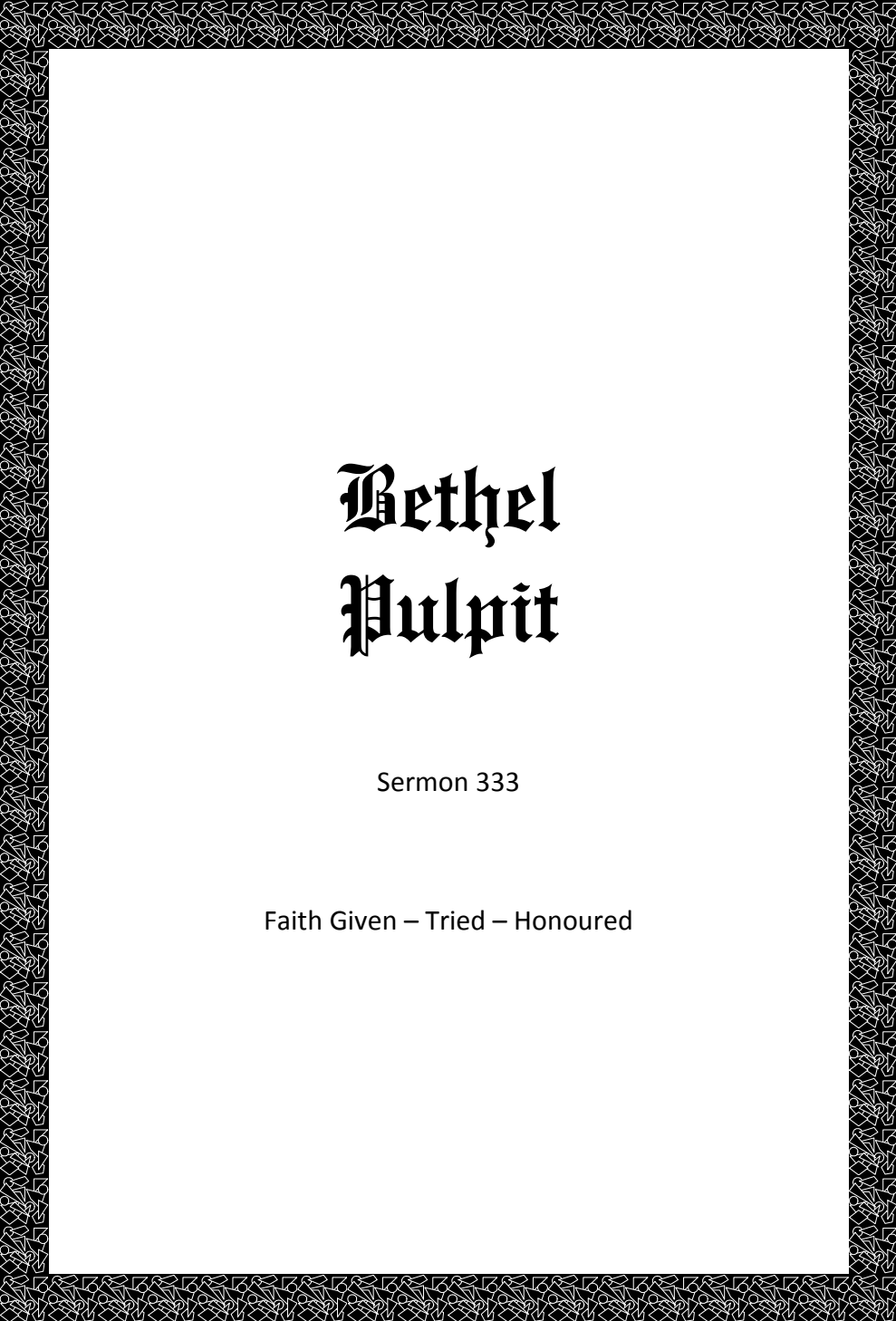




# Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 333

Faith Given – Tried – Honoured

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,  
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,  
on Lord's day morning, 21st April, 2013**

