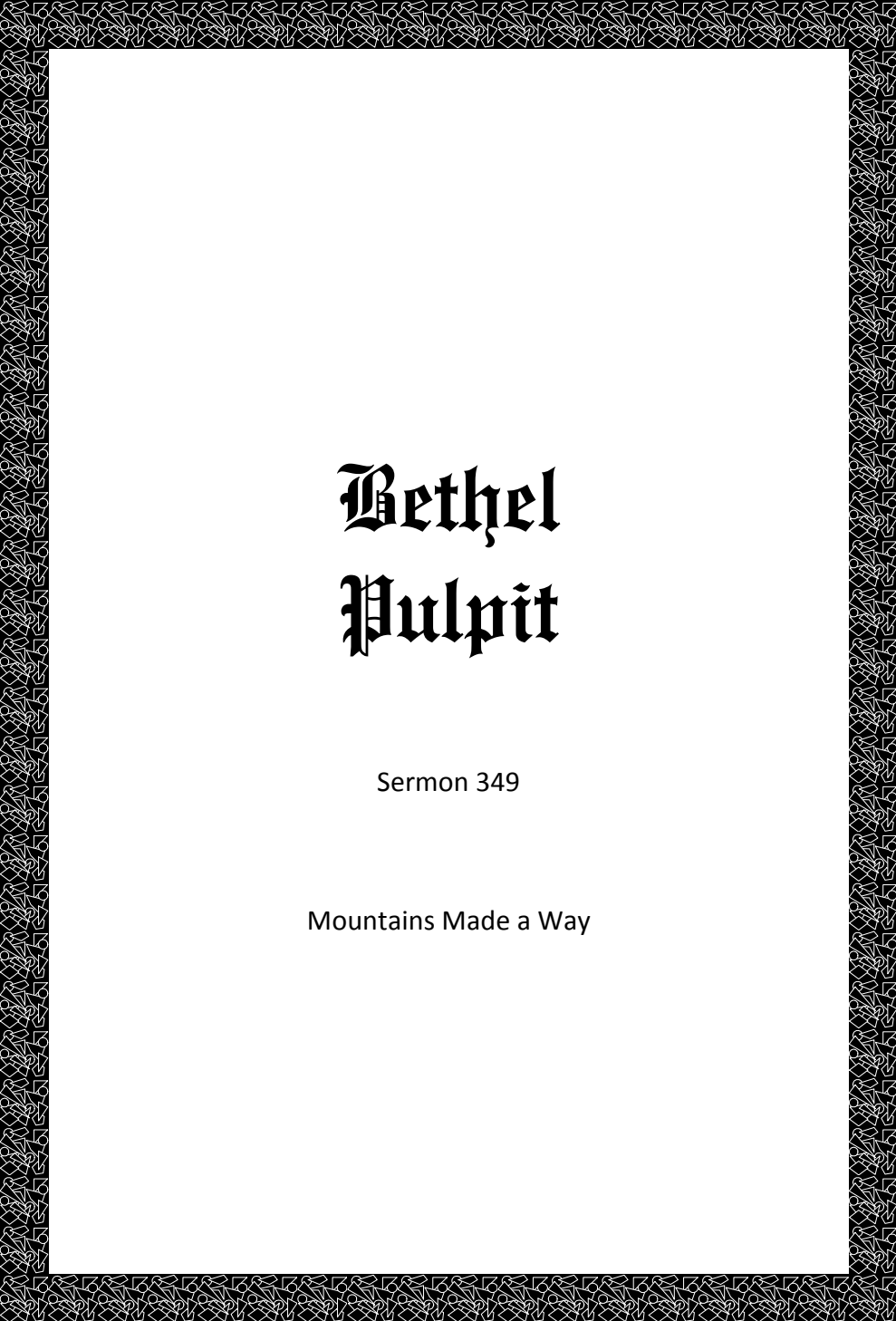




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 349

Mountains Made a Way

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

Text: *"And I will make all My mountains a way" (Isaiah 49. 11).*

In this chapter there are some very wonderful things, some very gracious promises, and the Lord says, I will do it. Also in this chapter there are some most impossible things, but the Lord says, I will do them.

I take it this wonderful promise we have here, in the context and in the circumstances, refers to God's ancient people being brought out of Babylonian captivity and returned to their own land. Now it was an impossibility. It was like a great, insurmountable mountain. There was no way. But the Lord said, I will do it. The Lord said, "I will make all My mountains a way." There were so many mountains literally between Babylon and Jerusalem and there were a lot more mountains metaphorically, impossible things. And the Lord says, "I will make all My mountains a way." You can read later on in the Word of God how He did it. So that is the meaning of the word literally in its context when Isaiah spoke it.

