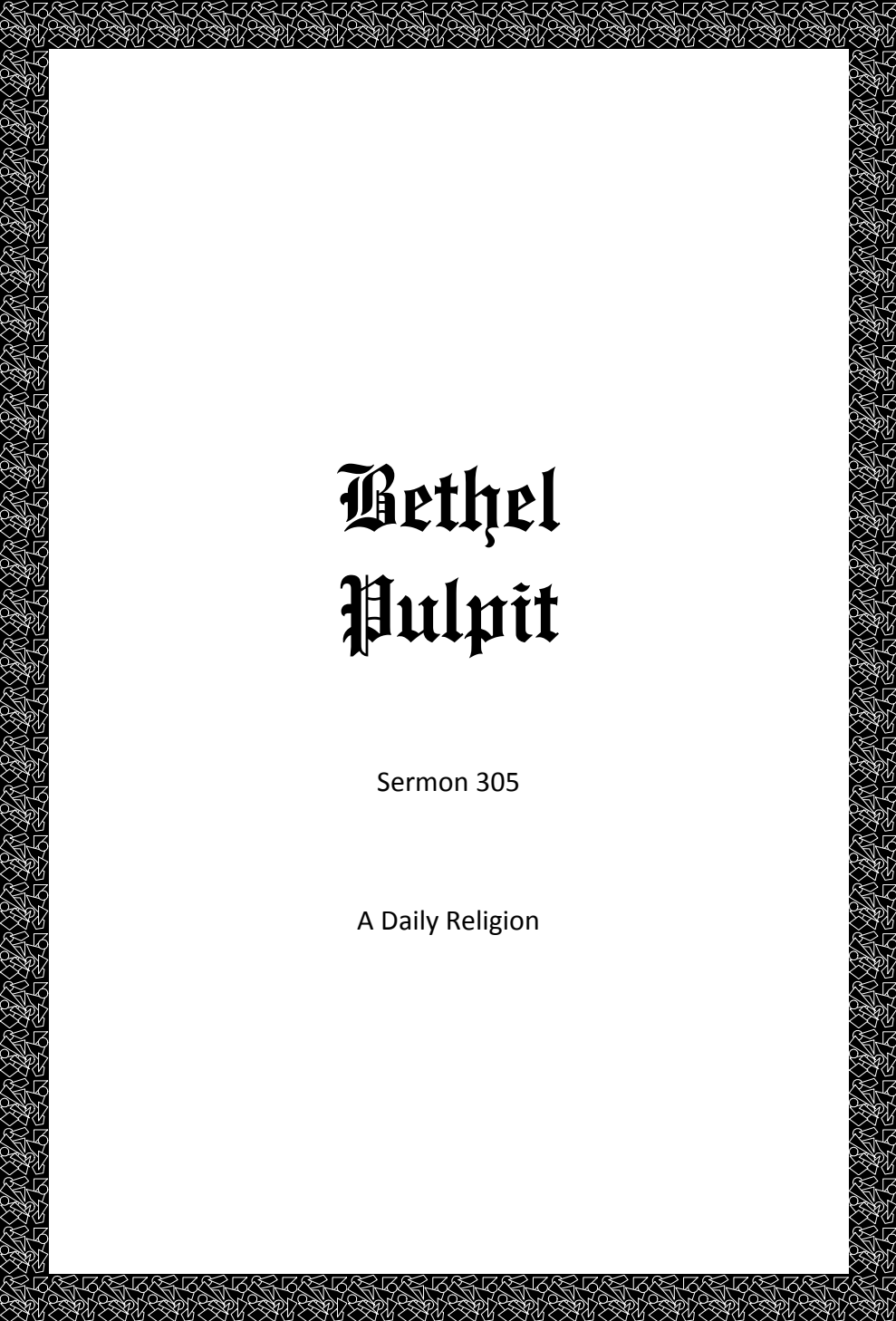




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 305

A Daily Religion

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day morning, 10th October, 2010**

Text: “Give us *this day* our daily bread” (Matthew 6. 11).

