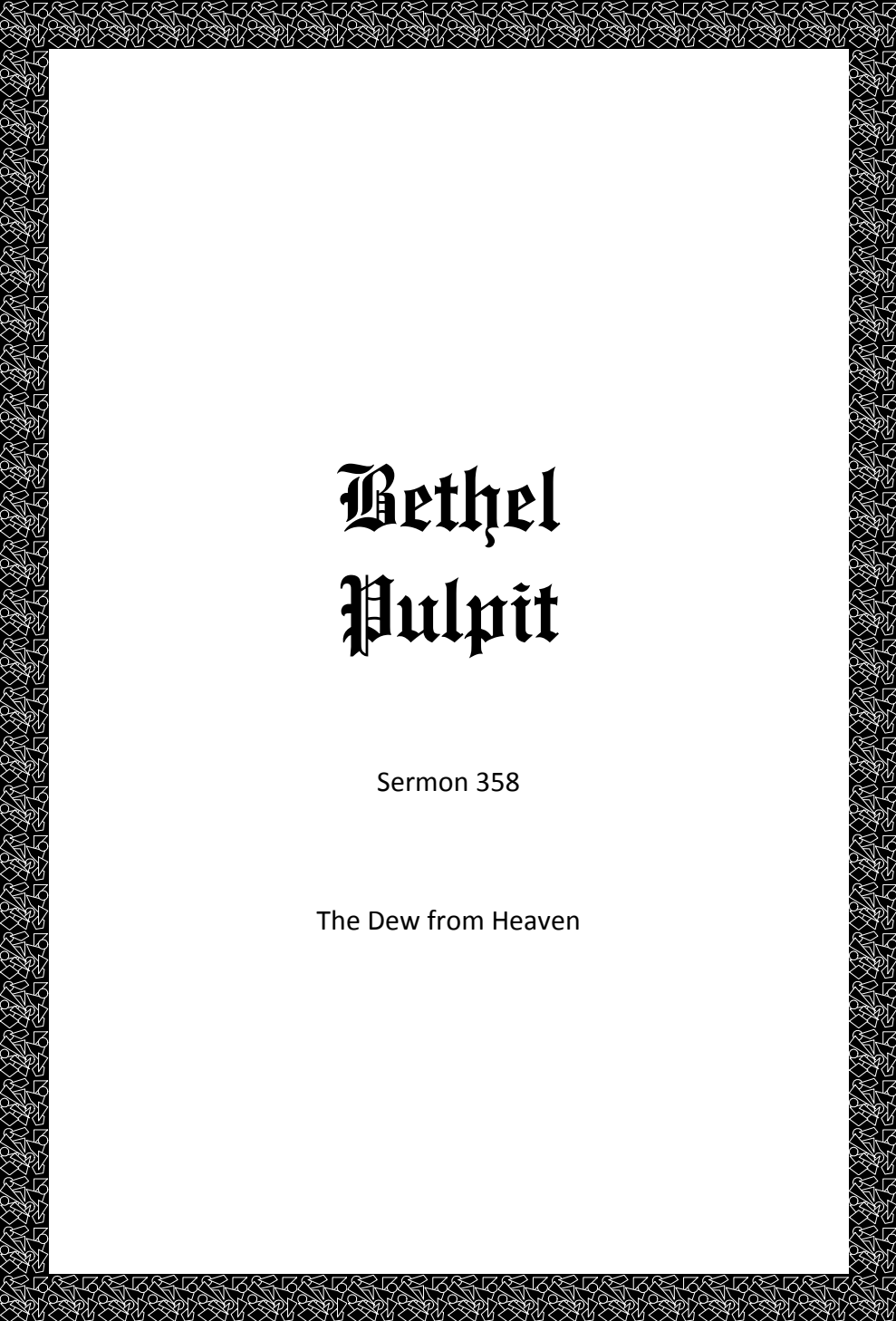




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 358

The Dew from Heaven

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day evening, 15th March, 2015**

Text: *"I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon" (Hosea 14. 5).*

This is a most gracious promise of real, spiritual prosperity in the church of God and in our hearts. And beloved friends, we need it, and we long for it. O what a wonderful favour if this word should be fulfilled amongst us even now, even this evening! "I will be as the dew unto Israel" – the blessings of the Lord, the riches of His grace, compared to the dew. I do not think in our country we understand the significance. The point is, the dew was exceedingly precious. Some parts of the East, there might be weeks with no rain at all, but often a heavy dew during the night. It meant life instead of death. It meant prosperity. It meant that things would grow instead of barrenness. The dew.

