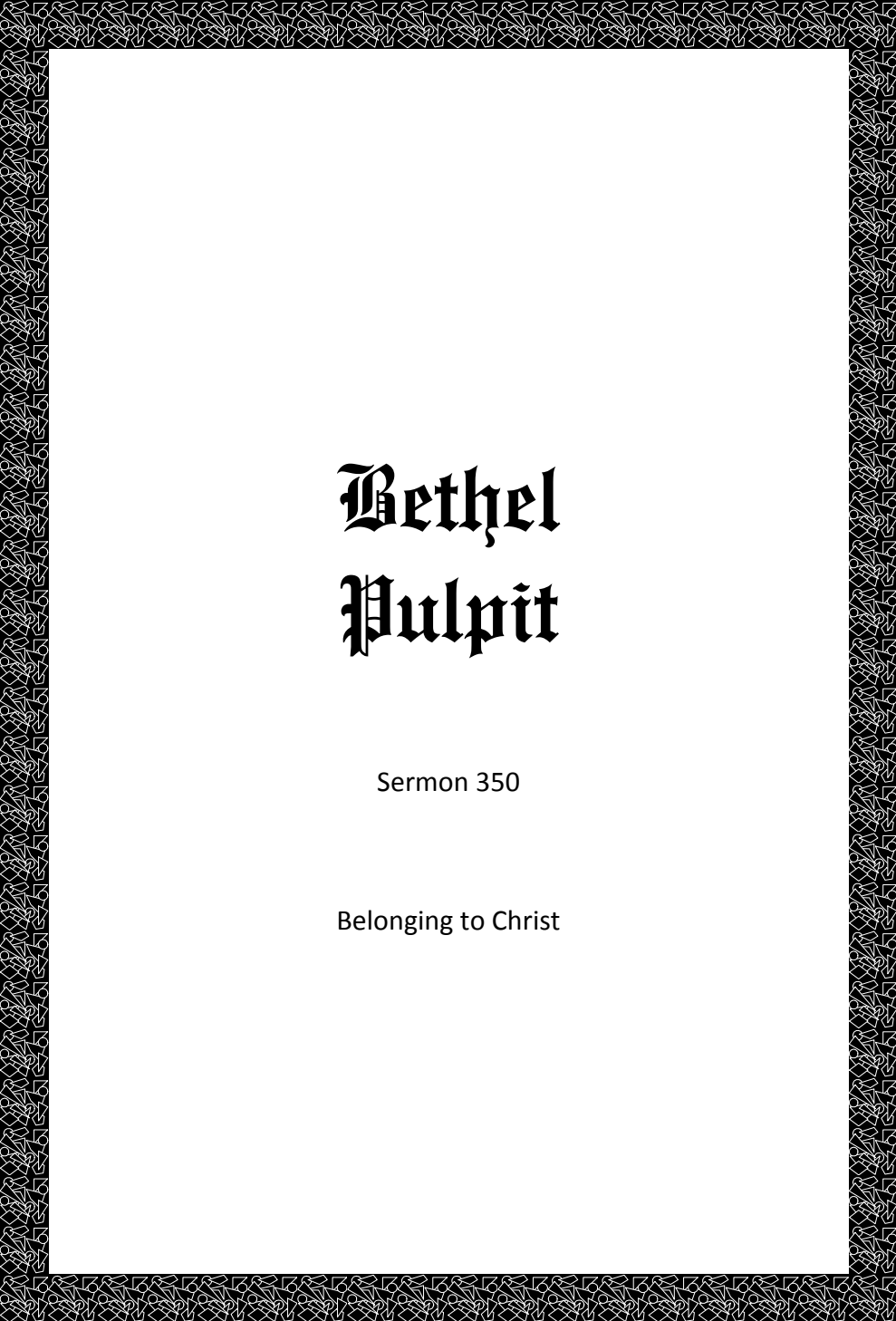




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 350

Belonging to Christ

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day morning, 24th August, 2014**

Text: *"Because ye belong to Christ" (Mark 9. 41).*

Surely, surely there can be no greater blessing, no greater favour than this: to belong to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ – to be His now, to be His to all eternity, to belong to Him in bonds of grace that can never be broken! O wonderful thing if any of us this morning have that sweet assurance we belong to Christ! "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine."

