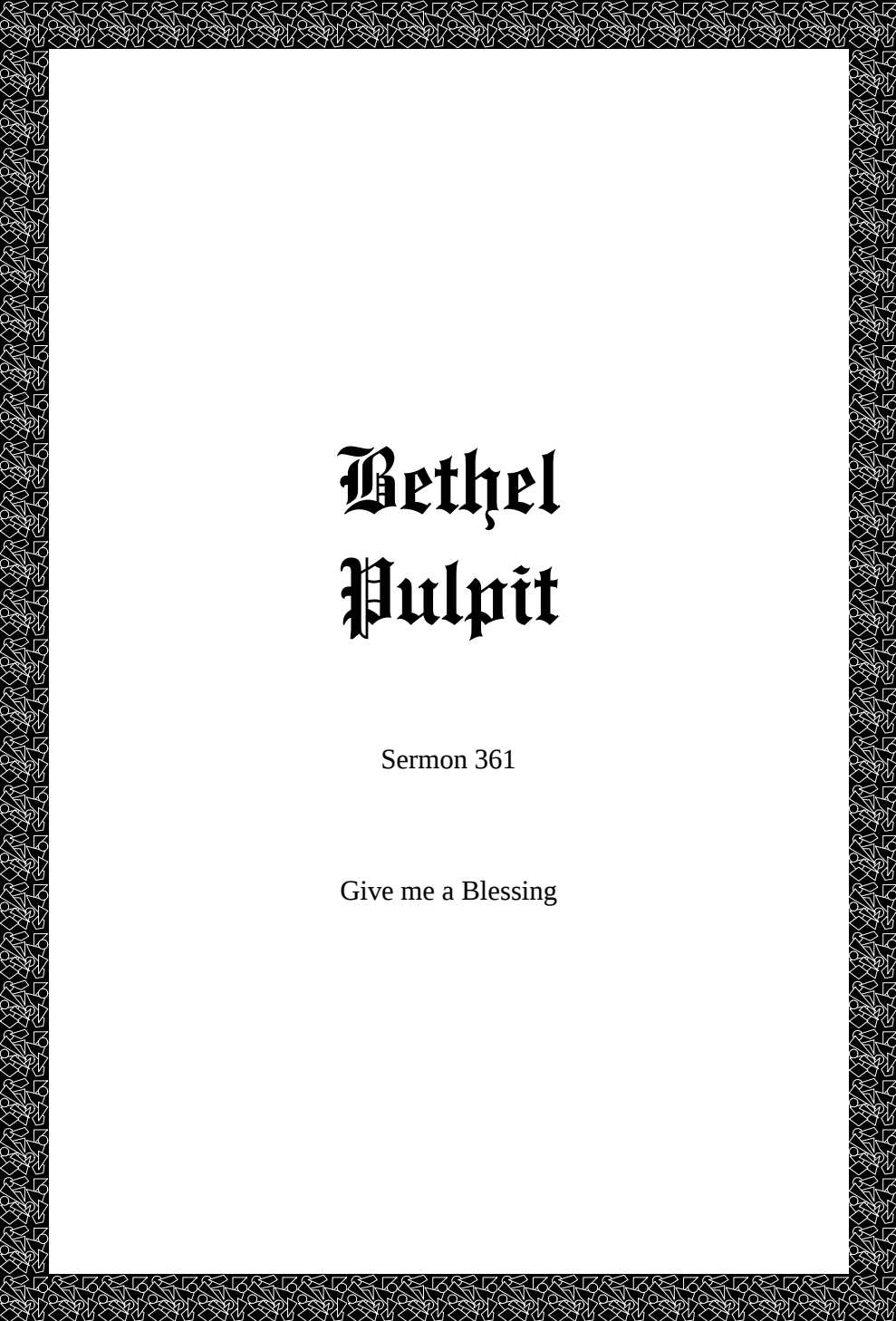




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 361

Give me a Blessing

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day morning, 2nd August, 2015**

Text: *“And she [Achsah, Caleb’s daughter] lighted off her ass; and Caleb said unto her, What wouldest thou? Who answered, Give me a blessing; for thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water. And he gave her the upper springs, and the nether springs” (Joshua 15. 18, 19).*

This is one of those little gems that are hidden away in the Old Testament amidst a lot of the names of places. We have Caleb here again, and it seems whenever he is mentioned, the Holy Spirit always gives him a most honourable mention. Well, what a thing it is to have that witness from God Himself that he followed the Lord wholly!

