

Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 370

A Mighty God and Saviour

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day evening, 1st May, 2016**

Text: *“Nevertheless He saved them for His name's sake, that He might make His mighty power to be known” (Psalm 106. 8).*

I do not intend this evening in a formal way to go through this text and open it up and apply it, but I want to speak from it with the Lord's help on a vital subject which we have throughout the Word of God, and we have the foundation for it here. And the theme is this: A MIGHTY GOD AND SAVIOUR. So you see, it is the great, the vital subject: a mighty God and Saviour. You have the foundation for it here. “He saved them” – that is the Saviour – “that He” – that is God – “that He might make His mighty power to be known” – that is the mighty God. This is one of the great themes of Scripture.

Now some years ago there was a discussion among the godly divines concerning the Epistle to the Romans. The Epistle to the Romans has often been thought of as the clearest, most important revelation of doctrine and divine truth. The discussion was this: what is the one important word in that wonderful Epistle to the Romans? They thought – was it *grace*, or was it *faith*, or was it *justification*, or what was it? And they came to this conclusion: it was not any of those things; the vital word in the Epistle to the Romans is *God*. And that is the vital word and the vital theme in the whole of Scripture, and of course in our little lives and in our experience.

God, the mighty God. He is from everlasting to everlasting. He is in control. He is on the throne. He is the Creator of all things. He is the mighty God – mighty in His power, mighty in His holiness and righteousness, mighty in the riches of His grace, mighty in the lives of all His people, despite their weakness. What a wonderful thing it was when David, feeling his weakness, cast down, everything against him, in the midst of all his sorrows, he said, “This I know; for God is for me.” And that was everything. Mighty against every enemy; mighty in their overthrow; mighty in their destruction. So we can understand that word that comes in Romans chapter 8: “If God be for us, who can be against us?” But there is a solemn opposite: if God be against us, who then can be for us?

The mighty God makes Himself known in creation, and in Scripture, and by divine teaching in the hearts of His people. I believe, without chalking down lines, if your religion is real, there will be a time when you have a believing view of how great your God is. I could take you to that very place in Haslingden, in the depths of sorrow, and no way of escape, no way of deliverance, and the sun was shining, just going down over those rugged hills round my native town.

“Before *those* hills in order stood,
Or earth received her frame,
From everlasting Thou art God,
To endless years the same.”

I felt the Lord could do anything, everything, however impossible. And then to prove that He did. He appeared.

The mighty God. Now what a wonderful thing that in Scripture the mighty God has made Himself known as a Saviour; He has made Himself known in salvation. So right through the Old Testament you have this theme coming again and again, that the mighty God is a Saviour. His ancient people were to prove it time and again. Really, the first time we have this special reference to God being an almighty Saviour is on the banks of the Red Sea. “Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.” So Israel right at the beginning knew what salvation meant in a national way – the case impossible, themselves completely undeserving, their enemies great, God greater, a miracle performed, the hosts of Pharaoh overthrown, the waters of the Red Sea divided, an escape for Israel, the destruction of Pharaoh and his army. And then you have the first song in the Word of God, and do you know what it is about? It is about a mighty God and Saviour. Have you noticed this: that right through the Old Testament when Israel was in trouble, the prophets continually sent them back to the Red Sea to remember what the Lord had done and what He is still able to do, because He is eternally the same?

So a mighty God and Saviour. And we have it opened up so much. You know that beautiful word: “He shall send them a Saviour, and a great one.” Now in the context it is providence there. It is still national. “A Saviour, and a great one.” Perhaps the strangest way in which we read of salvation, a mighty God and Saviour – what example would you give for

that? What about Jonah? At the end of it all, he bore this testimony: “Salvation is of the Lord.” What was the Old Testament church learning about salvation? The impossibility of the case, if ever there was such a case, Jonah in the whale’s belly. He did not deserve to be delivered. He was defying his God, yet the miracle was performed, with the power that no-one on earth could display. “Salvation is of the Lord.”