"Because ye belong to Christ." First of all, just to set it in its context, the Lord's people here are described – this is the description of them – they belong to Christ: "For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in My name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward" – which means the smallest thing done to the Lord's people in love and because they are the Lord's people, the Lord in heaven takes notice of it, and it will not lose its reward. It is one of the easiest things to do, one of the simplest things to do, one of the cheapest things to do, to give a cup of cold water, but it is noticed in heaven. O the importance of Christian behaviour, and what a witness the smallest thing is that is done in the name of the Lord Jesus, and done for His sake, and done in love to His beloved people, thinking especially of those in need!

"Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in My name." Whenever I read this verse, I think of a happening I witnessed a few times years ago. It was when I used to preach at West Row, the Barn Chapel, and in those days there was no water supply in the Barn or anything like that, and there was an old lady, a poor old lady, and she was deaf and dumb. She could not speak a word and she could not hear a word, but her job every week, she came with a bottle of cold water to fill the minister's glass in the pulpit. But to watch her do it – you could see the love in it. You could see the absolute delight with which she unscrewed that bottle and poured the water and then took it up in the pulpit.

"Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in My name." There is a story told about Martin Luther. At the famous Diet of Worms, he was exhausted at the end of the day – when a great man's servant appeared with a refreshing drink in a silver jug for him. Luther received it

in love and thankfulness, and asked, “Who is the prince who so graciously remembers me?” It was the aged Duke of Brunswick, actually a powerful lord belonging to the Pope’s party. Luther in gratitude poured out his heart in prayer that the Lord would remember the aged Duke when he came to die – and that prayer soon afterwards the Lord in His mercy answered.

“Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in My name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.” Well, so much for the introduction. I just have two points this morning, beloved friends. The first: “Ye belong to Christ”; the second: “*Because ye belong to Christ.*”

O but what a favour this, for an unworthy sinner to belong to Christ! Now we think of ourselves or other people who have some precious belonging. What do they do? Well, they choose it, and then they purchase it, and then they own it, and then they keep it, and they value it. In a sense, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ does these things with His people. He chose them from all eternity; He loved them with an everlasting love; He shed His precious blood that He might have them – that was the price; He owns them; they are His; He values them; He keeps them; they can never be lost. But the great difference is that this is done with poor, wretched, unworthy sinners. If you think of it naturally, anyone getting a purchase and saying, This belongs to me – well, it is something valuable; it is something well worth having. But it is the very opposite in the way of grace. Didn’t the old godly people used to love to sing,

“What was there in me that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?

’Twas ‘Even so, Father,’ we ever must sing,
‘Because it seemed good in Thy sight’”?

O to think of these the Lord chose, that they might be His own, that they might belong to Him! They were lost and ruined and sinful and guilty and rebels, and then to think that the cost was not too great, that He was willing to shed His precious blood that He might have them! And then that taking possession of them, and their safety, their security. They can ne’er be lost.

“Ye belong to Christ.” I would like very briefly just to speak of three different ways in which the people of God belong to Christ. First of all, as *His jewels*. He says, “They shall be Mine ... in that day when I

make up My jewels.” The impossibility of it – a jewel, such a precious thing, and these are worthless sinners. Do you know why the Lord’s people are precious? Well, you may go to a jewellers or it might be a museum. They might show you something, and perhaps you think it does not seem very special, but they say it is the most valuable thing they have got. Why? O the thousands they paid for it. That is why the Lord’s people are precious. He paid such a tremendous price for them.

Those He saves who are His jewels are those who fear the Lord and that think upon His name (Mal. 3. 16, 17). Now perhaps some of you can creep in there this morning: those that fear the Lord and think upon His name. Now do you ever think on the name of the Lord Jesus? And how do you think of it? Is it precious, your only hope, your only plea? Can you sing, “How sweet the name of Jesus sounds,” and really know it and prove it and believe it? “Ye belong to Christ” as His jewels, which means though worthless, unworthy, the people of God are precious in His sight. I have never spoken from that text and I have never heard anyone speak from it, but I believe it was the text that John Newton had up in his study: “Since thou wast precious in My sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee.”

“Ye belong to Christ” – His jewels. You know that if you have something you highly value, you will take great care that you do not lose it, or it is not harmed, or it is not damaged. His jewels. “Ye belong to Christ.”