If you do not have a daily religion, then your religion is worthless. If you leave your religion behind in chapel when you go home, then your religion is not a religion which will take you to heaven at last. Real religion is a daily religion – perhaps we might say an hourly religion. Daily you will have to confess your sin; daily you will have to seek help from the Lord; daily you will want to thank Him for His mercies; daily you will have to call upon Him when some special need arises; daily you will have to look into His Word. It is “Give us *this day*” – this hour – “our *daily* bread.” It is a solemn thing if we do not have a daily religion.

When the new birth takes place, there will be a difference. When the Lord puts His holy, tender fear in your heart, there will be a difference, and it will show itself in many ways. One thing: you will have a personal religion. Another thing: there will be an urgency, a reality in your religion. But there will be this: it will be a *daily* religion. And beloved friends, it will be a daily religion until the day that you die, and you will need a daily religion then, even for the most eminent saint, a daily religion. So our hymnwriter says,

“Daily I’d repent of sin,
Daily wash in Calvary’s blood,
Daily feel Thy peace within,
Daily I’d commune with God.”

“Give us *this day* our daily bread.” So there is a line of demarcation here. There was a time when maybe we liked to come to chapel. We were interested. Perhaps we were interested in the preaching; we were certainly interested in the hymns and the tunes. But Monday morning came and it was all forgotten. We were taken up with the things of the world, with earthly things. But O the difference when the Lord begins! It is that *daily* concern, that *daily* case, that *daily* dependence. So beloved friends, I lovingly ask you to examine yourself on this point, whether you just have a Sunday religion, a chapel religion, or whether you have a daily religion, because real religion is a daily religion.

So this is one of the best-known words in the Bible, part of what is commonly called “the Lord’s prayer.” Some people think John 17 is the Lord’s prayer and this is “the disciples’ prayer.” I have sometimes wondered whether in our chapels we have tended to shy a little bit away from this because so often it is just repeated aimlessly and thoughtlessly, but it is a beautiful prayer. It is the prayer the Lord Jesus Himself taught. It is a wonderful thing if you and I through grace are taught to pray it. This is a prayer *of dependence*.

“Give us this day our daily bread.” Well, first of all it means exactly what it says: our daily bread, our daily food. Years ago the reality of this was known and felt in the hearts and lives of so many of the Lord’s people in their deep poverty; they literally had to pray it. When they got up in the morning, often they did not know where their daily bread was coming from. Some of them used to pray that even if the Lord did not send them bread, would He take away the children’s hunger. You can read the lives of our eminent ministers in their younger days – Gadsby and Warburton and Kershaw – and how they had to pray for daily bread. So often they had not anything in the house.

I do not know whether any of you have read the sermon in this month’s *Zion’s Witness* by old John Newton – not John Newton the hymnwriter – John Newton the old Pastor at Hanover, Tunbridge Wells. At the end, he spoke of some of his early days. He said, “Once I had to go to the children’s money-boxes to borrow a penny from them to make up the money to pay my bills.” Another time: “I trembled when I saw my landlord in the street, thinking he might ask me for the rent; and how I had to beg and pray and plead with the Lord that He would provide me with a coat to wear when I went to preach.”

So over the years this has been a very real and vital prayer in its strict meaning. Happily today this is not so, when our outward needs are supplied. But in a way, should I say *happily*? Those dear, godly souls, O how the Lord sanctified their poverty! How they were drawn daily to the throne of grace! What wonderful answers they had to their prayers! But one of the complaints that the Lord makes in the prophets concerning one of the wicked nations of the earth was this, and this is the expression: that they possessed “*fulness of bread*” (Ezek. 16. 49). They had everything the world could give and they were satisfied with it.

People often say how wonderful it would have been to live in those favoured days when there was so much of the blessing of the gospel, but there was another side to it. There was the poverty, and there was also the persecution. But they had to live close to the Lord and they had to live lives of dependence. They knew what this prayer meant literally: “Give us this day our daily bread.” They prayed it from honest hearts, from full hearts. They prayed it urgently. Sometimes even while they were praying it, the door opened and someone literally gave them a loaf of bread. But how we need our nest stirring up at times lest we settle on our lees, if we have not much to pray about in this way! But if your religion is real, the Lord will always give you something to pray about.

