

Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 371

Consider!

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

Text: *“Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things” (2 Timothy 2. 7).*

The apostle here is speaking of a few important things, and suddenly he stops. These things are too important to be rushed over. Stop, and pause, and “consider what I say.” You may say, Well, what are these important things Paul is saying to his son in the faith, Timothy, here? Well, he gives him that charge to “be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus,” and he warns him that he will have to endure hardness, and he gives a threefold comparison, an interesting, threefold comparison: that before a battle is won, there has to be a fight; before a race is won, there has to be the endurance; and before the harvest is gathered in, it is needful labour in the field.

“Consider what I say.” So he is not leaving Timothy to go on unawares, and he follows by a most beautiful verse, and most of the divines have not been able to think just why, and what the reason is, why that comes in: “Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel.” Well, it does not matter how often that comes in, or where that comes in, or what the context is where it comes in. It is a blessed thing if we can remember the glories of the resurrection – “Vain the stone, the watch, the seal” – and also a risen, exalted Saviour, almighty to save in heaven.

“Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel.” As if he says, Remember this, Timothy. Whatever be your state and condition, however hard things are, remember this: you have a God and Saviour in heaven who is almighty to be with you, to help you and deliver you. May some of you this morning in all your concerns and your fears and your trials, may you sweetly remember this: that there is a Man in heaven, and that Man is true almighty God, and He ever lives. He is a great and glorious High Priest and He is almighty to save.

“Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.” These things are too important, they are too precious just to be

hurried over. “Consider what I say.” Now then, beloved friends, it is not just these few verses; it is not just Timothy; it is not just the apostle. There is a vital principle here, and that is where so often we go wrong. “Consider what I say” – that need to stand still, and to stop, and to pause, and to think, and to consider, especially concerning the Word of God, and the solemn things we hear and speak, and the glorious things we hear and speak. Now how much time do you spend considering them?

Now you young ones, you children, I hope you all read your Bibles, at least at night before you go to bed. Have you noticed that when you read through the Book of the Psalms, there is a little word comes in here and there, and that little word is *Selah*? It means just what we are talking about: stop; do not go hurrying on. It means a pause. It was really in the music. They were singing the Psalm, and they had to stop here. I think you will find when you come across this little word *Selah*, there is something that has gone before that is important, and we need to stop, and we need to think about it. Pause, stop, consider.

Older ones as well, when we are reading the Word of God, we need at times just to stop, and pause, and consider. I have often told you how J.K. Popham once had a quiet day, and he thought how nice, and he decided what he would do: read through the whole of the Epistle to the Hebrews. That was how he was going to spend the day. After an hour or two, he found he was still on the first word: God.

That is it: “Consider what I say.” There are special times when the Lord calls us to stop, and pause, and consider. One is when we are young. “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.” Do not leave it till you are older. It is a time to stop and consider. As our young people grow up, there are a lot of things you have to consider: what kind of work you are going to do, what kind of job you are going to have, and applications, and studying. It is all this considering. But this great point: to consider ourselves, and our sins, and our souls, and eternity, and Almighty God, and heaven, and hell, and what the Word of God teaches about it.

“Consider what I say.” Now there is another important time, and that is when the service has ended. You know the little story of some eminent man who did not go to church or chapel going through the village, and he saw a poor, godly countryman coming out of chapel on his way

home. He said, “Well, is it all done?” And the old countryman said, “Sir, it has all been *said*, but it is not all *done*.”

How do you spend the Lord’s day afternoon? The godly Puritans used to spend the Lord’s day afternoon going over the service and the sermon in the morning. But do you leave it behind in chapel? “The Lord give thee understanding in all things.” When you go through the chapel doors, is the sermon forgotten, its solemn warnings? Beloved friends, we are preaching, hearing, in the light of a never-ending eternity. We have to die. We have heaven and hell before us. We have immortal souls.

“Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.” If the Lord begins with you in love and mercy, He will write that little word *Selah* in your heart. It will not just be in the Book of the Psalms. You will be brought to stop and consider, and the Lord *will* give you understanding in all these things.

There is another time especially to stop, and pause, and consider. The wise man says, “In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider.” The day of adversity – when trouble comes, when there is ill health, when there are difficulties and problems and perplexities – now this is the time to consider, to consider in prayer, to consider when in secret. “And the Lord give thee understanding in all things.”

“Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.” Now this is a vast subject, and there are many exhortations in Scripture from beginning to end of the things we should consider. Let me just mention one or two. The Book of Job, and the Lord speaks, and He speaks to His servant Job in all his sorrows, and He says, “Stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God.” There the Lord is speaking of creation. Do we ever stand still, and look around us, and consider the wondrous works of God? You young ones – not evolution; creation. To “consider the wondrous works of God,” to think of that divine, almighty Creator. He created all things out of nothing in six days, and all very good. “Stand still.” O that is that pausing. “Stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God.”