But like all these later chapters in Isaiah, there is a looking forward to gospel days and the glorious work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as the Redeemer of His people. Now it is He who speaks here, the Son of God incarnate, our dear Lord Jesus. He says, "I will make all My mountains a way." Now beloved friends, with the Lord's help I want to bring this before you in two ways this morning. First of all, as it concerns our Lord and Saviour Himself and the many mountains that were in *His* way before the everlasting salvation of His people, and then secondly, how lovingly and graciously He fulfils this word in the lives of His people. As many of you know, this is one of my favourite texts that I have proved over and over again.

"I will make all My mountains a way." Before the people of God could be saved, before there could be any hope for any lost, ruined, guilty sinner, before salvation could ever appear, there were all these mountains that were in the way, and the first mountain before the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was this: that there was not a single sinner who would be born who ever deserved salvation, who ever deserved hope, who ever deserved

mercy. Why should the Son of God in glory take notice of a wretched, ruined race who would reject Him, despise Him? That was the first mountain. And what was it? “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” – in the heart, the loving heart of the Son of God from all eternity. We say these things; we have heard them; we sing about them. But the wonder of it, that the Son of God, looking down from everlasting, His delights were with the sons of men. Well, His delights were with His Father, rejoicing ever before Him. But we read He was “rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth; and My delights were with the sons of men” (Prov. 8. 30, 31).

It pleased Him to love a number that no man could number with an everlasting love. The riches of His mercy, the display of divine sovereignty, this great mountain levelled in His everlasting purposes in the covenant of grace, that He would be willing to come to this earth, willing to be a Man of sorrows, willing to suffer, bleed and die for unworthy, guilty sinners. Now what a mountain that was in the way, and there was one thing that levelled this mountain, and it can be expressed in one word: *love*. O the love of Christ to sinners that that mountain was levelled! Apart from that, when Adam fell and sin entered the world, the whole human race, the whole of creation would have been obliterated. But the mountain had already been removed. There was a people dwelling in His heart, so creation could not be destroyed. So instead of the first word being condemnation, there was a promise, and the first action instead of being destruction was sacrifice and blood shed and a coat of skins.

“I will make all My mountains a way.” But then there was another mountain in the way of the Son of God if He must come to earth. If it was necessary that He should live on the earth and that He should bleed and that He should die, how could He who is Almighty God become a man without ceasing to be God? And if He were to be born of a woman, how was it possible that He could become a real man and not partake of human sin? What a mountain this was!

“Eternal wisdom drew the plan;
In all things ordered well.”

We see it in the mystery of the virgin birth. “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of

God.” O eternal wisdom laid that mountain low so that there *was* a way that the Son of God could come, blessed be His name, to become a real Man and never cease to be Almighty God, become a real Man, with no trace of sin, “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.”

“I will make all My mountains a way.” And then there was another mountain. It was necessary that the Son of God should live a perfect, holy, spotless life in obedience to the law, that which none of His people could ever do, that holy life of perfect obedience without a spot, without a blemish, that He might reckon to His people’s account for their justification. So right from the beginning Satan sought to destroy Him, first of all when Herod slew all the children round about Bethlehem, and then that sore temptation in the wilderness when He suffered being tempted. If there had been the slightest blemish, then that righteousness would never have availed. And we read that the devil “departed from Him for a season.” Have you noticed all the way through there seemed to be the power of hell let loose – all these demon-possessed people and all the opposition of the scribes and the Pharisees and all the attempts to entangle Him in His speech?

“But spotless, innocent, and pure,
The great Redeemer stood.”

O how He levelled that mountain, the dreadful opposition of sin and Satan and the world! “He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.” And then when Satan tempted Him: “If Thou be the Son of God.” “O what an *if* was there!” And that dreadful mountain of opposition and temptation and affliction that the Son of God had to endure. But in His loving obedience to His Father’s will and His Father’s law and in love to His poor, unworthy people that mountain also was laid low.

And then, as I am sure all of you are thinking, came that greatest of all mountains. Let us be clear, though we cannot altogether understand it, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in His pure, spotless, sacred humanity shrank from the cross – not just the suffering and the agony, but His Father hiding His face, and all that weight of sin to be laid upon Him. If you want to see this mountain as it reached almost to the skies, you see it in the Garden of Gethsemane.

“None can penetrate through thee,
Gloomy, dark Gethsemane.”

Some of us have literally visited Gethsemane and as we wandered round, I saw one or two of our fellow church members who could not bear it. The tears were streaming down their faces. But neither could I. “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me” – now that is the height of the mountain – “nevertheless” – and that wonderful word, it brought the mountain down and it levelled it to the dust. “Nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done.”

“It were an easy part
For Him the cross to fly;
But love to sinners fills His heart,
And makes Him choose to die.”