You remember Joseph and his brethren – and sometimes we cannot understand the mysterious way in which Joseph dealt with his brothers, keeping Simeon, then he wanted Benjamin, and then the money in the sack, and then a cup in the sack. But whenever they went back to Canaan he *always* made sure there was something that would bring them quickly running back to Egypt for help again. That is how the Lord will deal with you. “Give us this day our daily bread.” You may not have to pray it literally as our godly forefathers did, but the Lord will not leave you long without giving you something to bring you urgently running back to Him for help.

“Give us this day” – day by day – “our daily bread.” Now moving on, it also means this: “Give us this day our daily bread” in a larger sense, in a more general sense: *the supply of all our needs*, bread being the vital thing, the staple thing. “Give us this day our daily bread.” That is, do in Thy love and mercy supply our needs day by day, our providential needs and our spiritual needs. So there will be things that you need in providence. Day by day, Lord, in Thy love and mercy provide them. There may be some of you here today and there is something that is in providence, in your life, in your home, in your family, in your circumstances, in your work, in your business, something you badly need. It may even be shortage of funds, shortage of money, but there is something you badly need. Well, it is embraced in this prayer for the supply of your needs. Jehovah Jireh, the Lord will provide, is the name of Almighty God.

“Say not, my soul, from whence
Can God relieve thy care,

Remember that Omnipotence
Hath servants everywhere.

“His method is sublime,
His thoughts supremely kind;
God never is before His time,
And never is behind.”

Years ago, many Strict Baptist homes seemed to have that up in a frame on the wall, and over the top it always had this: “Jehovah Jireh, the Lord will provide.”

And then you come to the New Testament: “But my God shall supply all your need” – not everything you want, not everything you would like – “all your need.” “My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” So may this be a help, a word in season to those of you in providence this morning – you are in need; it is not just something you would like or something you want, but something you *need* in your home, something you *need* in your life. It is embraced in this prayer: “Give us this day our daily bread.” You are not just going to limit it to a loaf of bread from the bakery. It is the supply of all your needs.

“Give us this day our daily bread.” But then *our needs in grace*. “Give us day by day our daily bread.” Well, daily we need forgiveness; daily we need God’s help; we need daily grace for daily needs; we need daily strength. And beloved friends, that is just what the Lord has promised. That is why we have to pray for it day by day. “Give us *this day* our daily bread.” Because the Lord *will* give it, all you need, but you have to pray the prayer this way. In infinite wisdom the Lord taught them not just, “Give us our bread,” but that twofold emphasis: *this day* and *daily* bread.

And really the Lord was teaching them something and it was this: that it is day by day that the Lord meets the cases of His people. It is day by day that He supplies your need. It is *when you come there*, not before. O how many a poor, trembling, tried child of God has feared the swellings of Jordan. O but when they have come there, dying grace in a dying hour. You see, it is day by day that the Lord meets the needs of His people in providence and in grace. There is that wonderful fulness which dwells in

Christ, everything that all His people ever need, a fulness of love and mercy and wisdom and grace and strength and help and everything. It is day by day that He gives it. So we do need strength and we need strengthening and the Lord has promised it, and He has never failed, but it is day by day. “Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be” – when that day comes. This prayer has to be prayed today and tomorrow and next week and next year and every day of your life.

“Let not thy heart despond, and say,
‘How shall I stand the trying day?’
He has engaged, by firm decree,
That as thy days, thy strength shall be.”

So, “Give us this day” – day by day – “our daily bread” – daily help, daily strength, daily grace. How clearly did the Lord teach this lesson to Israel in the wilderness with the manna, bread from heaven! There was a full supply for forty years in the wilderness, but they got it day by day, morning and evening, which meant they had to be completely dependent, entirely dependent. That is why it is daily bread, daily grace, daily strength, daily supplies. But when the day came, the manna was there. But some of them tried to gather plenty for the next day so that they had some in hand – unbelief, tempting providence, not trusting the Lord’s promise – and it putrefied. It is just like that with you and me.

