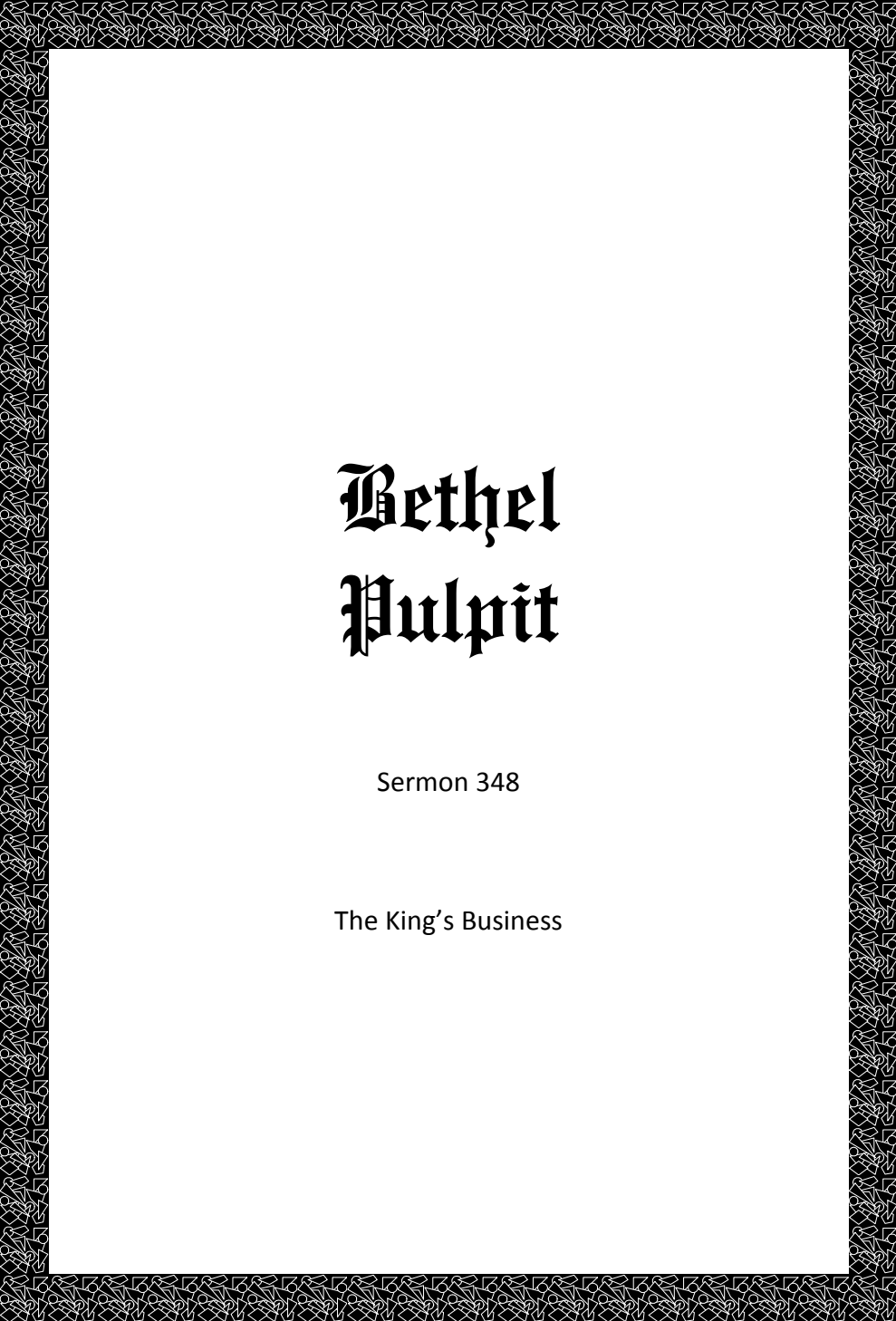




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 348

The King's Business

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day evening, 13th July, 2014**

Text: *"The king's business required haste" (1 Samuel 21. 8).*

David's behaviour in this chapter was not very good; indeed, it was a disgrace to his profession. This word that I have read to you was an untruth. O the sad spots and places that a child of God can get into when left by himself! David now for some time had been hunted by King Saul like "a partridge in the mountains." He had almost come to the point of despair, of giving up. He tried to flee to one place and another, but still Saul pursued him. He said, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul." He could no longer go to Samuel for help so he tried the Lord's priest. He went to the tabernacle which at that time was at Nob and he begged for something to eat, and he was given the shewbread, and he begged for a sword, and he was given the sword of Goliath. He said, "There is none like that; give it me."

