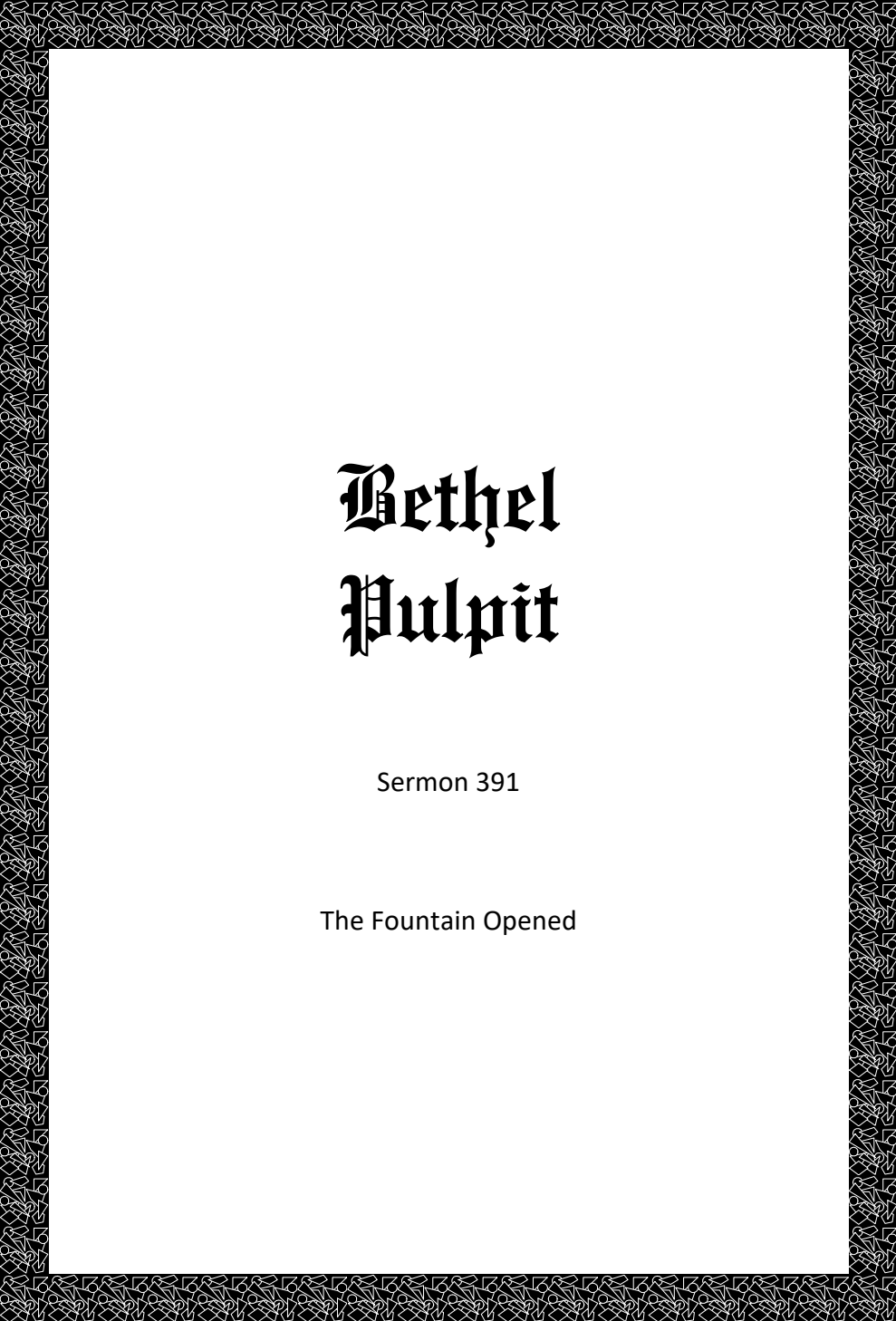




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 391

The Fountain Opened

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day evening, 14th May, 2017**

Text: *"But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water" (John 19. 34).*

We need to approach a solemn, sacred subject like this – the wounded side of the Redeemer – with reverence and godly fear.

"Alas! the cruel spear
Went deep into His side;
And the rich flood of purple gore
Their murderous weapons dyed."

This was the last act of indignity, of humiliation, afforded by cruel men to the suffering Saviour. Of course, we sometimes sing this:

"The soldier pierced His side, 'tis true,
But we have pierced Him through and through."

That is, the sins of the Lord's people in the death of Christ were as that cruel spear which went deep into His side. I wonder if any of us have ever had our hearts solemnly touched by this. It is the place of faith. It is the place of repentance. It is the place of love.

"Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side." So the vital point here is that the Saviour was dead upon the cross. This is what John is insisting on – that He really died – because soon after and right down the ages there have always been ungodly people who have tried to explain it away, and say perhaps it was only a swoon, and then in the cold grave He revived, and things like that.

The point here is that the Lord Jesus died, the fact. But it is the foundation on which the sinner's hope is built. The Lord Jesus laid down His life as a sacrifice, and He must not only suffer and bleed, but He must die, death being the wages of sin, and He as our Surety taking our place and taking those wages. So,

“Faith views Him dead upon the tree;
Then buried in the grave.”

