bindeth the floods from overflowing" (Job 28. 11).*

Is there anywhere in the whole of Scripture where we have such clear views of the greatness of God as in the Book of Job, especially His greatness in creation, His greatness in providence? We have to say, "O Lord my God, Thou art very great." To have this view of Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, in His sovereignty and divine power and majesty and glory, the Creator of all things, our Creator, and the One to whom one day each of us shall have to give an account and to receive the eternal sentence, "Come in, thou blessed," or, "Depart, ye cursed"; this great God who "can dash whole worlds to death, and make them when He please." I would that as a congregation we might have clear, believing views of the greatness of God, and what a mercy if through grace we can say, "This God is our God for ever and ever" – our God in Christ! It is this great, almighty God who loves His people with an everlasting love; this great, almighty God of the Book of Job who sent His dear Son to suffer, bleed and die; this great, almighty God who "with heaven and earth at His command waits to answer prayer." Now may we tonight be blessed with clear views by faith of the greatness of our God.

"He bindeth the floods from overflowing." Now you know, beloved friends, that I always feel it right to set a word in its context, and it may surprise you that the majority of the godly divines do not believe that this word I have read out to you is speaking of Almighty God! That may surprise you. Most of the godly divines believe this word is spoken of *man*. "He bindeth the floods from overflowing." You say, How do they make out that these wonderful things belong to man? Well, they take the point and the argument of Job chapter 28 to be this: that man can do some wonderful things, very wonderful things, exceeding wonderful things, and they are listed one by one, and this is one of them: binding the floods from overflowing. But then comes the question: "Where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? Man knoweth not." In other words, there are many, many things that man can do, wonderful inventions, wonderful attainments, but by all His searching he cannot find God and with all his searching he does not possess true wisdom. So that is the way the majority of the godly divines take it; not all of them.

But this evening I do not make any excuse whatsoever for taking this word and speaking to you this evening about Almighty God, because if this word is true of man, how much more so is it true of God! Then there are one or two other scriptures very, very similar to this and they do speak of God. One is this: “Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over.” Another, the one we read this evening in chapter 38, how He says to the proud waves of the sea, “Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.”

So with the Lord’s help I want to speak of this word this evening concerning the power of our God. “He bindeth the floods from overflowing.” Now He does literally. When the Lord created this world, in infinite wisdom, in almighty power, He bound the floods from overflowing. Otherwise the whole world would have been drowned. Now we see it in creation, the power of God binding the floods from overflowing. And then of course we think of that terrible flood in the days of Noah and the Lord bound that flood from overflowing. There was an appointed time, and when that time had ended, the waters of the flood abated. He bound the flood from overflowing, and even when the flood was at its highest, it could not touch Noah and his little crew inside the ark. He bound the flood from overflowing. And then in that wonderful promise of which the rainbow is such a beautiful symbol that He would never drown the earth again, then in the promise He bound the floods from overflowing.

So we might go on. The crossing of the Red Sea – no way forward, no way back, no deliverance on either side. He bound the floods from overflowing and Israel passed dry-shod over into the Promised Land, “which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.” And then again we come to the River Jordan, and Jordan was in flood at that time. When the holy ark was carried down into the waters of Jordan, then the Lord bound the floods from overflowing, and the whole of God’s Israel were able to pass over in safety. So throughout the Old Testament you have the very clear effect of this word literally. Literally “He bindeth the floods from overflowing.”

But I think you will find throughout the Word of God that floods are often spoken of in a symbolical way, meaning different things in different places, but the point being the power, the mighty power of the sea, the mighty power of the floods. I wonder if there is any power on

earth just like the power of the sea, the power of the floods, in overwhelming people, overwhelming things. Those who have spent much time at sea tell you of the dreadful nature of some of those Pacific storms, how the largest vessels are thrown about. It is difficult for the most skilful captain to contain them and control them. We think of places on our own coast where they have done everything to keep the sea out, building barricades, yet sometimes in the spring time of the year there has been a high tide and a stormy day and it has carried everything away like a table-tennis ball. The power of the sea, the power of the floods.