But the priest Ahimelech was bewildered what David was doing, where he had come from, why he was alone, and David explained to him that he had come on special business for the king. Now that was a complete untruth. Here again when he was asked why he came completely unarmed, his answer was that he had to come away in a hurry because this business of the king required haste; there was not time; he could not wait. In all this he was not speaking the truth; he was being deceitful.

That is one great point concerning the Word of God. When it speaks of the godly, it speaks of their mistakes and it speaks of their faults. There are so many good books about good men, but there is not much mention of anything that ever they did wrong. Now we know that David was forgiven, but these things are not left on record to be excuses for us, but rather as warnings, beacon lights. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." For David is described as the man after God's own heart, but where was he when the Lord left him for a moment? Where was Abraham? Where was Jacob? Where was Simon Peter? How we need that word: "Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not."

Now having said that to put this word in the context, I want to try to speak from it this evening in a spiritual sense: the King's business, the

Lord's business. It must ever be first; it requires haste. Now you might say, Is this permissible to deal with a text in this way? The godly Puritans went into this and they felt that this was a lawful thing to do, but they spoke of it as taking a text "by way of accommodation." They said it was lawful to use these things as an illustration, but they very solemnly warned that if a text is ever taken like this, we must never build a doctrine upon it.

So speaking of it in this sense this evening: "The King's business required haste." Our thoughts go first of all to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. "The King's business required haste." Now let us be clear, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was never in a hurry, but He was never still. The reason that I read that long chapter, the first chapter in the Gospel according to Mark this evening was this: how much did our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ do, how much did He accomplish in one single day! We read of one thing in one verse, and then something else in the next, calling the disciples, and then healing Simon's wife's mother, and then healing the leper.

It has been remarked that just considering our Lord Jesus in His sacred humanity, there was no man ever in the history of this world who accomplished so much in three years as our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ did. The Gospel according to Mark especially emphasises this: "straightway"; "immediately." Did you notice how it kept coming in: "immediately"; "straightway"? And you have it chapter after chapter. He was doing His Father's business. We read beautiful words like this: "Who went about doing good"; words like this: "I do always those things that please Him." It was the business of His eternal Father that was always His chief and great concern.

So you remember the first recorded word we ever have of the Lord Jesus. You remember when He was twelve years old: "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" Have you thought of His last word? "It is finished." What was finished? His Father's business, the honouring and glorifying of His Father and the everlasting salvation of His people. And from when He was twelve years of age till He cried on the cross triumphantly, "It is finished," you could see this written across every page of the gospel records. There He was about His Father's business.

"The King's business required haste." Healing the sick, raising the dead, opening the eyes of the blind – the King's business. The wonderful

words that He spoke, His ministry – the King’s business. That working out a glorious righteousness to be His people’s everlasting, perfect wedding dress – the King’s business. Going to Gethsemane, the judgment hall, to Calvary – the King’s business. And rising from the dead and showing Himself by many infallible proofs – the King’s business. And now risen, exalted, glorified in heaven – “How He lives to carry on His people’s cause above” – the King’s business. Ever living, ever interceding, almighty to save, sitting on the mercy seat, waiting to hear and to answer prayer, King of kings and Lord of lords, on the throne – the King’s business. “Wist ye not that I must be about My Father’s business?”

“The King’s business required haste.” Now then, with the Lord’s help I pass on to this word as it concerns you and me, if we are found amongst those who know and love and fear the Lord. This should be the principle of our lives: the King’s business requires haste. So we linger here first of all just for a little while and remind ourselves that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is our God and He is our King. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. He has triumphed gloriously. He has sat down upon His throne and there He reigns and He will reign and He must reign till He has put every enemy beneath His feet. “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” And so He reigns in everything: the rise and fall of kingdoms, the moving of the planets, the crushing of a moth, the falling of leaf. In everything He ever rules, He ever reigns, almighty, accomplishing His purposes. “None can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?”

But with His beloved people, He reigns over them and for them. By nature they are not the King’s friends; they are the King’s enemies. We have that word, “Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the King’s enemies; whereby the people fall under Thee.” You say, This great, this glorious King – has He enemies? That is you; that is me; that is every one of us in this chapel by nature – the King’s enemies. But when He goes conquering and to conquer, in His hand is a bow, and His arrows never miss their mark. He fires them in love, and they wound, and they weaken, and they slay, but they are arrows that are dipped in love, dipped in blood, and they bring a sinner in humble submission and full surrender to the Saviour’s feet.

“Thine is the power; behold, I sit,
In willing bonds at Jesus’ feet.”

The conquests of His grace, the conquests of King Jesus. I wonder which side you and I are on. By nature, “We will not have this Man to reign over us.” O but what a difference when we are brought in willing bonds, in humble submission, constrained by His love to Jesus’ feet! Like the one who spoke to King David: “Thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my lord the king shall appoint.” Or like the other one who said, “In what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be.”