Now those of you who know the Word of God well, if you think carefully where we first read of the dew in holy Scripture, it was when Jacob was being blessed by his aged father Isaac (Gen. 27. 28). Isaac thought he was blessing Esau, but it was Jacob in disguise. But old Isaac could not think of blessings good enough for his favourite son, and he started off with this: the dew, the blessings of the dew first of all. I think you will often find that the first mention of a word in Scripture gives you a clue to its meaning all the way through. Well, the first mention of the dew, it was a wonderful, precious blessing if the Lord would only give it.

"I will be as the dew unto Israel" – the sweet, bedewing operations of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes you read the Word of God and it seems hard and dry, and sometimes you listen to the preaching and it seems hard and dry. O but what a difference when it is attended with the sweet, bedewing operation of the Holy Spirit on your heart! Our hymnwriter says, "His grace as the dew shall descend." O so gently and so quietly, O but with such an effect! The refreshing, the reviving, the softening of your heart, the springing up where everything was barren before. It is a wonderful promise. "I will be as the dew unto Israel."

In that lovely little Psalm 133 we read of the dew descending on the mountains of Zion and then the Lord adds this: “*There* the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.” That is the church of God in its solemn assemblies. It is when the dew descends from heaven, because it is not something we work up or something we cultivate. It is a blessing that comes from heaven.

“I will be as the dew unto Israel.” And it penetrates. It penetrates the hearer’s heart. It penetrates the most obdurate heart. I think I have told you that one of my old friends at Haslingden wanted a real, good, strong, stout pair of boots, and he went to one shoe shop in the town, and they had a pair of boots actually standing in water to prove that the water would not penetrate. They said one thing to him. They said, “These boots will keep everything out but the dew.” They said, “No pair of boots will keep the dew out; it will penetrate where nothing else can and nothing else will.” Well, that is so with grace. That is so with the Holy Spirit’s work, it penetrates.

“I will be as the dew unto Israel.” You cannot hear it falling and you cannot see it falling. It is the effect. You remember how Moses began his dying speech to ancient Israel. He said, “My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew.” Now there is a difference. You can see the rain falling and you can hear the rain falling, but you cannot the dew. But there is that same softening, refreshing, reviving effect. It is something like that with the blessings of grace and the preaching of the Word. Sometimes it will be a clear word or a clear blessing or a clear deliverance, and you can see it and you can hear it. But sometimes it is almost imperceptible. How many we have had who have given their little testimony of the Lord’s dealings and they have not spoken so much on *that* spot and *that* place and *that* word, but they could testify that something had happened in their lives and there was a change; there was a difference. It was not as it was before. Well, when His grace descends like the dew, there will be the gracious effect, and beloved friends, you will know it.

“I will be as the dew unto Israel.” But it comes like this: softening, soothing, refreshing, blessing, when you feel something of your sin and guilt and unworthiness, unfitness, unpreparedness, unreadiness, and the gospel of Christ and Him crucified descends like the dew and it has that gracious effect. It “breathes comfort where distress abounds.” It brings

peace to your conscience, peace made by the blood of the cross. This is what we want – not just to preach and not just to hear, but that gracious effect, the dew from heaven attending the Word. They used to say about some preachers, Well, they all preached the truth, but with some there was the savour. They put it like this: there was the unction, or sometimes they said it was the dew. It is something we cannot give and we cannot create, but it is something when the Lord sends a man to preach, this is something He commands, even life for ever more, the dew descending from Mount Hermon to the mountains of Zion into the souls of the people.

“I will be as the dew unto Israel.” But then, beloved friends, there are providential trouble and concerns. I am thinking, there is a lot of sadness amongst us at present concerning yourselves, and concerning the unknown way, and concerning those you love. Your best friend can speak to you and it does not help, and if the queen came from Buckingham Palace and spoke to you, that would not help you, but if the Lord comes and causes this heavenly dew sweetly distilling in your soul, if He speaks a precious promise, then that will do the deed; that will have the effect. There will still be the sadness, but O the effect of the dew! That promise we read tonight: “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

“I will be as the dew unto Israel.” But sometimes with a believer you cannot altogether say whether it is spiritual trouble or whether it is providential trouble, neither are you called upon to distinguish or to identify, but you know there is a measure of darkness in your spirit and that you are cast down and you are burdened. O let this heavenly dew, the sacred influence of the Spirit, bring the blessing into your soul, and that will make the difference. That will set your spirit free, and that will turn your bondage into liberty and your darkness into light and your sorrow into joy. Then you will walk out that word: “Ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.”