Now here Caleb issued a challenge. There was a place called Kirjath-sepher. It was in the hands of the enemy, and Caleb issued a challenge: was there any valiant man – if anyone was willing to take Kirjath-sepher, then Caleb would give him his daughter for a wife. And there was this young man Othniel. Interestingly, afterwards in the Book of Judges he was the first of the judges (Judges 3. 9-11). He ruled over Israel. And he took Kirjath-sepher, and he received Caleb’s daughter Achsah to be his wife. Caleb had given her a present, but she encouraged her husband to ask for something else, but he seemed reluctant to do it, so she herself most reverently dismounted from her ass and asked him: “Give me a blessing.” Literally she meant, Give me a present. Caleb so kindly, affectionately asked her what she would really like – a loving father willing to do anything he could to help. “What wouldest thou?” She said, “Give me a blessing.” There is a present I would like. Already, kindly, thou hast given me this piece of ground, but it is a south land; it is where the midday sun shines on it severely. It would be a help if we could have another little field with some springs of water. “Give me also springs of water.” And Caleb very kindly granted her her request. “He gave her the upper springs, and the nether springs,” or the lower springs. That is it briefly, historically.

Now God’s people have always seen in this a very beautiful illustration of how the Lord in love and mercy deals with His children, and how He deals with them in answering their prayers, in dealing with their

burdens, in granting their request. The text that God's people have so often quoted in reference to this little account here is this: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" In other words, Caleb was only a sinful man, but he knew how to give good things to his children. "How much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?"

Now leaving the historical, to come to it this morning in a spiritual sense. What about this word that Caleb said: "What wouldest thou?" And it reminds us of how in the Old Testament the Lord Himself spoke to Solomon: "Ask what I shall give thee." And it reminds us of how the Lord in the New Testament spoke to poor, blind Bartimaeus: "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" In one of our well-known hymns, John Newton takes up this point very beautifully:

"And dost Thou say, 'Ask what thou wilt'?
Lord, I would seize the golden hour;
I pray to be released from guilt,
And freed from sin and Satan's power.

"More of Thy presence, Lord, impart,
More of Thy image let me bear;
Erect Thy throne within my heart,
And reign without a rival there.

"Give me to read my pardon sealed,
And from Thy joy to draw my strength;
To have Thy matchless love revealed
In all its height, and breadth, and length."

"And Caleb said unto her, What wouldest thou?" O beloved friends, if the Lord Jesus said that to you personally this morning, what would your answer be? Now we know what our answer *should* be, but what would our carnal hearts answer if left to ourselves? I think Philpot speaking on this point in one place said that a child of God left to himself would ask for some natural thing, or to get out of some trouble, or to gain something he wants, rather than heaven itself!

"Caleb said unto her, What wouldest thou?" Well, may you search your heart this morning as you have come to chapel. What is it you would

really like? What is it you really seek? Let us be clear, there is nothing wrong in asking for these natural things, but above all a soul to be saved, sin to be forgiven, a hell to be escaped, and a heaven to be gained.

“What wouldst thou?” And she answered, “Give me a blessing.” I wonder if any of you before you came to chapel this morning prayed for a blessing, that the Lord might bless us together, that He might bless His Word, that He might bless the preaching of the everlasting gospel, that He might command His blessing, even life for evermore. But it is this *me*. Bless *me*, even *me*, Lord. Do not pass me by. It is *me*; it is personal. I am the one. I am the sinner. I am the one in need. I am the one who has to die. I am concerned about friends and loved ones and family and the congregation, but it is *me*, O Lord. “Remember *me*, O Lord, with the favour that Thou bearest unto Thy people.” “Give *me* Christ, or else I die.” Have any of you a religion like this? This is the religion of the Holy Spirit. It is not the religion we have by nature. “Mine’s an urgent, pressing case.” This is the religion of the Holy Spirit. Real religion is so personal.

“Give me a blessing.” But, “What is it to be blessed indeed?” People sometimes speak carelessly. I suppose if you wanted a doctrinal, theological definition of a blessing, it is Almighty God for Jesus’ sake in His mercy granting some favour to an unworthy sinner. Well, that is just a theological definition of it. But you know what you mean when you say, “Give me a blessing.” What kind of blessing is it? Is there one here who says, Give me this blessing, Lord: prepare me for eternity. Make me ready to die. “Thy Spirit must this work perform.” May I be right for heaven. I cannot prepare myself. I do not want to be deceived. I want to be right at last. Do save me by Thy grace. Is this the blessing you want?

