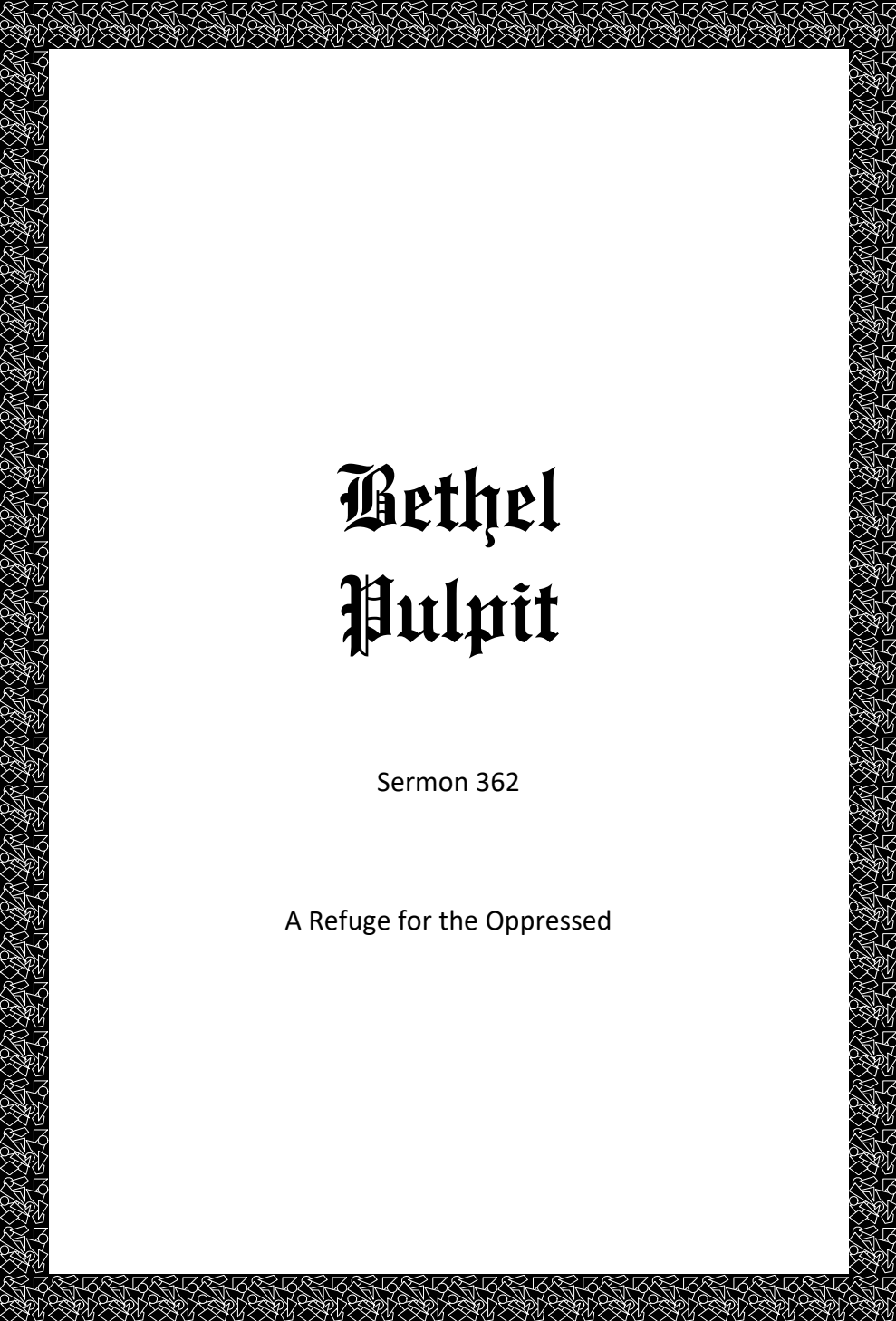




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 362

A Refuge for the Oppressed

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day morning, 30th August, 2015**

Text: *“The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee: for Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek Thee” (Psalm 9. 9, 10).*

I was talking to an old deacon some time ago and asked him about the minister they had had the week before, and this is what he said. He said, “He knows what he is talking about.” And beloved friends, when we come to the Psalms and all these amazing things that David states, he knew what he was talking about. O let us be clear on this: the Psalms are the inspired, infallible Word of God, but they are also the living experience of David. He knew what he was talking about, not like some of the poems of the famous poets. They sat quietly in their room looking out over a beautiful scene and penned down a few thoughts. But these Psalms of David – they were pressed out of him in his soul's experience, and of course you can see in the background these black figures coming to and fro. He does not mention one of them by name, but you can see Saul; you can see Ahithophel; you can see Doeg; you can see Shimei. But their names are left out so our cases fit in. Your case, my case, our case – these things fit in.