But faith believes that He died that we might live. Faith sees a beauty in His death. Faith views salvation there and salvation there alone.

“Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side.” So we linger here in admiration and in love. May it be,

“Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
Which before the cross I spend.”

“One of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side.” And John emphasises it, and he lays a special weight upon it, and he says that it was impossible that those soldiers, though they so cruelly threw the spear into His side, it was impossible for them to break His legs. There is the authority of the Word of God here. There is the certainty of the promises.

“These things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken.” Now of course, there is a lot hidden here. This is a quotation from Exodus chapter 12 – the Passover night, the slaying of the paschal lamb, the blood shed, the reason for it, Israel’s deliverance, how it set forth according to the type that that lamb taken for the sacrifice, not a bone of it must be broken. And then to think that the Holy Ghost takes it up on the great day of the atonement and points to the dying Saviour. Really, the whole of this word is this, in the dear Saviour hanging dead upon the cross: “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” O to behold Him by faith! That was a blessed word we sang just now. Did any of you feel you could fall under it by faith?

“Fly, then, awakened sinners, fly;
Your case admits no stay;
The fountain’s opened now for sin;
Come, wash your guilt away.”

The paschal lamb, death upon the cross, the deliverance, the salvation that flowed from it, the lamb slain in the place of the firstborn.

“And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and 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.” “For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled.” O the honour that is placed on holy Scripture, even what seems to us a little detail, only one of the types! But God’s Word must stand; God’s promises cannot be broken.

“These things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken.” And then the fulness that is opened up. This was the fulfilment of that solemn Passover night, and now the glorious fulfilment: “For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.” “For these things were done.” That is, His legs cannot be broken; that is, the spear must be cast into His side; that is, there must be the clear evidence of His death.

“These things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on Him whom they pierced.” This time the quotation is from one of the minor prophets, Zechariah chapter 12. But again, just as with the Passover and the paschal lamb, there is a fulness here, because the reference in Zechariah chapter 12 and the opening of the next chapter is this: “In that day” – and that is this day in John chapter 19 – “In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.” O what a word that is!

“There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.”

“A fountain opened.”

“And again another scripture saith, They shall look on Him whom they pierced.” We read just before that word of the fountain being opened, “In that day ... I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him.” So literally here there was a looking on Him who was pierced, but

this is pointing right forward to gospel days, and there was a special fulfilment of it on the Day of Pentecost. It seems very clear that on the Day of Pentecost there were some, if not many, who actually were implicated in these cruelties in the death of the Saviour, but under the Holy Spirit's influence and Peter's preaching, by faith they looked on Him whom they had pierced, and they mourned for Him in true repentance and in faith. Some have wondered even if the cruel soldier who cast the spear into the Saviour's side was one of those blessed with repentance and living faith on the Day of Pentecost.

This is still being fulfilled, but it must be the Holy Spirit's work. The great work of the Holy Spirit is to take of these things of Jesus – His Person, His work, His love, His sufferings, His death, the fountain He opened – and to show them to us, and to show us our personal interest in them. “And they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him.” Now that is the place of real repentance, and that is the place of real faith. You cannot really separate the two. But especially Calvary is the place of real repentance, when a sinner by faith looks on a crucified Saviour and His pierced side and realises, this is me. O how Berridge puts it:

“Sinner, thou hast done the deed;
Thou hast made the Saviour bleed!
Justice drew its sword on Me!
Pierced My heart to pass by thee!”

“They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced.”

“In that day ... I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him.” It does seem that there is going to be a wonderful fulfilment of this promise in the last days, and even with national Israel, the Jews. “For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on Him whom they pierced.”

“Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs: but one of the

soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.” Now the Apostle John saw that there was something very remarkable here. John, standing there by the cross, saw some amazing things. He saw the very earth shake. He saw the very sky darkened. He saw many miracles, amazing things. But the one thing that arrested him more than anything else was this: the blood and the water flowing from the Saviour’s side. Doesn’t he emphasise it! It is obvious that it is John himself who is speaking here: “He that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.” It seems to have made such a special impression on John. There is nothing in the whole of his gospel that he emphasises like this: “He that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true.”

And then years later, as we read this evening (1 John 5), when he was writing his first Epistle, it seems that this remarkable event still hovers upon his spirit. “This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood.” And he emphasises here, “That ye might believe.” Not just believe that it happened, though John is insisting on this, but believing something about the wonder of it.

“One of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.” The church of God has always seen the wonderful significance of it, never better expressed than in the beautiful, well-known words of Toplady in *Rock of Ages*.

“Let the water and the blood,
From Thy riven side which flowed.”

This is it:

“Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.”

The blood and the water – if you will, justification, sanctification – the precious blood of Christ that cleanseth from all sin, the sinner’s standing before a holy God, presented without “spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” The blood – the value of it, to save him from sin’s guilt, for we are all guilty, and that precious blood is made known in the sinner’s conscience, bringing that peace and pardon. But then the water – deliverance, not just from the guilt of sin, but from the power of sin. Sin shall no longer reign in the heart of the believer. He is not under the law; he is under grace.