“Give me a blessing.” Or is there one of you comes something like this: “Give me a blessing.” Do forgive all my sins, and grant me the sweet assurance they are forgiven, through that precious blood that flowed at Calvary. “Wash me, Saviour, or I die.” It is the blessing that you seek. But there are so many things.

“Give me a blessing.” Tell me, I pray thee: is there room in the Father’s house for me? O give me a lot and place among Thy children. I am not worthy of it, but, “Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.”

“Give me a blessing.” Perhaps with some of you, it is for the first time. You wonder if the Lord has ever blessed you. But we sing, “Christ has blessings to impart.” You say, Lord, is there one for me? We read that the Father has blessed His people with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. O Lord, give me one of these blessings. Is there a Jabez here this morning? What do I mean? And Jabez said, “Oh that Thou wouldest bless me indeed!” I take an *indeed blessing* to be one of these blessings of grace, one of these blessings of salvation. Now health is a blessing, and the supply of our needs is a blessing, and we could go on in all these things. Answers to prayer, these things are blessings, and you pray for them, and you are thankful for them. But “one thing is needful,” and as the Lord has engraven it on your heart by the Holy Spirit, “Oh that Thou wouldest bless me indeed!”

“Give me a blessing.” And those of you who perhaps have often been blessed, perhaps you are walking in darkness. “Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth.” Give me Thy blessing of heavenly light and heavenly love. Shine on my heart and on Thy Word and on my pathway.

“Give me a blessing.” Or perhaps with some of you it is like this: “Let me hear Thy voice.” Thy sheep hear Thy voice. Thou dost know them. They follow Thee. O “let me hear Thy voice.” Let me hear it speaking peace to me and speaking comfort to me. O give me a blessing through Thy Word. Give me a blessing through the preaching of the gospel. Do not send me home unblessed.

“Give me a blessing.” What about the love of Christ? O give me this blessing, to feel the love of Christ shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost. O give me a blessing. What of Calvary, “the wondrous cross on which the Prince of glory died”? O give me this blessing. Lead me there by faith. Bring me to the foot of the cross. May I see “mercy’s steams in streams of blood.” May I know and feel an interest in them.

O “give me a blessing.” Or are there some of you like this: you feel so ashamed of yourself. You say, Lord, give me a soft heart. I am ashamed of my hard heart. Give me more concern. I am ashamed of my unconcern. Give me a spirit of prayer. I do not like my prayerless prayers.

O “give me a blessing.” And that blessing of being upheld and supported and brought along and brought safely through. O give me a blessing. There are so many blessings that are treasured up in the gospel of the grace of God, but O may there be one for me, for poor, unworthy me. Do not pass me by. And if a sinner is ever blessed, it must ever be on one ground. It must be on the grounds of mercy in Christ through His precious, sin-atoning blood. But give me that blessing of bringing me safely through and safely to heaven at last.

“Give me a blessing; for Thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water.” I take this south land to mean this piece of ground that Caleb kindly gave Achsah and her husband. The midday sun shone brightly and strongly on it. Now I want to take this in two completely opposite ways.

Perhaps some of you feel that the Lord has given you a south land in providence. He has caused the sun to shine upon you. He has given you a nice home, and you have a nice family, and you are provided with a suitable job, and there are so many things in your life as you look about, and you feel the Lord has given you a south land, and you are thankful for it. You look back over your life, how the Lord has helped you here and there, and supported you, and delivered you, and you feel so thankful for all these things the Lord has done in your family and your life and your circumstances and all these things. He has blessed some of you with success, some of you with success at school or college or in your employment. Well, you say, Lord, I have got a south land. O but you feel you need something more. You cannot be satisfied with all these things the Lord has given you naturally. You are grateful for them; you are thankful for that south land on which the sun is shining so brightly. But you say,

“These can never satisfy;
Give me Christ, or else I die.”

You want something better, because you realise all these other things, one day you will have to leave them behind, and you realise that in a moment you can lose all these things.

“Thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water.” O you want to know those springs of living water that flow from eternal

love, that flow from beneath the sacred throne of God, that bring every blessing down, that flow by the way of the cross, these living streams which are in Christ to satisfy your thirsty, longing soul. Because if your religion is real, born again of the Holy Spirit, there will be that inward thirst. It is a mark of life in your soul, and all these things, the south land and the sun shining so sweetly, so brightly on it in providence – O you say, These cannot satisfy. And to hear that voice of love and mercy: “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink.” You say,

“I come, O Lord, and thirst for Thee;
Some living water give to me,
Or I shall faint and die;
All other means my heart has tried,
All other streams are vain beside
What flows from Calvary.”