So the Old Testament church little by little were learning what this word *salvation* meant. Of course, when you come to Isaiah, the evangelical prophet, he begins to speak of salvation, but he keeps having a little glimpse forward into gospel days, though not clearly. He is sometimes speaking of a mighty Saviour bringing out of Babylon, but then it becomes clear it is something more than that; it is something greater.

So you have it right through the Old Testament, and this word *nevertheless*, despite all their sins and all their unworthiness and all their guilt. Now this is beginning to teach them that whatever salvation is, whatever it means, it must be of grace. They are beginning to learn what grace means. “Nevertheless.” Here they were grumbling, provoking Him at the Red Sea. “Nevertheless He saved them for His name’s sake, that He might make His mighty power to be known.” We have it again at the end of the chapter. “Many times did He deliver them; but they provoked Him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity. *Nevertheless* He regarded their affliction, when He heard their cry.”

This word *nevertheless* is a good, gospel word. I knew an old, godly lady at Manchester. She told me that in her early days when she was brought into great distress and concern about her soul, the Lord delivered her by the powerful application of one word: *nevertheless*. It was one word, and it did the deed. A mighty God and Saviour. In the Old Testament it was mainly providential, but Israel knew what the word Saviour meant, and they knew they had a mighty Saviour, and they knew this word *nevertheless*.

Then Isaiah began to open it up. And then there came a day – it was a glorious day – when an angel descended from the sky in the fields of Bethlehem and he said, “Fear not... For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour” – and those shepherds knew what it meant – “a Saviour which is Christ the Lord.”

A mighty God and Saviour. Then in the New Testament this is beautifully opened up in the gospels – the *need* of a Saviour, the *need* of salvation, that deep, dark background of man’s lost, ruined, sinful condition. Then the revelation of the riches of God’s grace, free, undeserved mercies, and the revelation of a mighty God and Saviour. What do we sing sometimes?

“Mighty to save! He saves from hell;
A mighty Saviour suits me well;
A helpless wretch am I.”

Before I try to come to open up the doctrine and the teaching and then the experience, I do think this: when the new birth takes place and a sinner is savingly converted from death to life, there may be many things, and there may be many things that are lacking, but there is always this: you are brought to feel your need of a Saviour, and you are brought to see your need of salvation, and to see that you cannot save yourself, and then to have a glimpse of this glorious Man who is true, almighty God, who is the everlasting salvation of His people. Bring it lower: “Them ... that come unto God by Him” – a mighty God and Saviour.

Of course, beloved friends, this embraces all three Persons in the Godhead, because we are Trinitarians, and we believe in salvation. There is the necessity for the work of all these three distinct Persons. Mind you, in the economy of grace, it has pleased the Three-One God that the eternal Son, the second Person, should be exalted in the gospel in His suitability to meet the sinner’s need, but it is Father and Son and Holy Ghost, and each one a mighty God and a mighty Saviour.

God the Father – He planned salvation. In the riches of His grace, He saw sinners ruined by sin, and He chose a people, and He gave them to His dear Son, and the whole point was salvation, and He entered into a covenant with His beloved Son and with all His people as they stand in Him. Everything was provided for salvation in the covenant of grace, and grace reigned eternally. The plan that Eternal Wisdom drew: that the Son of God should become a real Man without ever ceasing to be God, and that without sin; and the mystery of the virgin birth, the wonder of it all. And as the Father loved His people with an everlasting love, He ordained salvation for them, and He ordained a Saviour for them, and He “spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all.”

Never forget God the eternal Father as a mighty Saviour. There is almost a tendency (and we do not really believe it, but we can slip into it), almost as if the Father was unwilling, and it was only through the love of the Lord Jesus that He was agreeable that there should be salvation. Thoughts like that do come into our minds at times, but they are not scriptural; they are not right. Almighty God, the eternal Father, an almighty Saviour in the plan and in His determination that it should be carried out. Of course, the well-known word: “God so loved the world” – that is the Father as an almighty Saviour – “that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

A mighty God and Saviour. And then Jesus the eternal Son of God, equal with His Father, appears as that mighty Saviour. First of all in God’s purposes in the covenant as He receives that gift, undertakes to be the Surety, to do everything necessary, and then in the fulness of time He comes, and that is why the angel said, “Unto you is born this day ... a Saviour.” That is why even before that Mary sang, “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.” It would be a wonderful thing if there were a few Marys here this evening and you were able to magnify the Lord.

