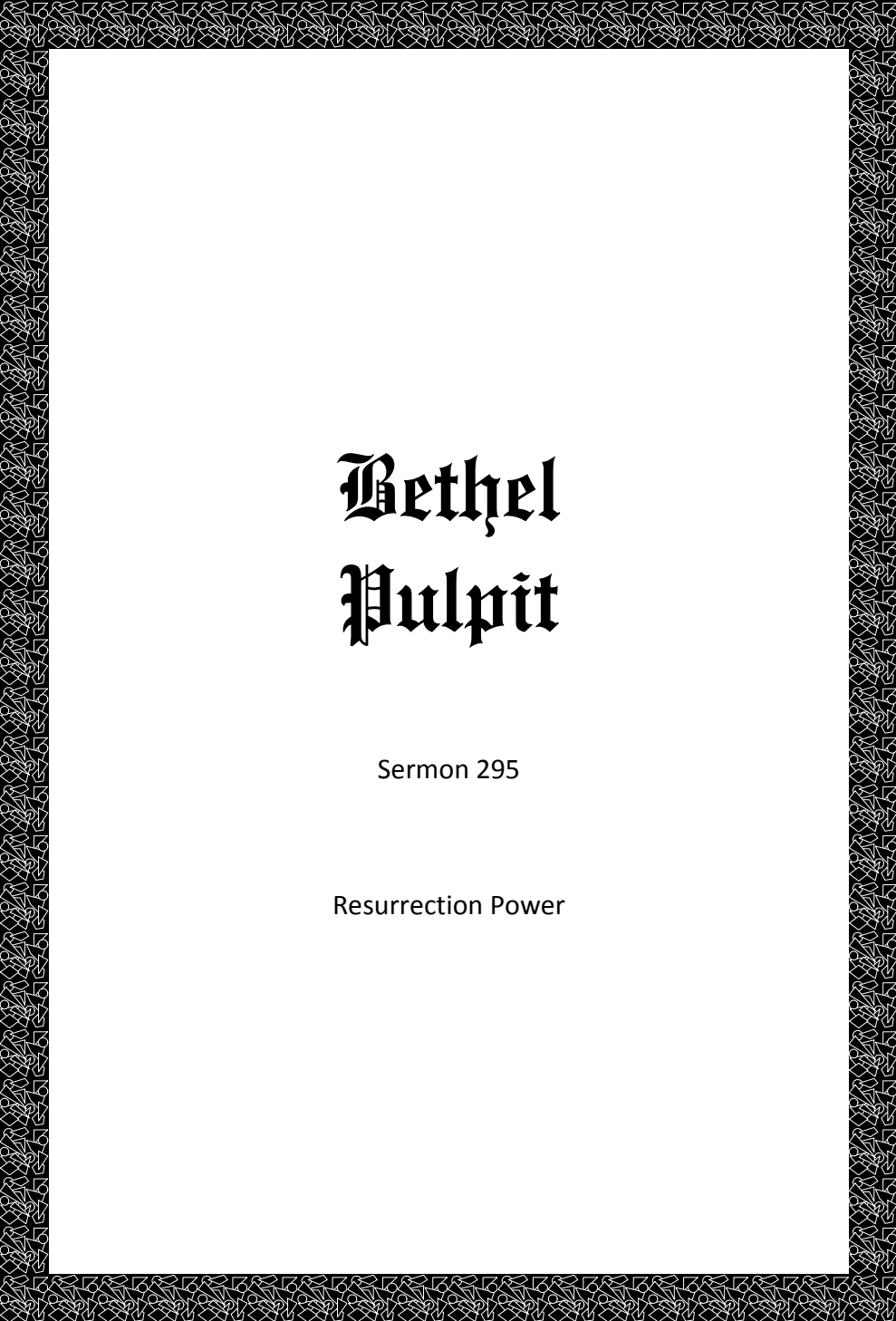




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 295

Resurrection Power

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

Text: *“Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you” (2 Corinthians 4. 14).*

You must have noticed what an emphasis is laid in the New Testament on the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. In the Acts of the Apostles, those early days of the Christian church, it was the great theme of the gospel ministry. “With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.” They knew it was a fact. They knew it was a glorious fact that the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ had died. They had seen Him die; they had seen Him buried; and they had seen Him after the resurrection. It was the foundation of their hope, their faith: “The Lord is risen indeed.” And as in so many places in the epistles, the apostle takes it up here, and he emphasises this point: that it was Almighty God, God the Father, who raised up His dear Son.

“Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus” – that is God the Father. Now of course, you remember the Lord Jesus said, “No man taketh [My life] from Me.... I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” But we have such an emphasis that His Father raised Him from the dead. It was an act of divine, almighty power – the resurrection. In one place we have it like this: “The exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead.” The power of God had never been so clearly shown ever since the world was created. It was an act of divine power.

“Knowing that He” – God the Father – “which raised up the Lord Jesus.” But beloved friends, do not forget that it was also an act of divine justice. It was an act of almighty power, but it was an act of divine justice. Never forget that. This was God's dear Son. Here was One who was innocent. Here was One who was unlawfully slain. It was an act of divine justice raising Him from the dead. The Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ died to save His people from their sins, and He took those sins upon Him at Calvary and when He died He bore them for ever away. If one sin had not been atoned for, the Lord Jesus must have remained in the grave. But it was an act of divine justice. God raised Him from the dead as a

vindication of His glorious Person as the Son of God, a vindication of His pure, spotless, holy humanity and a vindication that all the sins of the whole church of God were for ever put away, never to be remembered against them for ever, that eternal justice was now for ever satisfied. I have been thinking so much of William Gadsby's beautiful verse:

“He rose in triumph from the dead;
Justice declared the debt was paid.”

O that declaration of divine justice!

“Then Christ with kingly grandeur flew,
And took His throne in glory too.”

“Knowing that He” – God the Father – “which raised up the Lord Jesus.” And just to mention a third thing: it was an act of love, the love of a Father to His dear Son. We are not just dealing with doctrines and hard facts. If only you and I could realise how much the Father loved His Son and how much the Son loved His eternal Father, and what an act of sovereign love it was. With what holy, sacred, infinite delight His Father raised Him from the dead!

“Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus.” And the Father's love to all His people. Have you ever thought about this point? There is one expression Paul uses perhaps more than anything else in his epistles, and it is this: “in Christ”; “in Him.” Not just that the blessings of the gospel are in Christ, but in some mysterious way the people of God are actually *in* Christ, *in* Him. They were in Him from all eternity by His eternal choice in covenant bonds. But when Jesus died, His people were in Him, and they died with Him, and when He rose again, His people were *in* Him, and they rose again with Him. They were *in* Him when He was laid in the grave. They were *in* Him when He rose from the grave. That is what the verse means which we sing so often and quote so often, and I wonder if it is not always understood:

“One in the tomb” – that means Christ and His people in Him, one by eternal union –

“One in the tomb; one when He rose;
One when He triumphed o'er His foes;
One when in heaven He took His seat,
While seraphs sang all hell's defeat.”

That wonderful truth; and of course that other very, very well-known couplet:

“Once in Him, in Him for ever;
Thus the eternal covenant stands.”

“Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus.” Well then, beloved friends, the great point here, the theme this morning, is this: that there is an intimate connection, a close connection between Christ being raised from the dead and the various ways in which the eternal Father raises up His people. There are quite a few different ways in which God the Father raises up His people. Just as He raised up His dear Son, so there are these various ways in which He raises up His people. So if you and I are His people, we shall know what it is to be raised up.

There is an emphasis here, a two-fold emphasis, that if you and I are ever going to be raised up, whichever of these raisings up it is, it will always be “*by Jesus*.” You have it here: “Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also *by Jesus*.” You will never be raised up any other way. And the second thing is this: it is the same divine, almighty power that the Father put forth from heaven to raise His dear Son from the grave which is put forth in the life and work and experience of His people to raise them up, whichever of these ways you are thinking of.

“Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also *by Jesus*.” Beloved friends, let us be clear, these are very important things; these are vital things of which I am speaking. I want to speak this morning on one or two of these raisings up, and the first, and it is vital, is *in the new birth*, because the new birth is often spoken of in Scripture as a resurrection, a spiritual resurrection. That awful truth is set before us that you and I by nature are dead in trespasses and in sins. We cannot save ourselves. We have no power to save ourselves. By nature we are hateful, loathsome in the sight of a holy God. But it is not like a natural death of impotence and helplessness. It is an active death, a death of sin, a death of rebellion. “We will not have this Man to reign over us.”