“Give me a blessing; for Thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water.” And then to take it the other way, completely opposite – a south land, not taking it the sun so warm and so blessedly shining on the south land, but that fierce, burning midday sun of difficulty and trouble and sorrow and temptation.

Well, perhaps some of you have got the south land one way and some of you have got the south land the other way this morning. But whatever it is, “Give me also springs of water.” Well, if you have got that dry, burning, arid land – you might feel it spiritually – O you want the Spirit to be poured upon you from on high. You want the thirsty land to be visited. But those of you with hard things, and you bow before it; you are blessed with the grace of submission. You say, Lord, it is a south land Thou hast given me, and sometimes that burning sun at midday is too hard, too fierce, too intense for me. Do give me also springs of water. And the Lord is able to balance these things, to give you these springs of water that flow so sweetly in the gospel.

Well, the prayer was answered. There is prayer here, and it is prayer heard and it is prayer answered. “And Caleb said unto her, What wouldest thou? Who answered, Give me a blessing; for thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water.” Literally what good would that land have been if the sun was beating on it, if there was no irrigation, if there were no springs to refresh it and soften it and revive it?

“Give me also springs of water. And he gave her the upper springs, and the nether” – or lower – “springs.” God’s people have always interpreted this, the nether springs of providence and the upper springs of grace, and the Lord gives His people both.

“He gave her the upper springs, and the nether springs.” Perhaps some of you say, That is because she was his beloved daughter; I do not know that I am the Lord’s beloved daughter. But if you cannot go as a child of God, you can go as a sinner, because the glorious truth of the eighty-seventh Psalm belongs to every sinner saved by grace. It is a lovely little Psalm: “His foundation is in the holy mountains.... Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God.... Of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the Highest Himself shall establish her. The Lord shall count, when He writeth up the people, that this man was born there.” And that triumphant conclusion: “All my springs are in Thee” – all of them, the upper springs and the nether springs. I have not got any in myself; I have not got any spring from my heart; I cannot find them in the world. “All my springs are in Thee” – those upper springs of grace and love and mercy and faithfulness and tender compassion, those springs that can never run dry, and “all for the lifting of Jesus on high.” Not polluted springs, not cistern water. The Lord complained that some of His people were satisfied with cistern water, and the cisterns were broken, which if words mean anything at all, there was not much water in them, and the water that was in them was polluted. What does He say of Himself? “The Fountain of living waters.” This is the source of these upper springs.

“O Christ, He is the fountain,
The deep, sweet well of love.”

And His people, how they drink of these streams! “Of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.” “With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.” O but the wells are still overflowing, full and free! There is a wonderful fulness in Christ that can never be exhausted.

And what do these upper springs do for this south land? Well, as they flow over it, as they water it, they soften the ground. There is fruitfulness instead of barrenness. There is life instead of death. Where

everything was hard, it is softened. If you want it in a word: “Times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.”

“And he gave her the upper springs, and the nether springs.” The lower springs of God’s providence – do not despise them. You cannot really separate providence and grace. These nether springs, if you want one word to cover it, it is this: “My God shall supply *all your need* according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” Now these are the springs. This is the inexhaustible supply. “His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” And they ever flow and they are ever full, and their streams are streams of salvation. They can never run dry.

O but they run in a way of providence as well. The Lord is concerned about the smallest things in His people’s lives. You read the Word of God, and the little things the Lord is concerned about. Bless the Lord for the upper springs, but never, never despise the nether springs. O what would we do without them! Morning by morning, day by day, tomorrow morning, whatever there is, whatever there is not, when you get up in your home, the nether springs will be flowing, and may you be able to show forth His lovingkindness in the morning and His faithfulness at night (Psa. 92. 2).

Well, what a word this is, to know this inestimable blessing through the riches of God’s free grace, to know the upper springs and the nether springs, to have them flowing in our midst, and in our homes and lives and families and circumstances, and in the church of God, and above all, flowing into our hearts. You know what it will be then: “O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord.”

“And she lighted off her ass; and Caleb said unto her, What wouldest thou? Who answered, Give me a blessing; for thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water. And he gave her the upper springs, and the nether springs.”