**Text:** *“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1. 7).*

Almighty God gives faith, then He tries faith, and then He honours faith, because real, God-given faith will “stand every storm, and live at last.” And though it be tried, and it will be tried, and sometimes as if with fire, yet it will be “found unto praise and honour and glory” at the Lord’s appearing. And beloved friends, that is the thing that matters. We have our little lives now. We come to chapel on the Lord’s day – we go home – then comes Monday morning. How will we stand in the day of the Lord’s appearing? That great question: “Who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth?” whether it be the great day, the second coming to everlasting judgment, or whether it be His appearing personally when we die, when we pass into eternity. It might seem one thing now, but what will it be when He appeareth?

“Who shall stand when He appeareth?” Well, there are one or two answers to that question, but one very blessed answer and clear answer is given here: those that the Lord blesses with living faith in Jesus. That is the great point, the vital point in real religion. The Glorious Reformation was fought on that one point: living faith in Jesus for our justification in the sight of a holy God.

So then, if faith is so precious, and if it is so vital, and it is spoken of here as being more precious than gold that perisheth, the two vital questions this morning are, first, what is faith? And secondly, do I possess it?

Now, what is faith? Of course, first of all in its simplicity, it is believing all that God has said; it is believing the Word of God; it is believing there is a God in heaven, Father, Son and Holy Ghost; it is believing that that God is almighty, righteous, holy, eternal, all-wise; it is believing He has given a holy law; it is believing we are told we have failed, we have fallen in Adam and by personal sin; we cannot fulfil His law; we are guilty in His sight. It is believing we can do nothing to save

ourselves; and then it is believing the gospel plan that God sent His dear Son into this world. He has a people He has chosen to eternal life. Christ died for them. The Holy Spirit will call them. It is believing our only hope is in what Jesus did when He suffered and bled and died and rose again.

If you will, that is the beginning of faith. Faith believes there is a God, and faith believes the truth of His holy Word, and faith believes everything that is said in the holy Word about God and about ourselves and about the last judgment and about eternity, about heaven, about hell. That is really the beginning of faith. But real, God-given faith, what the old divines called *saving faith*, is more than that, because a person can have all that and it never do him any good. All that I have said so far, the devils believe that. Have you ever thought about that? All these things I have been telling you just now, the divine certainties of holy Scripture, the devil believes that they are true, but it does not do him any good. There is something more needed than that. I always remember in Sunday school my old grandfather used to tell us. He said, “I believe there is a place called London. I have never been there, but I believe there is a place called London, but true faith is a lot different to that; it is a lot more than that.”

Have you ever noticed in that wonderful account in the Epistle to the Hebrews chapter 11, the worthies of faith, they believed these things, but it was always followed by an effect? They believed these things, but because it was real, God-given faith, there was always an effect. Let me illustrate. Noah – we are told he believed what God had said, that there was going to be a flood, universal death and destruction. He believed it, but it had an effect: “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”

That is what it is spiritually. True faith is the gift of God, and it is a precious gift. True faith is the work of the Holy Spirit, not just in our minds, but in our hearts. And it has an effect. Many people read the Word of God and believe these things to be true, but it does not have any real effect. But Noah believed there was going to be this destruction, and it had an effect. He built the ark. He fled into it. He needed a refuge. If the Lord gives you and me living faith, we will know that one day there is

going to be everlasting destruction, never by a flood again, but condemnation, destruction of the whole earth by fire. Well, if it is real faith, we shall need a refuge; we shall seek a refuge. The Word of God, the Holy Spirit will show us the refuge. And if we possess real faith, we shall enter into that refuge, we shall flee to that refuge, and we shall find safety in that refuge: “That refuge for sinners the gospel makes known; ’tis found in the merits of Jesus alone.”

We do want a better faith than just a mere, notional faith. Of course, the old preachers like Gadsby and John Kershaw used to call it a Sandemanian faith. There was once this denomination called the Sandemanians and they believed that faith was nothing more than just believing the Word of God to be true. What was lacking in it? Well, there was no element of commitment. There was no element of trust. We want a better faith than what the old preachers used to call a Sandemanian faith.