“Dearly we’re bought, highly esteemed;
Redeemed, with Jesus’ blood redeemed.”

He says, “They are Mine” – Mine now and Mine eternally. “Ye belong to Christ,” and, “They shall be Mine ... in that day when I make up My jewels.”

“Ye belong to Christ.” The second thing: God’s people belong to Christ as *the sheep of His fold*. O how He speaks of them: “My sheep hear My voice.” They belong to Him, poor, erring, wandering sheep. “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.” But, “Ye belong to Christ” – belong to the great Shepherd of the sheep. And the lambs belong to Him just as much as the sheep do. What mean these bleatings of the lambs? A lamb, a new-born soul in Zion’s fold, and

those bleatings after Christ, in prayer, in longing desire. “My sheep.” He says, “I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.” “Ye belong to Christ” – the sheep of His fold; His watchful care; His tenderness; the Keeper of Israel who neither slumbers nor sleeps; His eye ever upon them.

“Ye belong to Christ.” And the third way God’s people belong to Christ: *His friends*. He says, “Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants ... but I have called you friends.” What a wonderful thing if Christ is our Friend! Some of the Lord’s people feel lonely; some feel forgotten; some feel deserted; some feel outcasts. But what if you can say,

“Poor, weak, and worthless though I am,
I have a rich, almighty Friend.”

O to belong to Christ! Some people boast if they have a friend who is a great man or someone who is eminent, or someone who is famous, or someone who has done well, or someone who is wealthy, but to have Christ as your Friend! And by nature we are enemies. “Ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ” – no longer aliens, but friends. “A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.” That is what it is to have Christ for your Friend. That is what it is for you to belong to Christ – a Friend who understands, who sympathises, who hears and answers your prayers. “A friend loveth at all times” – as much when you are walking in the dark as when you are walking in the light, and though you will be made to grieve over it, who loves you as much when you fall as in your best moments.

Now David knew what it was to have a friend in Jonathan, but he lost him when he was young through death. And then he had another friend called Ahithophel. He said, “We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.” He found that friend proved to be a traitor, a dreadful traitor. He joined Absalom seeking David’s life. One of the most painful things a person can ever know is when a friend proves not to be a friend. That seems to be a special trial of our young people, our girls and boys, even our children, when you have a friend and you find that friend is not really your friend. O the difference if you belong to Christ!

“A friend loveth at all times,” and, “There is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother.” But this Friend is a Brother and born for adversity. Well, He was born for His own adversity, that He might go to the cross, but He was born for His people’s adversity. You know what *adversity* means: things that come against you – spiritual things, the temptations of Satan, the opposition of people, perhaps persecution; the things that come against you – circumstances, troubles, difficulties, problems. And this Friend was born for that. That is why He is your Friend. He has promised to help you, and He has promised He will never leave you nor forsake you.

“Ye belong to Christ.” I do feel this is such a blessing, such a favour. O but beloved friends, there must always be that loving word of warning. You must not take it for granted you belong to Christ. It is a terrible thing if you come to chapel and you belong to Satan. “Satan’s blind slave, sporting with death.” How do you know that you belong to Christ? Well, surely there came a time in your life when He claimed you as His own, when He took possession of you by His Spirit. And how did He do it? Well, to put it simply, you were taught by the Holy Spirit that you could not do without Christ. That is how He took possession of you; that is how you came to belong to Him. You were taught you could not do without Christ. Why, you were lost; you were ruined; you could not save yourself; you could not prepare yourself for heaven; sins to be forgiven; you needed cleansing in the Saviour’s blood. There was none but Jesus. So He took possession of you. He claimed you as His own. You had to flee to Him in prayer, by faith. You could not do without Him. Nothing else could do. We sing it often:

“Come, and claim us as Thy portion,
And let us lay claim to Thee.”

So I lovingly say, there is a wonderful blessing, there is none greater, if you and I belong to the Saviour, if you and I belong to Christ, but do not take it for granted. Make sure that as a believer in Him, trusting in Him, resting on Him, it is on scriptural grounds as led and taught by the Spirit.