Really, if one thing in all Scripture emphasises the desperate condition in which you and I are by nature, our lost condition by nature, it is this: that only that same power that brought Jesus from the grave can raise us up from the death of sin. We have the two things put together: “The exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He

raised Him from the dead.... And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” It is the very same power, the power of the resurrection. Sometimes it is spoken of as a new birth. “Ye must be born again.” Sometimes it is spoken of as regeneration, which simply means living again. Sometimes it is spoken of as a quickening, the giving of life. And sometimes it is spoken of as a resurrection. We rise from the long sleep of death, dead in trespasses and sins, enemies to God by wicked works, under the curse of a broken law, deserving eternal wrath.

“Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus.” Now tell me, and you must know it, has that change taken place in your heart? Sometimes it is suddenly and sometimes it is gradually – that is, in our apprehension. Of course, with the Lord it is in a moment that divine life is imparted.

“The sinner sleeping in his grave
Shall at My voice awake,
And when I once begin to save,
My work I’ll ne’er forsake.”

Have you a sweet hope that the Lord has raised you up from that state of spiritual death? “The dead know not any thing.” But now you know something of your deadness and you know something of your need. There is a concern. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” – newly born, newly raised from the dead. “Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” But if you have never known this gracious change, cry to the Lord that He might perform it in you.

“Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus.” Now in the literal resurrection of Lazarus we read of in the gospels in John chapter 11, we have a very remarkable, clear, striking figure of what this spiritual resurrection is that is performed by the Father through the Holy Ghost – never without Him – in the hearts of sinners. It was a hopeless case; it was a helpless case; it was an impossible case – Lazarus lying in the grave. He had been there three days, and, “Lord, by this time he stinketh.” The impossibility of the case! Only divine, almighty power can bring the dead to life, naturally, spiritually. “Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes.” He was still in his graveclothes, and there was a napkin still over his face.

I want to press you on this point. As soon as Lazarus was quickened into life by the power of God, he could no longer remain in his grave. There was a rising up. There was a moving forth. There was a coming out. And it will be like that with you. Mind you, he could not move very quickly or very well. He still had a napkin over his face. He could not see very clearly, and if his hands and feet were bound in the graveclothes, he must have been stumbling or perhaps even falling. But as soon as divine life was imparted in his heart, he could no longer remain in the grave; he was coming out of it. And every step he took, however feeble, however stumbling, it was in one direction, and that was out of the grave and towards the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, He who had just declared, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."

O he had got life, but he had not yet got liberty. He could not really be satisfied with those graveclothes. But then Jesus said, "Loose him, and let him go." He had his life, and then he had his liberty. But if you are raised from that sleep of death, you will not be still in the world; you will not be in the ways of the world, following the ways of the world, the practices of the world; you will not be living your old life. That is repentance, coming out of the grave, stumbling towards the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And if you are stumbling towards Him, how will you come? "Lo, glad I come." Wasn't Lazarus glad to get out of that grave!

"Lo! glad I come; and Thou, blest Lamb,
O take me to Thee as I am;
Nothing but sin I Thee can give;
Nothing but love may I receive."

O this spiritual resurrection! Perhaps some of you are saying, I do not know whether you are interpreting this word properly. Surely Paul is speaking of the resurrection of the dead in the judgment day. Well, we will come to that later, but the judgment day, that last, great day, will be a terrible day for you and me if we have never known *this* resurrection – to be blessed with repentance and faith, to be stumbling away from our old life, and any hope in ourselves, to a precious Saviour. Now I hold you fast on this: either you know it or you do not know it. Your graveclothes may be very tightly round you and you might not be able to see very much at all with the napkin round your face, but there will be something happening,

some going forth, some going after Christ in prayer, in desire, in longing to be made ready, to be made right, to be prepared for eternity.

“Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus.” Now I want to come to a second raising up by the Lord Jesus, the power of the resurrection, and that is a sinner being raised up to a good hope through grace. It is the same divine, almighty power, the eternal Father, but He always works by the Spirit, by the Holy Ghost, and it is always through Jesus Christ. There is always the work of the Trinity there. But you are raised up. You are no longer dead, but you may still be dark. You are no longer dead, but you do not feel much life. You are no longer dead, but you have not got what you want. But you know this: you are not what you would be, but you are not what you once were. You see things you never saw before. You hear as you never heard before. There is a new appetite, new longings, new desires, a seeking after the Saviour.

“Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus.” Now what a promise! It is a promise for you to plead. It is not something you must do or accomplish or attain. Pray that the dear Lord Jesus might raise you up to a good hope through grace, that you might find a resting place in the merits of the Saviour, that you might find a refuge in Him, that you might be blessed with “everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,” and that your hope might be as an anchor to your soul, cast “within the veil; whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus.” O this raising up is *by Jesus*. There is not any other way.

“Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus.” I want to speak of another aspect of it. There are those times, and those of you who know and fear the Lord sadly realise it – we believe we are right, that the Lord in love and mercy has done something for us, O but the deadness and darkness we feel in our spirit. You do not need me to preach a sermon on that this morning. Those of you who know it, you hate it, you abhor it: the darkness, deadness, guilt and sin, that awful deadness you feel in prayer and when you come to the house of God and in hearing the Word, reading the Bible. You sometimes say like John Newton,

“Hardly, sure, can they be worse
Who have never heard His name.”

“Knowing” this. It is a wonderful thing to know these things. We know the malady; it is a wonderful thing to know the remedy. “Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus.” It is that same power, the power of the resurrection, that the great apostle himself longed to know: “That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection.” It is that divine, almighty, resurrection power. We need it in the church of God; we need it in our homes; we need it in our lives; and we need it in our hearts when we feel this awful deadness and darkness and barrenness.

But do not forget, the power of His resurrection has never been exhausted. It is the same this morning as when His Father raised Him triumphant from the dead. The power of His resurrection can be known and it can be experienced, and O what a difference it makes! Life instead of death. That word of the Apostle Peter: He “hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” We hope we have the life, but we are not always lively. There is a difference. You might have two tiny children and they are both alive, but one is not very well, languid and pale and sick and lying on the settee. That one is alive, but not very lively. The other one is here, there and everywhere. That one is lively. He “hath begotten us again unto a *lively* hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

“Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus.” Another thing: the day of trouble, the day of anguish, the day of deep sorrow in providence, in your home, your life, your family, your circumstances. You cannot escape it; you must go through. “Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus.” It means a few things that Almighty God will do with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you. It means that He will uphold you, support you. And it will be this glorious power of the resurrection. It means He will help you along and He will bring you through.

“Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus.” And then of course it speaks of the resurrection in the last, great day, that just as the body of Jesus was raised from the dead, so the bodies of His people in the last great day shall be raised from the dead. We firmly believe in the resurrection of the dead. “Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.” We

believe that that identical body which is laid in the grave, and there it will dissolve into its original elements, will be raised triumphant in the great day. "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption ... it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power." You say, How can it be? The apostle opens it up so simply. You sow a seed into the ground and then you see this wonderful flower. Well, it is different, but it is exactly the same. It is the identical seed which brings forth the flower. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" This is the hope of life and immortality beyond the grave, that the grave is not the end. It is those who shall know the power of the resurrection in their hearts in this life who shall be raised to eternal glory in the great day. But do not forget those who die without Christ also shall rise in fear and trembling to meet their Maker and receive that everlasting sentence: "Depart." May no-one here be amongst those who at last hear that awful word: "Depart."

"Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus." What about this: "And shall present us with you"? It is that lovely thought that Samuel Medley closes his hymn on "the one thing needful" with:

"Needful when I in heaven appear,
To crown and to present me there."

It seems to me the figure is something like this. It is a vast mansion, the mansion of the great, and this poor beggar man in his poverty has been invited there, but as he nears the gates of this great mansion, he is a little bit timid, a little bit fearful. But as he gets there, he smiles. There is a loving friend waiting at those magnificent gates to take him by the hand and take him in and present him. Do you know, you dear children of God, when you die and leave this world, then there is going to be a dear Friend waiting for you? He is going to take you by the hand and there is a loving welcome awaiting you, and He is going to present you to His Father.

"And shall present us with you." We have it three times very, very beautifully. First of all in the Epistle to the Ephesians, how Christ "loved the church, and gave Himself for it ... that He might *present it* to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." Then you have it again in the Colossians: "You, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to *present you* holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight." And finally we have Jude: "Him that is able

to keep you from falling, and to *present you* faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.” Now it is a wonderful theme; it is a beautiful subject. O may it be your mercy and mine to be embraced here, to be included here!

“Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.”