So the word is often used throughout Scripture in a symbolical way. “The Lord sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever.” What does it mean when He sits upon the flood? Well, all these floods of sorrow, war, terrorism, confusion, iniquity – they do not take Him by surprise. He sits there upon His throne and carries out His own purposes and says, “Thus far,” and they are completely under His control. “The Lord sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever.” And what a mercy He is in complete control! “The Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” “None can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?” No power on earth can move apart from His divine permission. As He controls the mighty floods in nature, so He controls the mighty floods in providence. “He bindeth the floods from overflowing.” Just like a farmer ties up a wild bull or ties up a frisky colt, so the Lord binds the floods.

Especially, beloved friends, this word has been with me recently as a prayer, and thinking of the dreadful state of things in England at present and what a terrible world it is to live in and what a terrible world it is for the little ones to be born into. You think of the open attacks that are taking place on anything that bears the name of Christianity. You think of the evil laws in Parliament. You think of the terrible behaviour of politicians. You think of the dreadful terrorism abroad in the earth. You think of some of the ridiculous sentences that some of our judges give. You think of how a thing like homosexuality, which once was a criminal offence, is not only legalised but now even being encouraged. So we might go on and on and on. You know all these things, and this is our hope, and this is our prayer, that the Lord will bind these floods from overflowing, and only He can do it. And they are floods, aren't they? They are mighty floods, they are tumultuous, they are torrents, and we cannot stand before them, and no-one can stand before them.

To have a view by faith of Almighty God upon the throne, He can restrain them; He can control them; He is able to bind these floods, and He is able to stop them from overflowing. May it be our prayer. These things that are coming before Parliament, this Equality Bill and all these things, God is in control. “God is our refuge and strength.” God is “a very present help in trouble.” May there be much prayer, many a cry from the church of God here on earth that the Lord will bind these floods and bind them from overflowing. Only He can.

But the point is, we do not deserve it, do we? Now the godly Puritans used to have a doctrine and the godly Scots have it today, what they call “common grace.” Now we do not like the expression – grace is not common! – but we believe the doctrine. What we would call it would be the general, overruling providence of God in the earth over all His creatures for the good of His people. That is what people generally call “common grace.” But the fear is that little by little it is being removed from the earth and the more it is removed from the earth, the more the floods of iniquity will run. O this prayer: Lord, in love and mercy, in the midst of wrath, remember mercy; in mercy bind these floods from overflowing, or what will our little ones, what will our children see? Bind the floods from overflowing.

There is a word: “The wrath of man shall praise Thee: the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain.” It is a remarkable word. What does it mean? Well, it means all the wickedness and the evil that there is in the earth, Almighty God will do one of two things with it. Either He will restrain it, bind the floods from overflowing, or if He does not, He will make it work to the honour and glory of His name. You know what John Kent says:

“Great is the mystery, truly great,
That hell’s designs should hell defeat;
But here eternal wisdom shines,
For Satan works what God designs.”

“He bindeth the floods from overflowing.” I understand that this word “from overflowing” in the original is something like this: from weeping, from shedding tears, and of course the meaning is that the Lord is able to bind up a mighty flood so there is not so much as a tear-drop left! It is an amazing statement, but “this God is our God for ever and ever,”

and He binds these floods from overflowing, and He can bind them so that there is not even a drop.

“He bindeth the floods from overflowing.” Well, we come to it personally in our lives. There are the floods of temptation. Are you ever tempted by Satan? Does the enemy come in like a flood? Is it too much for you, too hard for you? Does it seem it is going to overwhelm you? “He bindeth the floods from overflowing” when His people are tempted. That wonderful word: “When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.” God is greater than Satan, and grace is mightier than sin.

“And has He not His promise passed,
That thou shalt overcome at last?”