“I will make all My mountains a way.” And then there was one last mountain. We see those loving hands of Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus laying the lifeless body of our Redeemer in the cold grave. There it seemed that death was reigning. There it seemed outwardly that Satan and the powers of hell had triumphed. There it seemed that Pilate and the Romans were victorious. That last mountain! And you know the glorious end: “Vain the stone, the watch, the seal.” The resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as He rose triumphant from the dead, taking the sting from death and the victory from the grave, leading captivity captive, bruising the serpent’s head, rising to live, to die no more.

“I will make all My mountains a way.” So before going on, may the Holy Spirit enable us just to pause for a moment in worship and adoration and love and praise, to say, “Why me?” Perhaps some to feel a personal interest; perhaps some to say, “Here it is I find my heaven, while upon the Lamb I gaze.” For, “Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.”

Now to continue. “I will make all My mountains a way.” We have many mountains: things in our lives and circumstances, in our souls, in our families, in our relationships with others, in the church of God, as we think of the unknown way, some with things concerning their health, some those that they love. *Mountains*. You know what it means: these things – you have them with you; you have them before you; you cannot get through

them; you cannot get round them; you cannot get over them. They are dark, gloomy, threatening mountains. You feel they are going to fall on you and crush you. It is a striking description of our hard things and our problems and our troubles. *Mountains*. And if you are a child of God, the Lord Jesus is going to make all your mountains a way, every one of them. He says, They are My mountains. They are His because He has appointed you should have them in your life, and they are His because He is going to deal with them. “My mountains.” And I will make them a way, all of them, every one of them.

Well, what a subject this is! Let us begin with the vital point. If brought into real concern spiritually, born again of the Spirit of God, our great mountain, our sins and our souls and a never-ending eternity, and the judgment day, and how shall I stand in that great day? Now is that your chief, your great concern? And does it rise up, or has it ever risen up like a mighty mountain before you? What a wonderful thing it is that we have the glorious gospel of the grace of God! It speaks of the blood of Jesus. It speaks of a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, and it speaks of how the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth us from all sin. Because how ever high this mountain rises, all the sins of a believer are completely blotted out. There is no mountain there. There is no mountain to be seen. The atonement has been made. O but what is it personally, as you are led feeling something of this great mountain? It is too great; it is too heavy; you cannot deal with it. “Convinced as a sinner to Jesus I come, informed by the gospel for such there is room.” What? To look to the Saviour, to rest upon His merit, to plead His precious blood, and for the mountain to disappear.

Now some see it in a moment; some have to wait long; some, their eyes are dim. O but the point is this: to be brought with Christ our only hope, Christ our only plea. Now do not take it for granted. I believe there are many perish through a take-it-for-granted religion. We can say these words, we can repeat them, O but if you can say that your chief desire this morning more than anything else is if the Lord Jesus would give you that precious faith, scatter all your darkness, sin and unbelief, that you might look to Him for salvation and see Him coming to you in a way of blessing, just like the good Samaritan, coming right where you are to do everything for you. But the Lord has promised it. It is a gracious promise. It is a

promise of love and mercy. It is a promise that comes from the cross of Christ.

“I will make all My mountains a way.” Now you will have many mountains in providence, in your life. There may be some of you with mountains before you, and you cannot see any way forward or any way through. But the Lord can make a way where there is no way. Sometimes He says, “Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it.” There is no mountain there now. But these mountains that are in your way. A lot of you with your little families, or others with older, grown-up children, there are these things, these hard things, these problems and difficulties, and they are like mountains because you feel you cannot manage them. There are some people with their health, and there are some concerning those they love. Then looking forward to the unknown way, that date you have written down, that trial, or that thing you cannot manage, or that thing that is too hard for you. *Mountains.* O but when the Lord Jesus says, They are My mountains, and I will make them a way, all of them!

Of course, Satan will tempt you on this: some of the Lord’s people have a thing in their life and they know it never will be removed. Now how does it fit in with a word like this? I go back to my Haslingden days, and one of my friends, the news had come that his young wife was dying, and she could not possibly live more than three months. In those days, and I think still in Lancashire, deacons spoke at prayer meetings, and my old friend spoke of it at the prayer meeting that night, and he spoke of this: how the mountain had been laid low and made a plain in their souls, both of them – his wife with the news she was going to die and he himself receiving the news that he was going to lose the wife he loved so dearly. I thought that was very gracious. In that outward sense, the mountain was not going to be removed, but they both felt the Lord did deal with it in their souls and He had made the mountain a plain there.

“I will make all My mountains a way.” There are many mountains the Lord’s people have as they travel on heavenwards. I mean things like this: walking in darkness, the temptations of Satan, a hard heart, coldness, deadness, barrenness. And if your religion is real, these things are mountains to you, and you cannot deal with them; you cannot move them. It is as Berridge says: “I might as soon the seasons change... or raise the

dead to life.” But the Lord says, “I will make all My mountains a way.” You are not going to succumb to Satan’s temptations. You are not always going to be in darkness. “Unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings.” That hard heart is going to be made soft. “I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.” That wintry condition – the springtime is going to come.