Now then you young ones, you children, you know what it means to magnify something. If you have a magnifying glass and you look at something, you do not make it any bigger than it really is, but you get clearer views of it. That is what we want tonight. Like Mary, “My soul doth magnify the Lord.” He was there before – His wonderful love, His wonderful Person – O but to have clearer views of Him! “My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.” If ever there is a cause of rejoicing in this sinful world, it is to rejoice in God our Saviour.

O but to try to speak of the glories of Christ! The first time I met Mr. Jesse Delves, he was preaching at Manchester. He had been speaking beautifully of Christ, and we both said the same thing to each other at the same time:

“Living tongues are dumb at best;
We must die to speak of Christ.”

O but this mighty Saviour. Do you like that little word that opens Isaiah 63: “Mighty to save”? This is after His triumphs and His victories. This is after He had “trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with Him.” “Who is this?” There is not any doubt who He is. The prophet draws our attention to Him. This dear Man has been suffering, bleeding, dying, seemingly in weakness on the cross, bowing His head. Who is He? There is not any doubt who He is.

Then to see Him on the resurrection morning. “Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in His apparel” – those garments dyed in blood – are they glorious? “Glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, *mighty to save*.” “A mighty Saviour suits us well.” “Wherefore art Thou red in Thine apparel, and Thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with Me.”

A great God and Saviour. In the manger, when baptized by John in Jordan, when tempted by Satan, when on the Mount of Transfiguration – “Jesus only”; and then in all those wonderful miracles, a mighty God and Saviour. You say, Who is this who lies prostrate in the Garden of Gethsemane? And I believe there are many of you here this evening who without a doubt can say, This is a mighty God and Saviour. The world cannot see it. “He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” But faith sees Him in the garden as the mighty God and Saviour, and with the weight laid upon Him, the sins of all His people, that only a mighty God and Saviour could bear and could bear away.

In the judgment hall, buffeted and scourged and mocked, and a mighty God and Saviour. Pilate said, “I have power to crucify Thee, and have power to release Thee.” “Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above.” He could pray to His Father, and He would presently send more than twelve legions of angels to deliver Him. He was the Lord of angels, the mighty God, when He stood bound and with that crown of thorns in the judgment hall.

O but to see the bleeding, dying Saviour, and to see Him as the mighty God! Some of the divines speak of the active obedience of Christ and the passive obedience of Christ, and we know what they mean – His

active obedience, working out that obedience in His holy life, His passive obedience in what He suffered. But some of those old Scottish divines like Hugh Martin said the Lord Jesus was never more active than when He was bleeding and dying on the cross. O the things that He accomplished in His death! And you hear the dying cry of an almighty God and Saviour, “It is finished,” and that is the foundation of our hope.

And the resurrection, a mighty God and Saviour. “And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them.” An almighty God and Saviour. He ascended to heaven; He ever lives and reigns; He is on the throne, a mighty God and Saviour.

And then we think of the Holy Spirit. Do not forget, equal with the Father and the Son, a mighty God and a mighty Saviour. Now the Father planned it, and the Son accomplished it, and the Holy Spirit reveals it and applies it. What is the Holy Spirit’s work in this? Well, according to the economy of grace, “He shall not speak of Himself.” The Holy Spirit hides Himself and He reveals Christ, and that is why – and perhaps it may be a little help – a young seeker, a young believer is often tempted and tried, and Satan will tell you that you do not know anything whatsoever of the Holy Spirit’s work. You know what we sing:

“That blessed Spirit omits to speak
Of what Himself has done,
And bids the enlightened sinner seek
Salvation in the Son.”

But the Holy Spirit’s work in the new birth – “Ye must be born again” – quickening you into life, and then teaching you, and in His teaching blessing you with true repentance and giving you real faith, teaching you how to pray, and especially showing you that you need a Saviour – that you are helpless, you cannot save yourself – you need a Saviour. And then leading you to the Lord Jesus and revealing Him as an almighty Saviour, a willing Saviour, and enabling you to believe on Him, to rest your everlasting all upon Him to the salvation of your soul.