There is a background to these beautiful Psalms, and because David knew what he was talking about, we have all these things that come week by week into the hearts and lives and experiences of God's people today. They can see David was there before, and how David was helped, and how David prayed, and how David was tried, and how David was delivered.

So when David here says, “The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble,” he knew what he was talking about. If you like to contemplate the life of David, all the way through there were those times when he was oppressed, when he felt oppressed and when he was oppressed, and there were those times when he was in trouble. Very briefly, you can think of when he was a young boy and the lion and the bear came. That was trouble. Really he was risking his life. You can think of Goliath. That was a day of trouble. Humanly speaking

he seemed to be facing certain death, but he trusted in the Lord and was delivered. And that was terrible trouble with his own wife Michal who did not understand him and railed against him. There was that terrible persecution from Saul. There was the way his beloved friend Ahithophel proved to be a traitor to him.

There was that account we read together this morning (1 Samuel 30). I might have read many different passages in the life of David, but that was one of the worst for him personally. He felt he was at the end of everything, and his own men spoke of stoning him, and he had lost his wives, he had lost everything. He felt he had brought it upon himself, but he knew what it was, though he was so oppressed and though it was such a time of trouble, to find a refuge.

And you might have thought when he was king that would be the end of his trouble. It almost seemed to be the beginning. He had so much trouble in his own family and with his own sons, and his son Absalom sought to overthrow him and take the throne. So David knew what he was talking about. He knew what the trouble was; he knew what the refuge was. But more than these other things, his spiritual trouble. He sinned so grievously in the matter of Bathsheba, and he had the chastening hand of his God upon him, and he felt the condemnation in his own heart.

So he speaks of the faithfulness of God, and what he knew his God to be, and he knew his God had never failed him. These things written in holy Scripture are for your encouragement this morning, those of you who feel to be oppressed, and those of you who feel to be in trouble. Some of you feel the sadness of bereavement, and some of you have illness, affliction, and some in your family, and some long-drawn-out, and some your disappointments. You can put your own piece in here, what your trouble is, what your oppression is, and I am sure there are some in trouble because you cannot get what you want spiritually, and some of you are oppressed in your concern about your sins and your soul and a never-ending eternity.

“The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed.” The certainty of it – He *will* be. David has not any doubt about that. He says, He “*will* be a refuge for the oppressed.” Is there someone here this morning says,

“From the oppressive weight of sin,
My struggling spirit free;
Blood and righteousness divine
Can rescue even me”?

“The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.” Now we have this word *refuge* many, many times in Scripture, and really it comes more times in the Book of Psalms than anywhere else – because if anyone needed a refuge, David did – because he found it and he loved to testify of it. There is not so much of that today. If only we can testify of having found a refuge. That lovely little hymn 136, “Dear Refuge of my weary soul” – what a help, what a blessing it has been made to many of the Lord’s people in their times of trial and temptation.

“The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.” Now I am sure some of you know the first time in Scripture where we read this word *refuge*. It was when Joshua was told to appoint six cities of refuge in the land of Canaan, that when the avenger of blood was after anyone because of a death that he had caused, if once he could get inside one of these cities of refuge, he should be safe. They were wonderful places, these cities of refuge.

Have you noticed that though this word *refuge* is mentioned so much in Scripture, it is only mentioned once in the New Testament? The subject of it though is all the way through –

“A refuge for sinners the gospel makes known;
’Tis found in the merits of Jesus alone” –

but only one reference: those “who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.” Really it is a reference to the cities of refuge, but this is what living faith is, what living faith does. It flees for refuge to the hope set before us, and that is set before us in the cross of Christ. That is where the refuge is.

“O the sweet wonders of that cross,
Where God the Saviour loved and died!”

And there is the refuge. Those “who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.” There is urgency there. There is activity there, not of the flesh, but of grace. It is led and taught by the Spirit. I hope

there are many sinners here this morning fleeing for refuge to the hope set before you. We would seek to set the hope before you, but may the blessed Spirit set the hope before you. What does John Kent say?

“And if God the Spirit reveal this to you,
Take refuge in Jesus, though hell should pursue.”

“The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.” But when sadness comes, the refuge of the blood-sprinkled mercy seat, the refuge of the throne of grace, the privilege of prayer, the refuge of the Lord’s sympathy, the Lord’s understanding, the refuge of the Lord’s promises. Some of you young ones with these new things when September comes, new things you come into, I am sure you will need a refuge. May the Holy Spirit show you where the refuge is and lead you to the refuge.

“The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed.” God’s people are oppressed by Satan, and oppressed by temptation, and oppressed by unbelief, and oppressed by self. But, “When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.” The standard is this glorious refuge in the Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus. O but that refuge in the time of need; that refuge in the time of sorrow!