“He bindeth the floods from overflowing.” These floods of temptation. And then the floods of sorrow. Now many of you in various ways during the past year have had your sorrows, and some of you have had deep sorrows, and some of you have continuing sorrow. There is bereavement; there is illness; there is affliction; there are things in your family; there are things amongst those you love – all these various trials and troubles, and sometimes they are like floods, as if they are going to overwhelm you. These overwhelming floods. Isn’t it a wonderful mercy that this great, almighty God knows and understands and cares!

And you view it in His beloved Son as He sits on the throne. “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” He knows your sorrows. It is that word spoken to Israel in Egypt: “I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows.” And He says that to you, beloved friends, tonight. “I know your sorrows.” And if they are like a flood, they will not overwhelm you because He will bind those floods from overflowing you. “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.”

“When through the deep waters I call thee to go,
The rivers of woe shall not thee overflow;

For I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless,
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.”

“He bindeth the floods from overflowing.” There are one or two beautiful words in that little Psalm, number 93. “Thy throne is established of old: Thou art from everlasting.” Now listen: “The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice.” They have got a voice. It is not a nice voice; it is a cruel voice. “The floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.” It is worth repeating. “The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.” God is greater than all your sorrows.

“He bindeth the floods from overflowing.” Floods of temptation, floods of sorrow, and then those floods that would overwhelm and destroy His beloved people. We read of a house built on a rock, and we read of the floods that came. We are told this, and the Word of God does not exaggerate: they “beat *vehemently* upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock.” The everlasting safety and security of the people of God in Christ.

“On the Rock of Ages founded,
What can shake thy sure repose?”

It is the whole church of God: “Upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”; but it is every believer, every sinner saved by grace, because each one, led by the Spirit, is brought to build his hope, his only hope upon Christ the eternal Rock.

“My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.”

That is the religion that takes a guilty sinner to heaven, and that hope can never be destroyed. The floods rage against it and the floods beat against it, but that sinner on the Rock of Ages is safe, eternally safe.

“He bindeth the floods from overflowing.” They assail but they cannot destroy. “He bindeth the floods from overflowing.” Down the ages, how Satan has sought to overthrow the church of God! There have been these floods of persecution and floods of opposition and yet the church of God has never been destroyed. But the real miracle is this: that

Satan has never destroyed one single child of God, not the weakest, not the feeblest.

“You’re safe in your Redeemer’s hands,
Who bears your names upon His heart.”

O to be found on the eternal Rock, the Rock of Ages!

“He bindeth the floods from overflowing.” Now there is another thing, and this comes closer. When we come to the love of Christ, “Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.” That is the love of Christ to sinners. O the floods that sought to overthrow and overwhelm the love of Christ! When the Saviour was born into this world, those floods of persecution from cruel Herod. “Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.” But those floods were bound from overflowing. And then those terrible floods of temptation when the Lord Jesus “suffered being tempted” in the wilderness. But those floods could never overwhelm Him.

“But spotless, innocent, and pure,
The great Redeemer stood,
While Satan’s fiery darts He bore,
And did resist to blood.”

Then you think, the Garden of Gethsemane and O those floods of sorrow, and though the Saviour sweat as it were great drops of blood, the floods of sorrow did not destroy His love. “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.” You see the willingness of the Saviour to die. When they came to seize Him in the garden, “Whom seek ye?” They said, “Jesus of Nazareth.” They gave Him that despised name. He willingly, lovingly took it. He said, “I am He,” and they fell down helpless. If ye seek Me, take Me, bind Me, crucify Me, but let these My followers go their way. That was binding the floods from overflowing. The suffering Saviour, He forbade the floods to destroy His immediate disciples. And of course, “Let these [My followers] go their way” – as Krummacher beautifully puts it – is the passport of the whole church of God to heaven. “Let these go their way.” Let not any of the floods ever overflow them, ever destroy them. You see the willingness of the Saviour 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.”