Of course, all through the life of a believer, the Holy Spirit teaches him – and really it is day by day, to our dying day – our need of Christ, and our need of Him as this divine, almighty Saviour. Well then, that is the work of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, one God.

Then the preaching of the everlasting gospel, and there are many things in the gospel, but it does speak of an almighty God and Saviour. If that is left out, well, there is not any gospel. It is a solemn thing when a church comes to that point like Mary Magdalene: “They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.” That is why sinners love the gospel, because it speaks of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and sinners do love this *nevertheless* in the gospel. When you come to the New Testament, it is this: it is all of grace; it is completely unmerited; it is entirely undeserved.

So as well, there in the gospel, looking on the Lord Jesus in His divine, almighty power, you see not just great power, but you see great love. “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.” You see great mercy and great compassion, and these are the things you need. The Lord God, an almighty God and Saviour.

Now we are not to think of this as if it is only at the beginning, when a sinner is awakened and first brought to know these things. You have a life to live. You have a pilgrimage to walk out. You have a fight to fight. You are weak and helpless. Sin is mighty. The world is mighty. Satan is mighty. When you are plagued with sin and unbelief, these things are too strong and too mighty for you. It is every day of your life that you need this mighty God and Saviour, when you get up in the morning and when you go to bed at night, and you need Him daily to save you. You need Him to keep you by His power. You need Him to hold you fast. You feel how helpless you are, but the wonderful thing about this mighty God and Saviour is this: He is immutable. That may seem a big word. What does it mean – that He does not change? Well, it does mean that, but it means more than that. It means He *cannot* change. And as the gospel reveals it: “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”

He was that mighty Saviour in His purposes in the covenant; that mighty Saviour when He died; that mighty Saviour when He first made Himself known to you; and that mighty Saviour today, to hold you fast, to keep you, to forgive you, to cleanse you in His precious blood, to deliver you in the hour of temptation, to be both the resurrection and the life to you, the foundation on which you build, the One alone to whom you look in your helplessness by faith – but you look in hope, and you look in

complete dependence, and you cannot look in vain, because this mighty Saviour has said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

It is this: “I am the Lord, I change not.” You do; I do, and not for the better. “Therefore ye sons of Jacob” – poor, sinful sons of Jacob – “are not consumed.” You deserve to be consumed; you fear you might be consumed. “*Not consumed.*” Why? Because, “I am God, and not man.” If He were man, He would have to cut us off and cast us away. “I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” “It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.”

A mighty God and Saviour, ever with His people, still with them right to the end. There they are, still sinners, still weak, still helpless, at times in great need, at times in sorrow, at times in affliction, some of you tonight with your various deep burdens and cares. The gospel sets before you this mighty God and Saviour, everything you need in Him. He is the one to whom you pray, the One who sits on the throne of grace, the mercy seat, the One who hears and answers your prayers, and He is almighty to answer your prayers. And the One who delivers you in the trying hour; He is an almighty Deliver; and the One who supplies your needs, body, soul, providence and grace. “My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” That wonderful fulness from the mighty God.

And then that divine support, and that divine upholding in the trying hour lest you would sink. What have you got before you tomorrow, and the coming week? Are you going to sink? Do you know what your mighty God and Saviour says? He says, “I” – the eternal God – “am thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” O this mighty God, this mighty Saviour! And,

“His grace shall to the end,
Stronger and brighter shine.”

And if He is strong, then He is able to make you strong. You feel nothing but weakness, but He says, “As thy days, so shall thy strength be.”

A mighty God and Saviour. And His final act as a mighty God and Saviour is when you come to the end, to bring you safely across, safely

through the river, and land you, despite all your fears, to land you safely in heaven.

I would that this evening even before we close some of you by faith might have just a glimpse of this glorious Person, an almighty God and Saviour, be able to cast yourself entirely upon Him and have that sweet assurance that He is yours. “Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine.” A mighty God and Saviour.