“I will make all My mountains a way.” So what is it that you have today in your life or in your circumstances, or in your relationships with other people? You younger ones have had mountains recently with your exams, and perhaps there will be starting a new school, or going to a new class, and all these things can be mountains to you. What is a mountain to one is not a mountain to another. I have told you over the years how two people came to see me years ago in the same week and they were absolutely two opposites. One would have been delighted if she had been in the other position, and this one the other way round, but the two of them were so sad. If the Lord means a thing to be a mountain, it will be, but not so you might despair, but so you might know His blessed ability to help you. He giveth more grace as the burdens increase. He blesses you with strength equal to your day. He kindly upholds you. He supplies all your needs. He blesses you with His gracious presence.

“I will make all My mountains a way.” If you think of the figure, I do not know whether you have ever read one of those sermons of J.C. Philpot preaching to a London congregation in the 1850s. I think his text was, “Who art thou, O great mountain?” But he started off – he had a vast congregation – and he said, “Most of the people in this chapel will never have seen a mountain in your life.” That was speaking in 1850 in the middle of London! Now most people here have seen a mountain. Some of you have climbed Snowdon, or you have seen mountains in Scotland or visited Switzerland. Literally in the great day all those mountains are going to depart. That is going to be the power of God literally in that last great day – all those mountains brought down. But to see a mountain and to think of how striking this figure is!

“I will make all My mountains a way.” That text I just mentioned of Philpot’s of course is a well-known text amongst us: “Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain.” What was

happening there? Well, as I have often told you, the temple at Jerusalem meant so much to God's people, the Jews, and it was in ruins, and the people had started rebuilding it, but they had stopped. The power of the state was against them and the people had no heart. Poor Zerubbabel was discouraged. He felt the temple should be rebuilt. What was it – twelve years, and not a stone had been laid on another? There was no possibility of it ever being finished. The Lord spoke: "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and He shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it."

"Who art thou, O great mountain?" It is not a question; it is a challenge. It does not matter who the mountain is, what the mountain is – spiritually, providentially, great, small, in your family, in your circumstances. "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." The temple was built.

But then when you think of that greater temple, the sure foundation laid for sinners in Zion in the Person and work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and His work going on. O but at times it seems slow and at times it seems to come to a stop. "He shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it" – every mountain laid low and,

"O what a sweet, exalted song
Shall rend the vaulted skies,
When, shouting grace, the blood-washed throng
Shall see the topstone rise."

Glorious truth! But doesn't it make you stop and think! When that last, living stone is laid in its place, the topstone brought forth, time no longer – "Grace, grace unto it" – will you and I be found among those living stones in Zion above and built on the sure foundation, or will our religion prove to be nothing but scaffolding – perhaps rising higher than the building, but never a living stone and never built on the foundation?

"I will make all My mountains a way." If you have a mountain before you, the Lord Jesus is going to go before you and when you come to that mountain, the Lord Jesus is going to be there. May you be able to say like old Caleb, "Give me this mountain." It was full of enemies, Anakims,

adversaries. “If so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said.” May there be a few of you this morning able on the ground of this word and promise to look at this mountain before you and say, “Give me this mountain.... If so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able.”

“And I will make all My mountains a way.” Well, there are many mountains in the lives of God’s people, but none of us yet have reached our last mountain, and that will be higher, and that will be the most frightening.

“Who, except Jesus smiles within,
Can look the monster in the face?”

“It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” It is one thing speaking about it, but another thing to come there. O but this great and glorious promise of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: “All My mountains,” and it includes that last great mountain.

“My mountains,” says the Lord Jesus, and it was a mountain to Him. O but how He triumphed, and in His death how He triumphed for all His people! In His precious, sin-atoning blood, how He triumphed, and then, “Come, see the place where the Lord lay” – an empty grave! How He triumphed in His glorious resurrection, and then as He led them out as far as Bethany, and He ascended into heaven! And how He triumphed, Christ exalted on the throne, and not just for Himself, but for each poor, trembling believer who trusts in Him and has a living union to Him. He says, “Where I am, there ye may be also.” “All My mountains,” and that last great mountain to land a believer safe on Canaan’s side. The wonderful thing is that Satan has never yet triumphed with one and he never will, and our Lord and Saviour Christ has been victorious with them all.

Well, what a word this is, and some of us time and again have proved this over the years. May many of you prove it, that the things you have before you this week, and in the unknown way, and as you go home now, and as you stop and think, and as you have things in your hearts, and all these things, and then that last great mountain. “And I will make all My mountains” – all of them – “a way.”