“I will be as the dew unto Israel.” But you notice that I have been speaking about the sacred influences of the dew, the grace and the blessing. But do not forget it is the Lord Himself who speaks, and He says, “I will be as the dew unto Israel.” In its fullest, gospel sense it is

“none but Jesus.” It is Jesus Himself. Didn’t He gloriously fulfil this on the road to Emmaus! There were two there, and what about the state of their souls, and the Lord came right down upon them and right into their hearts, the risen Saviour like the heavenly dew, and, “Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way?” It was a different walk back from Emmaus to Jerusalem than it was from Jerusalem to Emmaus!

“I will be as the dew unto Israel.” If you are familiar with this Prophecy of Hosea and if you read it through carefully and remember it, the Lord has already said one or two things He will be unto Israel. In one place He says, “I will be ... as a lion.” That is His anger. “I will be ... as a lion.” And then He says, “I will be ... as a moth” – not so noisy, not so fierce, more quiet, but the moth, wearing away their strength, wearing away their vigour. Sometimes you might know that lion in your life, but I think some of you know this – what shall we call it? – a corroding influence, the moth. It can work havoc if it gets in a wardrobe of clothes. Perhaps you do not know it is there, and perhaps it is hidden away. “I will be ... as a lion”; “I will be ... as a moth.”

But this is Israel forgiven, their backslidings healed, His anger turned away, His love flowing to them freely, and He says, “I will be as the dew unto Israel.” May the Lord fulfil it amongst us. May He fulfil it even this evening, or perhaps when you go home and you sit quietly with the Word of God, alone with the Lord.

“I will be as the dew unto Israel.” And then, beloved friends, there will be an effect. There always will. Wherever there was the dew, there was an effect, and here we have the gracious effect: “He shall grow as the lily.” So there is prosperity now, and there is fruitfulness now where everything was barren before. There is something growing, something springing up out of your heart, heavenwards, Christwards, and under the sacred, sweet, bedewing influence of the Lord Himself, you will grow as the lily.

I take that to mean one or two things. The lily – something beautiful, beautiful to behold, something pure and white, something fragrant, something attractive. There is life here. It is different from that previous condition, that dark condition, that dead condition. What could be more beautiful than the growth of the lily? That is a sinner who has

known something of the blessing of the dew from heaven. “He shall grow as the lily.” Mind you, this point of the growth in grace, I think it tries some of us. The Lord says, “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” People sometimes may have a lily and it does not seem to grow at all; it is a disappointment; it is useless; there is not any beauty in it. You and I feel like that sometimes. But to be blessed with this growth in grace! It does not mean we are growing better, but more in dependence on our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and in our knowledge of Him.

But this growth of the lily and this beauty and this purity, following the heavenly dew – I do not take this growth to be in that glorious righteousness of Christ in which a sinner stands complete for His justification. Why ever do I say that? Because that does not know any change. Dear child of God, whether you are walking in the dark or walking in the light, your standing in Christ in His glorious righteousness can never alter. But I take it more to be this: the way you are enabled to walk more tenderly in the fear of the Lord, and to show forth His praise, and to walk in love, even as Christ also hath loved you. I take this to be the blossoming of the lily following the dew, and also its sweet savour. O the sweet savour of a godly believer when under the sweet, bedewing influence of the Lord Himself! Well, we have known them. They knew what it was for the truth to come to them like the heavenly dew, and they knew what its softening, sanctifying influence was upon their hearts and in their lives. They knew what it was to seek to obey God’s Word: “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.”

Now this is the effect, and this is what we long for in our churches, and here at Bethel, and in our own homes, and in our Sabbath school, and in our hearts. “I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily.” “Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.”