But just lingering on Hebrews chapter 11 for the moment. Moses believed certain things. He believed that the world was vain, that earthly pleasure could not satisfy; it was only for a season. He believed that the world was lost. He believed that the people of God were the only blessed people. But he went further than that. It had a gracious effect. It was God’s work in his heart. It was that living faith. It was the Holy Spirit’s work. “By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.” Now that is real faith. It gives up everything for Christ’s sake. If only I might be right. If only I might be saved at last. “Saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.” It will cause you to forsake the best this world can give if only you might be found one of His dear people.

This is real faith, and why it is counted such a precious gift – the godly Puritans always called it “the queen of graces” – why it is such a precious thing is this: that those who possess this God-given faith, or to use that expression, who are made true believers on the Son of God, they have everlasting life. “He that believeth on the Son” – or in other words, he who has this precious faith – “he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting

life.” Again, that is the great truth of justification, how can man be just with God? How can a guilty sinner find acceptance with God?

“’Tis not by works of righteousness  
Which our own hands have done.”

It is by faith in the Lord Jesus. “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”

So I am pressing you this morning on this vital point. If our religion is real, the Lord will bless us with real faith. It is the Holy Spirit’s work following the new birth, and that faith will believe everything God has said, that is revealed in His Word, about Himself, about ourselves, about eternity. And there will be the effect, and one effect will be, if we have real faith, our eyes will be opened – those blind eyes that before could not see our danger or our refuge or our need, could not see ourselves, could not see the vanity of the world, could not see the blessedness of the people of God, could not see the preciousness of Christ. But the Word of God compares it to the opening of blind eyes. You see things you never saw before. You see things you never saw by nature. You see yourself; you see your need; you see the vanity of the world; you see the solemnity of eternity; you see the blessedness of God’s people; you see your need of a Saviour; you see the suitability of the Saviour.

O this faith! It has been spoken of as an empty hand. It brings nothing to Christ; it receives everything. That is why it is the most God-honouring of all the graces. Hope brings its expectation; love brings a soft heart; the other graces all bring something; but faith does not. Faith comes with nothing and it receives everything. This is faith, beloved friends:

“Nothing in my hand I bring;  
Simply to Thy cross I cling.”

Now that is true faith. One or two of our hymns give quite a good definition of faith.

“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,  
On Thy kind arms I fall,  
Be Thou my strength and righteousness,  
My Jesus, and my All.”

That is living faith. That is that faith that saves, that faith which will take you to heaven.

“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.”

That is faith. If you can say those two verses feelingly, really, from an honest heart, I believe you will get to heaven. I believe that is real faith. O faith looks to Jesus in complete dependence, in hope. Faith rests on the merits of Jesus. Faith leans on the promise.

You remember under the ceremonial law (Leviticus 1), if an Israelite was concerned about his guilt, he was permitted to bring a lamb, and as that lamb was slain, as that lamb bled, he laid his hand upon its head and he confessed his sin, and we are told that “it shall be accepted for him” – the blood shall be accepted for him – “to make atonement for him.” That is a beautiful emblem of faith. We are sinners. We are guilty. The dear Lamb of God bled, dying at Calvary. And faith lays its hand upon His head, and what does it say? I am the one who deserves to die. It is He instead of me. It is the Just for the unjust, to bring me to God. But here I confess my sin, and here I rest my hand, the weight of my sins, my immortal soul, on the dear Lamb of God. O have you got a religion like this?

“My faith would lay her hand  
On that dear head of Thine;  
While like a penitent I stand,  
And there confess my sin.”

O this is living faith. It looks to Jesus and leans on Jesus alone.