Well then, to come to the second point: “*Because* ye belong to Christ,” and there is everything in it. “*Because* ye belong to Christ,” you have every blessing in Him that a sinner can ever need or that the Lord Himself can ever give. O if you belong to Christ, “Blessed be the God and

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” “Because ye belong to Christ,” “all things are yours ... and ye are Christ’s” – you belong to Him – “and Christ is God’s.”

“Because ye belong to Christ.” “Because ye belong to Christ,” your sins are all forgiven. “Because ye belong to Christ,” you are washed in His precious blood. “Because ye belong to Christ,” you have an Advocate in heaven who ever speaks on your behalf. For, “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” “Because ye belong to Christ,” salvation is yours. “Saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.” O the wonder of a poor, helpless sinner belonging to Christ! What a solemn thing if we do *not* belong to Christ, and if Christ is not ours. O may each of you be really concerned about it. Do we belong to Christ, or do we belong to ourselves? Do we belong to sin? Do we belong to Satan? Do we belong to the world?

There is a never-ending eternity before us. O but the difference! The Lord has set this difference, the difference if only we belong to Christ. “Because ye belong to Christ,” you can never be lost; you can never perish. He will never lose one who belongs to Him. There will not be one sheep, one lamb missing from the fold in the great day. There will not be one jewel missing from His crown. There will not be one limb missing from His mystical body. “Because ye belong to Christ,” you are safe and safe eternally. He will never lose the purchase of His own blood. “He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.”

I hope there are some of you young ones here this morning and you begin to see something of the everlasting blessedness of the people of God in Christ. I remember it was one of the first things with me, and I believe it has been one of the first things with many of the Lord’s people. You have perhaps been growing up, a girl, a boy, and you see God’s people. Perhaps you think some of them are nice; perhaps you do not think much of some of them; perhaps you think some of them are strange; perhaps you think they are too severe. But when you get a glimpse of them as they stand in Christ, the only favoured people: “Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord,” and you see just how wonderful these blessings are, and then you think, Well, they have them, but I have not got them. And then you begin to pray for them: May their

blessings be mine. May this people be my people; may their God be mine. But may some of you see it this morning as the Holy Spirit reveals it, as you are given faith – the glory, the wonderful blessedness of a poor, unworthy sinner, a creature of this earth, belonging to Christ, belonging to the eternal Son of God.

“Because ye belong to Christ,” heaven shall be yours and that for ever and ever, because all those who belong to Christ now will one day be with Him where He is for ever and ever. But it all depends on this: “Because ye belong to Christ.” It is entirely on the ground of God’s grace. It is entirely undeserved. It is entirely through His mercy. But the wonder the privilege, to belong to Christ!

But there is just one other thing. “Because ye belong to Christ,” you are His witnesses here, and Satan watches you, and the people of God watch you, and your children watch you, and the world watches you. The Apostle Paul at the time of that shipwreck said, “Whose I am, and whom I serve.” So “because ye belong to Christ,” you are called to be separate from the world. We are called to live to the honour and glory of His name. “Because ye belong to Christ,” you are called to walk worthy of your high calling. “Because ye belong to Christ,” you are called not to dishonour Him, not to dishonour that worthy name by which ye are called.

“Because ye belong to Christ.” When J.K. Popham was dying, one of his young lady members was allowed to slip in to see him, and he looked up and said, “I have just one thing to say to you, my dear: never forget whose you are and whom you serve.” Well, what a word that is for each one who professes the Lord’s name, each one with a sweet hope of belonging to Christ in everlasting bonds that can never be broken! Always remember, never forget, whose you are, whom ye serve.

“Because ye belong to Christ.”

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Bless the Lord, my soul, and raise
A glad and grateful song
To my dear Redeemer’s praise,
For I to Him belong.
He, my Goodness, Strength, and God,
In whom I live, and move, and am,

Paid my ransom with His blood;
My portion is the Lamb.

Though temptations seldom cease;
Though frequent griefs I feel,
Yet His Spirit whispers peace,
And He is with me still.

Weak of body, sick in soul,
Depressed at heart, and faint with fears,
His dear presence makes me whole,
And with sweet comfort cheers.

O my Jesus, Thou art mine,
With all Thy grace and power;
I am now, and shall be Thine
When time shall be no more;
Thou revivest me by Thy death;
Thy blood from guilt has set me free;
My fresh springs of hope, and faith,
And love, are all in Thee.

J. Hart