There is another Scripture on the very same subject, and it is David. David knew what it was to be in the fields on a starry night, to look up, and he says, “When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers,

the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" I wonder if you have ever been out on a beautiful, moonlit, starry night and you have looked up and considered the heavens that He has made, the moon and the stars, the work of His fingers, and you have had some sense of the greatness of God. O how great our God is! And this opposite: our nothingness. "What is man?" Yet the Lord takes notice of him; the Lord visits him.

"Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things." Now another thing the Lord tells us to consider, and this time it was Samuel in his farewell, in that loving speech he gave to Israel, the nation he had served so well, and he concluded it like this: "Consider how great things He hath done for you." What a consideration that is, and what a subject, and what a theme – the great things the Lord has done for you! For His people? Yes, but if you can come in it personally: "for you."

And our Lord Jesus Christ spoke on this subject. He spoke of it specially in a way of divine providence. "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." On that ground He speaks of the mystery of the Lord's loving providence in the hearts of His people.

"Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things." Well, beloved friends, it is a vast subject. It is a vital subject, and there are so many things in Scripture. I just want to speak of two this morning, two of these vital considerations that the Lord solemnly calls us to, and they are the two things that really matter.

The first is this: the consideration of ourselves, and who we are, and what we are in the sight of a holy God, and our great need, and our lost condition as sinners in His sight. And the word here comes in that interesting little Book, the Book of the prophet Haggai. On two occasions the Lord there very solemnly speaks to His ancient people, and He says, "*Consider your ways.*" He reproves them concerning their ways, because they were not considering their ways. They were considering all kinds of things. They were considering their wealth, and their ambitions, and their prosperity. They were considering the beautiful homes they were living in. They were not thinking about the neglect of the Lord's house which was

lying in ruins. And the Lord opens it up to them. He says, You are doing nothing but making money. It is a most striking expression. He says, You are putting it in a bag which has holes in the bottom; you are putting your wealth in bags that have holes. We do not hear much of that.

But what are we considering by nature? There is a lot of consideration about things we are going to buy, things we are going to have in our houses, in our homes. There is a lot of consideration, tremendous consideration about holidays. So much of our consideration is of worldly things. I know what some of you are going to say to me. Surely a husband has to consider the things in his family. Of course he has, and the Lord rebukes him if he does not.

But the point in the Book of Haggai was this: they were really considering themselves, and their ease, and their comfort, and their prosperity, but they were *not* considering the ways of God; they were not considering the house of God; they were not considering the things that mattered. These things were being forgotten. These things were being despised. I would put it very clearly to you. Do you ever stop and consider your ways, and has the Lord ever given you understanding in all things, and especially how that some of your ways are wrong? Did He ever show you that your ways by nature are leading to endless ruin? John Newton says,

“Stop, poor sinner! stop and think
Before you farther go!
Will you sport upon the brink
Of everlasting woe?”

It is only the Lord in His mercy brings us to stop and consider. That is why Paul says it even to his beloved Timothy. You need the Lord to give you understanding in all these things.

During the Napoleonic wars, I think it was at Waterloo, there was a British officer hurrying along on horseback, when everything was pitch black in the middle of the night. Suddenly there was a flash of light, and he saw there was an abyss, and he would have gone over to his destruction. It so made him consider that this was where he was spiritually as well as naturally, on the brink of everlasting woe.

But do you consider these things? When you leave chapel this morning, will you be considering these things? And this afternoon, will you spend any time considering these things? And what about tomorrow morning? Will you be considering these things, or will they all be forgotten? “The Lord give thee understanding in all things,” because we do not have this understanding unless the Lord the Holy Spirit gives it. But one great miracle of the new birth, one great miracle of true conversion, is that you will begin to consider these things.

“Pause, my soul!” – that is the stopping and considering –
“Pause, my soul! and ask the question,
Art thou ready to meet God?”

And this is the vital question. Do you ever stop, and pause, and consider?

“Am I made a real Christian?” – not an imitation one or a formal one – “Am I made a real Christian,
Washed in the Redeemer’s blood?”

“Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.” So you cannot separate these two parts of the verse. God has joined them together. If the Lord does give us understanding of our ways – wrong ways, sinful ways, lost ways, ways going to a lost eternity – if the Lord does give us an understanding of these things, then we will pause, and we will stop, and we will consider our ways.