There was a great controversy at the time of the Reformation between the Roman Catholics and the Protestants, and the Roman Catholics would give a point. They would say, Yes, we are saved by faith, but not by faith alone. There must be something we can do to add to it. Yes, we agree with you completely. Salvation, justification, it is by faith in Jesus, but there is something else needed; it is not by faith alone. There was one of those German dukes, as he sent his godly envoys to the

conference, he called after them and said, Beware you do not return without that word *alone*.

You will have that burnt in your heart by the Spirit of God if you are blessed with this living faith. It will be Jesus only, looking to Him, depending on Him, hanging on Him, believing on Him to the salvation of your soul, coming to Him, venturing on Him. Now this is the faith that the Lord gives which takes a sinner to heaven. There is no merit in faith. The value of faith is that it rests utterly, absolutely and completely on Christ and what He has done.

Well then, this faith will be tried. God will try it, and Satan will try it. God will try it to prove it real. Satan will try it to seek to get rid of it. But if that faith is real, if it is the faith of God's elect, if it is that true believing that the Holy Spirit has wrought in your soul, it will "stand every storm, and live at last."

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Well then, this trial of faith. Some come into it as soon as the Lord blesses them. Many come into it immediately after they have openly professed the Lord's name. Some seem to go on smoothly many of their days, and then towards the end their faith is sorely tried. Now how is this faith tried? Well, Satan will tempt you to unbelief, to deny the truth even, as well as doubting your own standing. Some of the godly old ministers said they never had a thought about atheism, until after the Lord blessed them they were tempted to it.

The temptations of Satan are severe, the fiery darts of the devil, these temptations to doubt God's Word, God's truth. And then there are his temptations to sin in various ways. Some of the old preachers used to say, If a man does not like strong drink, Satan will not tempt him to get drunk. Satan tempts where the believer is weak – some to the lusts of the flesh, some to covetousness, some to dishonesty. But these temptations are all to try your faith. Then there are the afflictions that God's people come into. Sometimes they are bewildered. Sometimes they cannot understand. Sometimes Satan says, Why should the Lord deal with you like this when you have sought to walk worthy of Him? You get on legal ground. You have sought to honour Him. You have the seventy-third

Psalm, the terrible temptations of Satan when poor Asaph was in trouble and everything was going right with his ungodly neighbours and his soul well nigh staggered under these things. Disappointment, affliction in the family, illness, sickness, bereavement – why do these things happen to me? If the Lord has many arrows in his quiver, Satan has many arrows in his, and for generations he has been studying human nature and he knows where to fire these arrows, and the Lord permits these things for the trial of faith. But we are told also that God tries His people, God ordains this pathway of trial and difficulty and affliction, this passing through the fires.

But then there is another trial, and that is the trial of prosperity. In his great work on divine providence, John Flavel said that thousands more have fallen in the trial of prosperity than in the trial of affliction. O but don't you see it, when people who have seemed to walk humbly with their God in days of sorrow, and in days of perplexity, and days of poverty, and then affluence has come, and then what has happened to their religion? Only the Lord knows whether it will prove right at last. O what falls there have been, what dishonouring of the Lord! John Newton – people talk about him more as a well-known hymnwriter, but in his day he was the great Christian letter-writer, his very profitable letters. He heard of a friend, a young man, a godly young man, who had inherited a tremendous fortune, a tremendous amount of money. Typically of Newton, he wrote lovingly but to sympathise with him! He said, It is the greatest trial that your faith has ever had. May the Lord enable you to stand in it.

Well, Peter knew what he was talking about. “The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire.” When you think of Peter, how he was tempted in the courtyard of the high priest and when he denied his Lord and Master with oaths and with curses. Now did Peter's faith fail? Peter failed; his character failed; there are a lot of things that failed; but Peter's faith never failed. How do we know that? Because the Lord Jesus said, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.” And his faith did not fail, and the proof of it: those bitter tears of repentance, the humble confession, the gracious restoration. “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?” The Lord did not cast him away. His faith did not fail, because it was in the hands of his Saviour, because he was divinely kept.