“No stock on nature’s barren ground;
My all is in thy storehouse found.”

There is no shortage, there is no lack there. But the Lord will not let His people have a stock of grace in hand so that they are prayerless, so that they can manage things themselves, so that they are independent. Forty years in the wilderness, God’s ancient people had to walk out this word: “Give us this day our daily bread.”

I just pause here for a moment. What a witness there is to the sacredness of the Sabbath day, that when the Sabbath day came, there was no manna, there was to be no gathering (see Exod. 16. 22-30). The day before they could gather twice as much. It did not putrefy. It was a living miracle week by week. And do not forget that this was the Lord honouring His own holy Sabbath *before* the law was given. The manna was given,

the instructions concerning the Sabbath were given on the ground of grace before the law was ever given on Mount Sinai.

“Give us this day” – day by day – “our daily bread.” It was something similar with Elijah in the house of the widow woman at Zarephath, the barrel of meal and the cruse of oil. “I have commanded a widow woman *there* to sustain thee.” It was the place of God’s appointment. It was a strange place. That terrible famine when Elijah went to Brook Cherith. He must have been happy there. He knew this prayer and he knew the answer to it: “Give us this day our daily bread.” It was a miracle, the ravens bringing him the bread and the flesh and he drank of the brook. He thought he would stay there, but the brook dried up. The mysterious providence of God! It must have been a terrible trial to Elijah. Day by day he saw the brook drying up and a silent God. Perhaps you know something like that. You are seeking God’s leadings. Things are shutting down. Things are closing up. You know you cannot go on. You know you cannot continue. You ask the Lord what to do and the Lord is silent. Not till that very day when Brook Cherith dried up did the Lord tell him what to do. That is daily supply for daily need.

“Give us this day our daily bread.” Poor Elijah must have received a terrible shock when the Lord said he had provided a widow woman. Well, it was a time of famine. A widow woman? and down in Zarephath, a heathen country where Jezebel the wicked queen came from? “I have commanded a widow woman *there* to sustain thee.” The barrel of meal was empty but for a handful and the cruse of oil, yet it never failed. That is it. Wouldn’t you and I like to have the barrel overflowing with meal? But it did not and it will not, but there will always be that handful of meal in the bottom of your barrel in grace and in providence, and there will always be a little oil in your cruse. It is day by day. When they came there, there was sufficient till the Lord sent rain upon the earth.

“Give us this day our daily bread.” There is a most beautiful illustration of this in perhaps a little-known word. Actually it is the concluding word in the second Book of the Kings. I have always felt this is a lovely illustration of this *day by day* supply. Now it was the time of the Babylonian captivity and the King of Judah, Jehoiachin, was in prison in Babylon, and it happened that the King of Babylon lifted up his head out of prison. There are some most beautiful descriptions. We must not over-

spiritualise these things, but we can use them as illustrations of the Lord's dealings with His people. "He ... did lift up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah out of prison; and he spake kindly to him." That is what some of you want. Wouldn't you love it for the Lord to speak kindly to you, speak to your heart? Wouldn't you love to be brought out of prison? "The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail." "He ... did lift up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah out of prison; and he spake kindly to him ... and changed his prison garments" – "the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness" – "and he did eat bread continually before him all the days of his life." "Continually" – it was a full supply; it was "all the days of his life"; it was "every day." Now this is it, where it fits in with our subject this morning as a beautiful illustration of it. He was promised bread continually, every day, all the days of His life: "His allowance was a continual allowance given him of the king, a daily rate for every day, all the days of his life." Now just read that again: "He did eat bread continually before him all the days of his life. And his allowance was a continual allowance given him of the king, *a daily rate for every day*, all the days of his life." So he proved it.