So the King, King Jesus. “Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty.” That is what some of us long for this evening, to have a glimpse of the King in His beauty – the beauty of His suitability to meet our need, the beauty of His sin-atoning sufferings, the beauty of His lovely face. “Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off.”

Well, if the Lord has dealt in love and mercy with you and me, if we are truly His, if we truly belong to Him, this should be the principle in our lives: “The King’s business requireth haste.” It should be so in our family; it should be so in the church of God; it should be so in our plans, in our choices, in our decisions. “The King’s business requireth haste” – which means in its simplicity this: that the things of God, the King’s business, must ever be first.

When we have a word like this: “The King’s business requireth haste,” it certainly does not mean that we need to be hasty. There are many warnings, especially in the Book of Proverbs, against being hasty – hasty in our actions, hasty in our temper, hasty in our decisions. There is a word that says, “He that believeth shall not make haste.” But, “The King’s business requireth haste.” The things of God must ever come first. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

“The King’s business requireth haste.” Do not just think of the King’s business as some eminent thing in the church of God or even in life. Wasn’t it John Newton who said if the Lord sent two angels to this earth, one to sweep the streets and one to rule a kingdom, they would both

be completely happy; there would not be any jealousy one of the other? Why? Because they were both doing the King's business. The old poet said,

“Who sweeps a room, as by His laws,
Makes that and the action fine.”

A loving mother looking after her children – that can be the King's business. The same with these menial things – they can be the King's business. When I came to Bethel at first, they told me that during the war years they needed so much wood. They must have had some kind of heating then that needed a lot of wood, and it was very hard to get. There was one poor, old woman – if I remember right, I think she was called Miss Gazeley. She was quite feeble, but she used to spend her Saturdays, I think it was in Stockwood Park, picking up twigs and picking up wood and taking them home and bringing them to chapel. That was the King's business. Many people would like some exalted position. The psalmist said, “I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.” It is this: it is putting the things of God first.

Of course, we think of the house of God; we think of chapel, the services of the Lord's house. There are quite a few hymns which take this point up.

“With joy we hasten to the place
Where we the Saviour oft have met.”

Or the well-known one:

“Yes, with a cheerful zeal,
We haste to Zion's hill.”

O do you know something of that spirit when you wake up and it is the Lord's day: “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord”? “There my best friends, my kindred dwell; there God my Saviour reigns.” Sometimes it is a choice between your carnal things and the things of the house of God, or your carnal things and the honour and glory of God, and it is this: “Father, glorify Thy name.”

“The King's business requireth haste.” The things of God must be first. I have been thinking a lot of that Old Testament king, Amaziah (2 Chron. 25), King of Judah. He was not one of the best, but he certainly

was not one of the worst, though he proved to be a bad man in the end. But he had taken some action. What it was: he had sent a hundred talents to the King of Israel to come to his aid and help him in battle, and a man of God opposed him. He must have been a brave man, and he told him he was wrong. He said, You should not be doing this; the King of Israel is not a good man. The Israelites at present are following their idols. You do not want carnal help. You should be relying on the Lord. You have done wrong, and if you go into battle with these Israelites, it will come to ruin; it will end in death. And surprisingly this king, though he was not a good man, fell before it.

There is not much of that today in England. There was in former years. Look at a man like William Pitt, one of our greatest prime ministers. He was not a godly man, but wouldn't he listen to William Wilberforce! And when John Newton went to speak about the slave trade, didn't he welcome him! There have been times in our country when ungodly men in high places bowed to the warnings of the godly. Well, this ungodly king Amaziah did. But he said, There is one thing: what about those hundred talents of silver I have spent hiring this army? I am going to lose all that. The man of God said, "The Lord is able to give thee much more than this."

There is a principle here. Sometimes if the King's business requireth haste you may have to sacrifice your money; you may have to sacrifice your time. You do not know what you might lose, and you are willing to do it, but what about the hundred talents? What about what it was going to cost you? What about what you are going to lose? "The King's business requireth haste." "The Lord is able to give thee much more than this." The old preachers used to say, "God is a debtor to no man."

But there may be some of you here, and "the King's business requireth haste." "This is the way, walk ye in it." "What shall we do for the hundred talents?" What about what we are going to lose? How are we going to manage? "The King's business requireth haste." "The Lord is able to give thee much more than this." So this is seeking the honour and glory of God and this is putting the things of God first.