O but then we come to Calvary, and at the cross we do *not* see this word fulfilled. We do not see it fulfilled – “He bindeth the floods from overflowing” – because His eternal Father, as His dear Son stood in the sinner’s place as his Substitute and his Surety and his Saviour, He poured on Him the floods of divine wrath and He did not bind them from overflowing. We have that awful word, the dear Saviour speaking prophetically in the Psalms: “The waters are come in unto My soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow Me.”

“The waves of swelling grief
Did o’er His bosom roll,
And mountains of almighty wrath,
Lay heavy on His soul.”

O to see the dear Saviour overwhelmed in suffering, overwhelmed in the wrath of God as He takes the dying sinner’s place at Calvary and this word *not* fulfilled: “He bindeth the floods from overflowing.” And it was not fulfilled at Calvary that it might be blessedly and everlastingly fulfilled for all those for whom the Saviour in love suffered and bled and died. Now this should endear the Saviour to us, because do not forget that this dear Saviour who was overwhelmed at Calvary in suffering is this great God of the Book of Job.

“Behold a scene of matchless grace,
'Tis Jesus in the sinner’s place;
Heaven’s brightest Glory sunk in shame,
That rebels might adore His name.”

This should endear the Saviour to you, make Him precious to your soul, to see the wonders of that love which never could from His own withdraw, that many waters could never quench, that the floods could never destroy. “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.” “He bindeth the floods from overflowing,” but not with His beloved Son incarnate at Calvary, but that in order that this word might be gloriously and eternally fulfilled for all for whom the Saviour stood.

“He bindeth the floods from overflowing.” And then the last great flood, the swelling of Jordan, and that will be an overwhelming flood.

Beloved friends, it is one thing for me to stand in a pulpit in a warm chapel and for you to sit comfortably in your pew and for us to speak about these things. It will be different when we come there, and we *must* come there, and, “How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?” O what a mercy there is a word like this: “He bindeth *those* floods from overflowing.” And faith cries,

“In that dread moment, O to hide
Beneath His sheltering blood!
'Twill Jordan's icy waves divide,
And land my soul with God.”

“If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses?” Which I take to mean, if little thing have been too hard for you, how will you manage harder things? “If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?” If many things in this life are too difficult, too hard, well what will death be? “How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?”

O but this blessed word: “He bindeth the floods from overflowing.” And God is faithful to His word. How many who have been all their lifetime in bondage through fear of death, when they have come there, and been blessed with dying grace in a dying hour, they have sweetly proved that He binds the floods from overflowing. You remember Bunyan's Mr. Fearing, how when he approached the cold, deep, dark river, he trembled and almost fell in a swoon, but someone enquired, how was it when he entered the river? Well, the answer was, they had never seen the river so shallow. He walked over comfortably and he hardly got his shoes wet.

Now God is sovereign, but He has promised this, that all His beloved people shall be brought safely through. “The redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.” O may the Lord bind every flood in our lives from overflowing and then may we prove it to be so with that last, great, terrible flood, to prove this to the honour and glory of His name, and as our hymnwriter says,

“Death of deaths, and hell’s Destruction,
Land me safe on Canaan’s side;
Songs of praises,
I will ever give to Thee.”
“He bindeth the floods from overflowing.”

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God of my life, to Thee I call;
Afflicted at Thy feet I fall;
When the great water-floods prevail,
Leave not my trembling heart to fail.
Friend of the friendless and the faint,
Where should I lodge my deep complaint?
Where but with Thee, whose open door
Invites the helpless and the poor?
Did ever mourner plead with Thee,
And Thou refuse that mourner’s plea?
Does not the word still fixed remain,
That none shall seek Thy face in vain?
That were a grief I could not bear,
Didst Thou not hear and answer prayer;
But a prayer-hearing, answering God
Supports me under every load.
Poor though I am, despised, forgot,
Yet God, my God, forgets me not;
And he is safe, and must succeed,
For whom the Lord vouchsafes to plead.

William Cowper