"Give us this day our daily bread." But now to pass on again and to come closer. The vital point: *the bread of life*. That is what we need; that is what we must have; and every day of our life. "Give us this day our daily bread." Wherever there is life there is hunger. If there is no hunger at all, there is death. If there is little hunger, there is not much mark of life. So when the new birth takes place (and "Ye *must* be born again"), when the Holy Spirit works in the new birth in giving you life in your soul, there will be an appetite, there will be a hunger, there will be a longing, for your soul to be saved, your sins to be forgiven, eternity to be prepared for. And the Lord compares it to a hunger for two reasons: because hunger is completely personal, absolutely personal; it is you and you alone and you yourself. And secondly, nothing will satisfy hunger but food.

So if your religion is real, you are a hungry soul. We go back to those early days, some of us, and we look at the things we used to love, our pleasures and our friends and our pastimes, and a bit closer, our going to chapel.

“These can never satisfy;
Give me Christ, or else I die.”

We could not be satisfied till we had tasted of the bread of life. That is a beautiful word: “If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” If you have had just a little taste, it is a foretaste of more; it is a foretaste of heaven. Not so with the world. The world gives you something and then dashes your hopes to pieces. The world gives something and then takes it away. But when the Lord gives you a taste, it is always a foretaste. “If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” But that hungering of a living soul after forgiveness, after cleansing in the blood of Christ, after the blessings of the gospel! Nothing else will do; nothing else will satisfy. Some of you are there this morning, unless I am mistaken. And do not forget what John Berridge says:

“Those holy hungerings of thy soul
Are not for mockery meant;
He hath prepared a royal feast
To give thy soul content.”

“Give us this day our daily bread.” Do you think the Lord Jesus would teach His people to pray this prayer only that He might disappoint them? “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”

“Give us this day our daily bread.” Now how does the Lord satisfy this hunger? Well, especially through the preaching of the everlasting gospel. He says, “I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread.” He says of His hungry people, “They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of My house.” That means plenty and of the best quality, the fulness of the gospel. “And I will make them drink of the river of My pleasures.” So this is a good prayer when you wake up on the Lord’s day morning: “Give us this day our daily bread.”

“Again, dear Lord, we would be fed;
We come to seek for living bread,
And feast on love divine.”

“Give us this day our daily bread.” But not every day is the Lord’s day, is it? We go back to those early days spiritually when we wished it were. O when we could not bear when the Lord’s day came to an end, and

we took a last look inside the chapel, went back and had a last look before going home. “Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth.”

“There have I been, and there would go,
'Tis like a little heaven below.”

But it is not always the Lord's day. But, “Give us this day our daily bread.” Well, as you are led to the throne of grace in prayer, especially as you are brought prayerfully to read God's holy Word that your soul might be satisfied, your soul might be fed. And above all as the Holy Spirit leads you to Christ.

“Give us this day our daily bread.” Now it is in spiritual things as in natural. If you look back over all this year, you have probably had meals three times if not four times every day. Most of them you cannot remember what they were or anything special about them, but perhaps some special day you remember, perhaps it was your birthday or something like that. It is like that spiritually. The Lord will feed the souls of His people day by day to keep them alive. But so in grace, as in nature – there will be some days you specially remember. But every day the life of grace in your soul is being maintained.

“Give us this day our daily bread.” O but to be brought to Jesus, to be satisfied with the Lord Jesus! “My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, saith the Lord.” How the Lord Jesus opened it up: “I am the Bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst.” A living soul cannot do without Christ. A living soul must have Christ. A living soul will live on Christ. And in your measure, greater or small, it will be day by day, because every day you need the Saviour. You need Him to help you. You need Him to forgive you. You need Him to uphold you. You need Him to be with you. And so you have to go on these errands to the throne of grace, the blood-sprinkled mercyseat, and there by living faith you feed on Christ as the Bread of eternal life, and he who eateth of this bread shall never die.

“For he that eats immortal food,
Immortally must live.”

But O that we knew more and more of it in the sweet experience of it, in the gracious enjoyment of it, to sit down under His shadow with

great delight, His fruit to be sweet to our taste, to hear the heavenly Bridegroom say, “Eat ... yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.” And so this must be our prayer till our journey’s end and then as the little verse says:

“Grant that we
May feast in Paradise with Thee.”

“Give us this day our daily bread.”