“He shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.” Now this is a very beautiful figure, a beautiful analogy, the lily. You cannot think, really, of anything more lovely, anything more beautiful. The Lord Jesus says, “As the lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters.” It speaks of the beauty, the loveliness, the fragrance, the

purity. But there is just one thing it does not speak of. It does not speak particularly of strength or stability. It is a weak little plant, and also it withers away. So the Lord's word will not be deficient. It brings in another analogy. There it is like the lily, the church of God, the individual believer. O but the strength of Lebanon! "He shall cast forth his roots as Lebanon." We read a lot about the mighty cedars of Lebanon in the Word of God. They were renowned for their strength, and so often they are an emblem of strength, and the roots of those mighty cedars, well, how deep they went! How far-reaching they were! Now that is the believer. He is under the influence of grace when the Lord appears and blesses him as the dew. This is what we want: to be established, to be made firm, to be made strong – strong in faith, strong in grace, to be "strengthened with might ... in the inner man," to receive strength daily from the Lord, to be strong in prayer, to be strong in dependence – weak in ourselves, but strong in our God and Saviour.

O but these roots! "He shall ... cast forth his roots as Lebanon." The dew descends and the lily blossoms. O but how those roots go down into the earth! You know, beloved friends, the root of a plant, the root of a tree is vital. You cannot see the roots. They are under the ground. They are out of sight. You cannot hear those roots growing. They do not make a lot of noise. But those roots are absolutely vital for the strength and the standing and the life of that plant or of that tree. How the Lord Jesus emphasised that point in the solemn parable of the sower! It seemed to be growing well; it seemed to be a good plant. And the Lord Jesus said, "Because it had no root, it withered away," and died. And so will your religion and mine if we have not good roots in it.

"He shall ... cast forth his roots as Lebanon." Those roots – people cannot see them; people cannot hear them growing; but they are vital, and people cannot see if our religion has any roots. The greatest part of real religion goes on in secret between our souls and Christ, whether it is when you are sitting in the pew, or whether you are at home, or whether you are about your daily business. But it is that secret religion; it is that vital religion; it is the life of faith and prayer; it is that seeking the Lord's will; it is dependence upon Him. Now this is where our real religion is, in secret between ourselves and the Lord. These are the roots of vital godliness.

“He shall ... cast forth his roots as Lebanon.” And what do these roots do? Well, they do two things really. They hold the plant, they hold the tree securely in the soil, but then also they reach down into the soil and they receive from it all that nourishment and food and moisture that they need. These roots are vital. So what is it practically, personally, experimentally?

“Happy souls! who cleave to Christ
By pure and living faith.”

And the blossom may fade, it may wither on the lily, but the life is in the root, and that life can never be destroyed. O what a blessed, beautiful word that is: “Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” It is worth repeating, and I will say it again: “Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” It is there in the roots. Satan can never touch it. It is a hidden, secret life. O that life in union with the Son of God.

“He shall ... cast forth his roots as Lebanon.” O beloved friends, do be concerned about having a religion with good roots, and as they go down into the soil, they will hold you fast and they will hold you safe and they will hold you secure. You will not be blown about with every wind of doctrine. The storm will come, the tempest, the rain, sometimes the flood, and you can lose a few of the twigs, but that root can never be destroyed, and that plant stands firmly there in union with Christ.

But then also those roots reach out, living on the soil. Quite a number of you here have been to Hampton Court Palace over the years and there is that wonderful Hampton Court vine. It is nothing much to look at, but it is a wonderful, fruit-bearing vine though it is very old, and they think the secret of it is that the roots are so strong and so long that they reach right down to the nearby River Thames, and that is the secret. So whatever drought there is, there is that constant supply.

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And it is this: if through grace you as a sinner in all your weakness, helplessness, barrenness, need, are sweetly and eternally united to that wonderful fulness which dwells in Christ. “For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell” – everything you need now and for eternity, that fulness of grace and love and mercy, that fulness that can

never be diminished, that can never be exhausted. O to be a sinner living on the Saviour – the heavenly dew and the beautiful blossom! O what a blessing are these sinners in the church of God who are made attractive through grace! O but it is that vital secret, those good roots that reach right down and that cling to the Saviour and that hold you fast in Him.

Well then, what a word is this! And it is promised to a people who have been backsliding, but the Lord has restored them, and He has blessed them with His pardon. He has healed their backslidings; He loves them freely; His anger is turned away. It is all through Calvary, through the cross of Christ. It is all in the Saviour. And then this wonderful blessing. But may we know it in our churches and may we know it here at Bethel, and may we know it in our souls, and especially you sorrowing ones, whether in grace or in providence, and those walking in darkness, and those who mourn over your barrenness, and those who long to be free, and those who pray for the blessing. It is one of Christ's *I wills*. "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely.... I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon." O beloved friends, may it be so.