"The King's business requireth haste." But then also it is walking in a way of obedience, obedience to the King. "Where the word of a king

is, there is power.” Even naturally, especially in former days when kings were more despotic, the importance of obeying the king. But this is loving obedience. “What Jesus does command, His people should obey.” And of course, it does speak of an open profession of His name. It does speak of honouring Him in His appointed ways. And, “The King’s business requireth haste.” “But what shall we do for the hundred talents?” What if I lose my friends and I lose my reputation? I might even lose my job. And what of my weakness and helplessness? “The Lord is able to give thee much more than this.” There is a principle here.

“The King’s business requireth haste.” But then it is a warning against sleepiness and slothfulness in the things of God. The church of God in the Song of Solomon says, “By night on my bed I sought Him” – she was seeking Him, but she was half asleep, and that is the fault with so much religion today, and we have to plead guilty – our lukewarmness that the Lord complained of in the third chapter of the Revelation, our backwardness, our slothfulness, our deadness.

“The King’s business requireth haste.” This is the opposite. It is that holy zeal. We read in one place, and it is when the Lord had taken that whip of small cords and chased the buyers and sellers out of the temple: “And His disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up.” It perhaps seems a strange expression, and it is applied to the Lord Jesus. The zeal of His Father’s house had eaten Him up. What does it mean? Well, we talk sometimes about a *consuming passion* – something that eats you up. With some it is their ambition; with some it is seeking after pleasure; with some it is making money; with some it is sport. A consuming passion – it eats them up. What was it with the Lord Jesus? The zeal of His Father’s house, a holy zeal for His Father’s honour and glory. “The zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up.” “The King’s business requireth haste” – not some slovenly attitude, not some careless attitude. “That in all things He might have the preeminence.”

“The King’s business requireth haste.” So in a few places in Scripture we have this haste in the King’s business described like this: this running after Him. “I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart.” That sinful backwardness has gone. There are the sweet constrainings of His love. But so often we feel there is not the haste

we would like and the enthusiasm and the holy zeal. That prayer: “Draw me, we will run after Thee.”

“Draw me, O Lord, and I will run
In sweet obedience to Thy Son.”

If the Lord Jesus draws you by His love, if the love of Christ constrains you, then you will know what it is to run and you will know what this means, this godly haste, this gracious haste.

“The King’s business requireth haste.” There are two occasions in the New Testament where it is recorded that people made haste. Now can you remember who they were? The first one: Zacchaeus. He was a little man and he climbed up a tree that he might see the Lord Jesus. People have argued, was he in earnest seeking the Lord or did he come from curiosity? Well, we do not know, but the Lord knew all about him. This was the appointed time. We read, “He must needs go through Samaria,” and He must needs go through Jericho. Zacchaeus had a solemn shock when he heard the Saviour’s voice say, “Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down.” The Lord knew his name. Well, it was in the Book of life. The Lord knows your name. Has He ever said to you in the spirit of it, “Make haste, and come down”? Come down from that sycamore tree you have climbed up. Come down from your unconcern. Come down from your self-righteousness. Come down in repentance. Come down in all your need. And we read of the obedience of faith that “he made haste, and came down.”

When the Lord begins with us, we know something of this gracious haste. There is eternity before us. O the haste we feel in our spirit, that haste to go after the Saviour, if only we might find Him! We need Him; we cannot do without Him. If only He will make us right; if only He will prepare us. Well, Zacchaeus proved it. “The King’s business requireth haste.” What a word that was: “This day is salvation come to this house.” I know what some people will say: Well, there was not this, and there was not that, and there was not something else in his religion, and what did Zacchaeus know about this? Do you know how Zacchaeus proved the reality of his call by grace? The gracious change in his life. It was complete. And as he had this zeal before in making money, and it seems in deceiving the people, he had a zeal now in repentance and a zeal in restoring all he had taken. The law required a certain amount if a person

had taken something unlawfully. Zacchaeus was not bothered about the law. He knew the gospel is a higher standard than the law. He could not give them enough back. That is the evidence. Some people do not feel they have got much and they cannot say much, O but don't they prove the reality of their religion in that tender, humble, loving walk in which the vital thing is this: "The King's business requireth haste." So Zacchaeus.

And the others we read of who made haste: the shepherds. The shepherds on the day when our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was born at Bethlehem, when they received those glorious tidings from the angel: "Fear not.... for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." They could not stay any longer. And what about their sheep and their lambs? Well, they had to leave them. I believe they left them in the hands of their God. And we read, "They came with haste." Of course they did! They knew the sweet drawing, the sweet attraction. "They came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger."

O beloved friends, may we know something of the religion of Zacchaeus, something of the religion of the shepherds, even tonight having a little glimpse of our incarnate God laid in the manger. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor," and that holy zeal and the sweet constrainings of love divine and that going with haste even to Bethlehem, and to Calvary –

"To worship our incarnate God,
And know He saved us by His blood."

"The King's business required haste."