“The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee.” Now it is not just to know *about* the name of the Lord, not just to know *about* it. It is to know the Lord’s name. You just think of it naturally. Sometimes you hear of a name. It is a well-known name, perhaps some firm, and it has a good reputation, and you hear of it. Well, that is one way in which you can know a name. But it may be you have been to see the premises, and you can read the name on the outside. That is another way you can know a name. But then if you come into real contact, you prove that what you heard about that name was true, and you prove the value – it is a help to you. Now that is the way in which really you are brought to know the name; not just to know of it, not just to hear of it. So it is with the name of the Lord. Everybody in this chapel knows about the name of the Lord. O but to be brought to know it!

There are a lot of things said about the *name* of the Lord, which I take to mean all that He is and especially His loving character and His divine attributes. “The name of the Lord.” We have a lot of things said about it. “The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.” “Because of the savour of Thy good ointments Thy name is as ointment poured forth.” One speaks of safety in the name; the other speaks of an attraction in the name.

“And they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee.” I want to linger here this morning. I find this quite an attractive subject, the name of the Lord. “His name, as Jesus, suits us well.” Do you know that name? And how do you know it? And is there an attraction in it? And can you say, “How sweet the name of Jesus sounds”? The name of Jesus. It was the name given to the Son of God when He assumed sacred humanity. “Thou shalt call His name Jesus” – the Saviour – “for He *shall* save His people from their sins.”

“And they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee.” O you will if you know the name of Jesus, and if you know yourself, and if you know your own need, and if in measure you know your sin, and if you know you have to die and eternity before you. “They that know Thy name.” This will be the Holy Spirit’s work. There will be an attraction in the name of the Lord Jesus. You will say,

“Jesus, my Lord, I know Thy name,
Thy name is all my trust;
Nor will He put my soul to shame,
Nor let my hope be lost.”

This is what living faith is. It knows the name of Jesus, but it trusts in the name of Jesus, and that hope, that trust, will never be put to shame. Why, the great apostle – what about his attainments? What about his attainments in grace? But when he comes to the end it is this, and it will be your mercy and mine if that is where we are when we come to the end: “I know whom I have believed” – not just to know *about* Him, not to know *of* Him. “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.”

“Firmer than heaven His throne His promise stands,
And He can well secure

What I've committed to His hands,
Till the decisive hour."

"And they that know Thy name." "His name, as Jesus, suits them well" – the name He took because He was going to be the Saviour, because He was going to bear their sins at Calvary, because He was going to bear them away. It is a name of love. It is a name so suitable to sinners. I have never been fond of acrostics, but there used to be one they used a lot when I was young: J-E-S-U-S – Jesus Exactly Suits Us Sinners. Well, whether you like acrostics or not, there is a blessed reality and truth in it. He does, doesn't He! Jesus exactly suits us sinners. The Saviour, because that is your great need, salvation.

"And they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee." Now what about His name as the Redeemer?

"Thou dear Redeemer, dying Lamb,
We love to hear of Thee."

But not just to hear *of* Him, but to hear *from* Him. And I am sure some of you love to hear this from the Redeemer: "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine." Some of you have always loved that name of the Redeemer. Well, Job did in that far-off day. "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." When we think of the name of the Lord Jesus as the Redeemer, redemption always speaks of the payment of a price, and something or someone being set free by the payment of that price. What a price was paid on the cross at Calvary by the Redeemer, and that price was His own most precious blood, and it set free a multitude that no man can number.

"They that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee." It is a name that sinners put their trust in. It is for those who are unworthy. It is for those who have nothing to pay. It is a name that can be trusted. It is a name that will not let you down. It is a name that will never fail you. But some poor soul says, That worthy name – surely it is far above our reach. But in matchless condescension the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ has made His name known, made it precious, made it pleadable – sinners can

plead it; made it reliable – sinners can rely on it; made it trustworthy – sinners can trust in it. “Trust in Him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before Him: God is a refuge for us.” And it is as you are brought to trust in Him in these glorious names which He bears and as our hymnwriter says,

“All are too mean to speak His worth,
Too mean to set my Saviour forth.”

O but to be brought to know the value, the preciousness of the name!

“They that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee.” What about His name as the Lamb of God? “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” It speaks of His spotless perfection, His innocence. It speaks of His tenderness, His compassion. But when we hear of the Lamb of God, it is especially His sacrifice for sin. “A lamb without blemish and without spot.” What did the lamb mean on that Passover night? It was everything to them. It was life instead of death. It was their salvation. It was the difference between them and the Egyptians. It was deliverance – the lamb slain, the blood shed, the blood sprinkled on the lintels and doorposts of the house, and the promise and the security under the blood and under the promise. “When I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.”