Do you know what it will make you do? It will make you pray. It will make you pray to the Lord that you might be right. It will make you pray to the Lord that He might forgive you, and that He might save you by His grace with an everlasting salvation, and that He will wash you in the Saviour’s precious blood. That is what consideration will lead you to, because there will be a gracious effect of it. Why? Because it is the Holy Spirit’s work in your heart, and when He begins a good work in you, He “will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” I can say to you this morning with all my heart in love and affection to your souls, “Consider what I say,” but it is only Almighty God by His Spirit who can work in your hearts and give you understanding of these things. That is a good prayer for young and old: Lord, in Thy love and mercy give me an understanding of these things.

“Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.” That is the first thing. Under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, consider your ways. Now the second thing, and let me open it up in this way. Of course, I am going to speak to you about the dear Saviour of sinners, but in the beautiful Epistle to the Hebrews which is so full of Christ, you have it three times; three times this call to consider. “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, *consider* the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.” And then again, speaking of Christ, “made an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec”: “*Consider* how great this Man.” And then thirdly, “*Consider* Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.” Now, “consider what I say,” concerning the glorious Person and finished work of the incarnate Son of God.

“Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.” If He has given you an understanding of your sinful ways, if He has given you an understanding of your need of salvation, if He has given you an understanding that you need to be right, then the one is the remedy to the other. “Consider your ways” – that is the malady. “Consider Him” – that is the remedy. This is a blessed contemplation for young and old, and whether you are beginning, or whether you are just seeking the Lord, or whether you have been in the way many years, to be blessed with a sweet, sacred consideration of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who He is, the Son of God from all eternity. Even then, His “delights were with the sons of men,” “rejoicing in the habitable parts of His earth.” Consider that wonderful love which He had to His chosen from all eternity, when He had loved them with an everlasting love.

“Consider Him.” And O how He veiled His glory and in the fulness of time He came to this earth, born at Bethlehem, born of a virgin, “made of a woman, made under the law.” Consider that He came with a covenant purpose to save His people with an everlasting salvation, and consider Him in His real, proper, sacred humanity, a real Man, that He might sympathise and that He might understand, and that He might suffer, bleed and die.

“Consider Him.” But especially consider Him in His dying love and atoning blood, Gethsemane and the judgment hall and Calvary. And

consider Him in that great sacrifice when He for ever “put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself,” and “perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” Consider Him in His glorious resurrection and ascension to heaven, and consider Him there almighty to save.

The one is the answer to the other. O the Lord give you understanding in these things. But if you have been brought to consider your ways, and if in any measure you have a little understanding – and the Lord is so sovereign in the way He leads and teaches – but as you consider the glorious Person and finished work of our Lord Jesus, you will be brought to consider just how much you need Him. That is a good beginning when you feel your need of a Saviour. You will begin to consider you cannot do without Him, and the Lord will give you understanding in all things, and you will see a sweet attraction in Him, and as you are brought to consider Him, you will want to know Him, whom to know is eternal life.

As you consider Him, you will pray to Him, and you will consider the things you need as you pray to Him. You will not dictate to Him, but it is an urgent, pressing case. It is “Give me Christ, or else I die.” You will be praying that He will forgive you, that He will wash you in His precious blood, that He will save you, that He will prepare you for heaven. “Consider what I say,” concerning your lost condition, but concerning the glorious Person and finished work of the Saviour. But to consider this: that He is as willing to save the needy soul as He is able.

You will be brought to consider that He has made some precious promises. As you consider Him, you will consider the words He speaks. You will consider a word like this, a precious promise like this: “Him” – and Bunyan says there have been some strange, wicked *hims* have ventured on Christ, but they have been received. “Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.” And you will consider some encouraging words like this: “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

But do not forget that threefold word in the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is this; it is considering His complete suitability to meet your need: “Consider the Apostle” – that is the One that the Father has sent – “the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.” It is a lovely theme, to consider Him as a great High Priest, laying down His life a

sacrifice, and then rising, ascending, for ever to intercede, the sinner's Advocate with God, the one Mediator whose advocacy never fails.

“Consider Him.” “Consider how great this Man” – the greatness of His mercy, and His love, and His faithfulness, and His power to save. “Consider Him that endured” – O what a word this is; the Lord give you understanding – “*such contradiction.*” You can see the persecution of Herod there; you can see Satan in the wilderness; you can go to the judgment hall; and O the wonders of the cross. “*Such contradiction* of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”

“Consider your ways,” and “Consider Him,” and “Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.” Beloved friends, as you leave chapel, as you go home, this afternoon and during this week, and perhaps when you are awake in the night, may the Lord bless you with this consideration of these things that really matter, and “the Lord give thee understanding in all things.” And as you consider the Saviour, you will learn the answer to that question: “What think ye of Christ?” And He will endear Himself to you, and you will consider Him in love and in affection, as the one thing needful. The Lord give you understanding in all these things.