“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire” – and Peter’s was – “might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” So Peter knew what he was talking about, and he also knew this: that these terrible trials, whether the temptations of Satan or whether the Lord trying His people, they always work for good. In the analogy here, pure gold well tried by fire, it loses nothing but the dross, and it is purer when it comes forth out of the fire.

“To His church, His joy, and treasure,  
Every trial works for good;  
They are dealt in weight and measure,  
Yet how little understood!  
Not in anger,  
But from His dear covenant love.”

But if you are blessed with this true faith, this living faith to take you to heaven, you *will* be tried, you *will* be tempted, there *will* be the assaults of Satan, there *will* be things in your life. There will be afflictions which are sent by the Lord Himself. These things that have come, perhaps you say, Why, Lord? Perhaps we do not altogether ask wisely. But it is for the testing, the trying of our faith, and if our faith is real, it will “stand every storm, and live at last.”

There were two men, David and Ahithophel, going to the house of God in company to worship the Lord, and you listen to them. They are holding sweet counsel together, and one possessed living faith, and one did not, and the trial came. What happened? David failed, but his faith did not fail. But Ahithophel, carried away with the lust of earthly things, covetousness, honour, fame – in the end he took his own life. Demas, who is mentioned in one of the epistles, was one of Paul’s friends. He walked with him in his trouble. But later on you find he did not possess true faith. “Demas hath forsaken me” – the trial came and his faith did not stand – “having loved this present world.” So it is an exercise that the Lord will hold us fast, keep us fast, keep us to the end, bless us with enduring faith, and strengthen our faith. O to know that enduring faith, faith which works by love, faith which purifies the heart, faith which overcomes the world!

“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise

and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” Now in coming to a close, why is it that real faith can never perish? First of all, in all its simplicity, because it is the gift of God; it is His work; He performs it; and because it belonged to Him in the beginning, He will claim it at the end.

“Faith once received can ne’er be lost,  
Nor hell from Christ thy soul divide.”

But then you go on, because the Lord watches over that faith and He strengthens that faith and that word is still true, the beautiful word that was spoken concerning Peter: “But I have prayed for thee.” When your faith is weak, when your faith is feeble, when your heart is hard, when you do not seem to pray very well for yourself, to hear a whisper from heaven: “But I have prayed for thee.” What, despite all your sins and unworthiness? “I have prayed for thee.” And what is the end of it? “That thy faith fail not.” It is a wonderful thing.

And then it is just as John Bunyan saw in the Interpreter’s house, that dimly-burning flame – that is living faith. And that dreadful person pouring the buckets of water on it – some of you know something about that – but the flame not going out, burning more brightly. And then that glorious, hidden person adding more and yet more oil to keep the flame burning. Now this is it: “He giveth more grace.” And this is it:

“His grace shall to the end,  
Stronger and brighter shine;  
Nor present things, nor things to come,  
Shall quench the spark divine.”

What a word this is: that it shall “be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ”! What an honour here put on faith, that little faith, that trembling faith, that tried faith! But it is real, and it lasts, and it endures, and it comes safely through, because it is God’s work, not ours, and it can never perish, and it can never be lost until it receives the full consummation in eternal glory. O what a word it is, and at the end it comes to the vital point. We read about this trial and this test here. But what about this: “at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” That is in great glory and power and majesty, to judge the world in righteousness. “When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?” Well, He will, but He will only find it in the hearts of His people where the Holy

Spirit has put it. So He gives faith, and He tries faith, and He honours faith, and what an abundant honour He puts on it in heaven at last.

“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”

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Faith! 'tis a precious grace,  
Where'er it is bestowed;  
It boasts of a celestial birth,  
And is the gift of God.

Jesus it owns a King,  
An all-atoning Priest;  
It claims no merits of its own,  
But looks for all in Christ.

To Him it leads the soul,  
When filled with deep distress;  
Flies to the fountain of His blood,  
And trusts His righteousness.

Since 'tis Thy work alone,  
And that divinely free,  
Come, Holy Spirit, and make known  
The power of faith in me.

*Benjamin Beddome*