“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” What a wonderful occasion it was when John the Baptist so lovingly pointed out this glorious Stranger in the crowd and he said, “Behold the Lamb of God.” And we read, “And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.” And that is what we desire in the preaching of the gospel, and that is what it has ever been. We cry, “Behold the Lamb of God,” and sinners blessed with living faith do behold Him and they follow Jesus.

“They that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee.” If you know His name as the dear, dying Lamb of God, you will be sweetly enabled to put your trust in Him, all your trust in Him, not as Berridge says, peeping and squinting some other way for creature help.

“They that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee.” Another blessed name: “This is His name whereby He shall be called, The Lord our

Righteousness.” O do you know that name, or do you want to know it? Because if our religion is real, we are taught this by the Spirit of God, that we have no righteousness of our own, and yet we must have a righteousness to stand before a righteous God in the great day. “This is His name whereby He shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness.”

Those of you who are familiar with John Bunyan’s *Grace Abounding*, he was so tried and troubled and tempted by Satan, and suddenly it came to him: “Thy righteousness is in heaven,” and he thought about it, and there by faith he saw the Lord Jesus an exalted Saviour at the right hand of God. “The Lord my righteousness.” And he saw this: that it was a perfect righteousness and that it represented him in heaven, and that righteousness could never be increased; it was perfect; it could never be diminished; it was the righteousness of Christ the Lord. And so despite his sins and his faults and his failures, here was his hope and here was his standing. He was enabled to look away from everyone and everything else and all his sins to Christ his righteousness.

“Upon a life I did not live,
Upon a death I did not die,
Another’s life, Another’s death,
I rest my whole eternity.”

Now that is the religion that will take you to heaven.

“They that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee.” And surely, surely some of you, feeling you have no righteousness, are looking only to the righteousness of Christ. It is your only hope, your only plea, your only foundation. I think it was one of the later Puritans, Robert Traill, who once said, You look in the glass of God’s law and you see your face, and you see it as an ugly, deformed, sinful, evil face. He said, That is not the face that represents you in heaven; it is another face, a different face, the face of the Lord Jesus, and that is the face the Father sees in heaven. He does not see your evil face; He sees the beautiful face of His dear Son. That is the ground of your acceptance, and that is why He can say to a guilty sinner, and may He say it to some of you this morning: “Thou art all fair, My love; there is no spot in thee.”

“They that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee.” Just to mention one more name, and there are many that might be mentioned:

“Jehovah Jireh, the Lord will provide.” Didn’t the old, godly people love that! Many of them had a little poem up in their room. “Jehovah Jireh.” It said,

“Say not, my soul, from whence
Can God relieve thy care,
Remember that Omnipotence
Hath servants everywhere.

“His method is sublime,
His thoughts supremely kind;
God never is before His time,
And never is behind.”

“And they that know Thy name.” Look back over your lives, and some of you have known this name: Jehovah Jireh. The Lord has not failed to supply your need in body, in soul, in spirit, in family, in circumstance, in trouble. And in a New Testament, gospel sense, “My God shall supply all your need” – all of it – “according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

“The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.” And especially a refuge in this: that “they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee.” William Gadsby, when he was young, said he thought the names of the Lord Jesus – and we have these beautiful names and characters and offices and relationships: Prophet, Priest, King, the Good Shepherd, the living Vine – he thought they were so many interesting names. But he said he lived to prove there was a vital reality in them, that there was something in each of these beautiful names that all His people badly needed. His name as the Good Shepherd – we need Him to care for us, to guide us. His name as the Priest – we need Him to make the atonement for us; we need Him to intercede for us. And so we might go on and on.

“They that know Thy name” – they that know it personally, savingly, lovingly – “They that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee.” This is a vital point, and yet it is such a simple point. “Trust in the Lord at all times.”

“Trust Him; He will not deceive you,
Though you hardly of Him deem.”

It is this being enabled to live the life of faith, and day by day to trust in the Lord. But it is as you are brought to know His name. But as you are brought to know yourself, and as you are brought to know the vanity of the creature and the vanity of the world, and as you are brought to know your helplessness, and as you are brought to know your need, so you will be brought to trust in Him. It is a wonderful thing, trusting in the Saviour day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment.

“And they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee.” And then He confirms it. I have tried to ponder this. You cannot altogether perhaps see the relationship of this last clause to all the rest of this beautiful text. But why ever David put it in, it is a good word, that “the Lord will not forsake His people for His great name’s sake.”

“The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavour to shake,
I’ll never, no never, no never forsake.”

“For Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek Thee.” Isn’t that a kind word as well as a good word! It does not say, The Lord will not forsake the elect; He will not forsake those He has chosen; He will not forsake those in the covenant. He brings it right down, shall we say – I do not want to speak unadvisedly – to the smallest mark of grace. The Lord has not forsaken them that seek Him.