Now in the gospels and in the epistles, these are two vital things which God has joined together. If ever they were joined together, they were joined together here, the blood and the water flowing together. Now you *cannot* separate them in the gospel. You *cannot* separate them in a sinner's experience. Where the blood is, there is the water. Where sin is atoned for, there is that sanctifying effect, deliverance from the power and reign of sin. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

There is a power in the blood and there is a power in the water. The solemn thing is when people try to separate them. What do I mean? Well, you have had it right down the ages. There is many a one who wants to be saved by the blood of Christ, saved from going to hell at last, but he does not want to be saved from his sin. He does not want to be delivered from the power of indwelling sin. He does not want to be delivered from his idols. He does not want to be delivered from the world. He wants to have the blood, but he does not want to have the water. "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

"Let the water and the blood,
From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power."

So where there is a real work of grace, a sinner under a sense of his soul's needs, his spiritual concerns, he is willing by faith to receive both the water and the blood. He does not just want the blood, and then his whole life to be left to dishonour the Saviour. He wants to receive the water and the blood. He wants the cleansing effect of the blood and the water. It is just the same doctrine that Christ is both a Priest and a King – a Priest to atone for the sins of His people, a King to reign in their lives. So many would love to have Christ as their Priest to take them to heaven, but they do not want Him to be their King to reign in their lives. You cannot separate the offices of Christ.

"One of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water." There is something solemn here, something sacred, something vital – vital for you, vital for me, vital in our

salvation, vital if ever we are going to get to heaven – the blood and the water.

Now it is laid on me, beloved friends, that we are to linger here and meditate and draw near, as the Holy Spirit enables us by faith, and look on a dear, dying Saviour, and look on the fountain that flowed from His side, and seek a personal interest there. Always remember this: that though we preach these glorious things, Christ crucified, we do not preach a dead Christ. We preach a Christ who did suffer, bleed and die, blessed be His name, but He rose again triumphantly and He lives for ever.

But somehow it seemed to be on my mind, lingering on my spirit today, Psalm 62, waiting upon the Lord. “Truly my soul waiteth upon God.” May that be where we are before we go home this evening: waiting upon God, waiting upon Him at the cross of Christ. “From Him cometh my salvation.” It is from the Saviour’s wounded side that our salvation comes, and in the sixty-second Psalm, we have this word *only* which keeps coming in again and again. We are to wait *only* upon God, because “neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name ... whereby we must be saved,” but the name of Jesus, and it is the name of Jesus as crucified.

“My soul” – *your* soul – “wait thou only upon God.” That is the place, those of you who are concerned about what I have been speaking about tonight, and concerned about your sin and eternity and your soul’s salvation. “Wait thou only upon God.” Wait, as you are led there by the Spirit, wait at the foot of the cross. “For my expectation is from Him.” We have not any expectation from ourselves, from our own heart, from the world, from empty religion, from other people, but our expectation is from the Lord Jesus, dying, rising again. “For surely there is an end; and thine expectation shall not be cut off.”

“He only is my rock and my salvation.” Now you have the Rock of Ages there, the rock foundation on which our hope is built, but then we think of the smitten rock. The ancient Jews had a very, very strange tradition. There was a tradition amongst some of the ancient Jews that when Moses struck the rock in Horeb, there was blood flowed from it as well as water. We have to leave that – that was a Jewish tradition – but we think of what it signifies. Those beautiful words I read to you this evening in John chapter 19, there does seem to be a reference to that smitten rock

and those streams of living water that flowed forth. “He only is my rock.” This is the only source of blessing.

“’Twas Jesus, my Friend, when He hung on the tree,
Who opened the channel of mercy for me.”

“He is my defence; I shall not be moved.” O to see all these things at the foot of the cross! “In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God.” O what a refuge there is! You remember the refuge Martin Luther felt in his dreadful soul distress when he almost starved himself to death in a desire to fulfil the law of God, until John Staupitz, the superior of the Augustinian monastery, visited one day and said, “Brother Martin, look to the wounds of Christ.” That is where Luther was raised to a little hope, and may some of you tonight look to the wounds of Christ, and through grace find a little ground where “your anchor, hope, shall firm remain, the wounds of Jesus, for your sin.”

“In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. Trust in Him at all times.” That is what living faith does. It can place no confidence in itself, but it is brought to trust in a crucified Redeemer. “Trust in Him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before Him.” Pour out your desires, your longings, your prayers, your fears, your hopes. Pour them out before the Lord. Old John Berridge, in the well-known sermon he preached at Whitefield’s Tabernacle, took this text, and when he came to, “Ye people, pour out your heart before Him,” he said, “I do feel glad this evening it doesn’t say, *His people*, pour out your hearts before Him, though of course it is true. But I was afraid it would leave me out. It says, *Ye people*.” You are not forbidden to pour out your heart before Him.” “God is a refuge for us,” that

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

“Selah.” Do not go home and forget about it. “Selah.” Meditate on it. “Selah.” Think about it. “Selah.” Be concerned about your soul’s interest in it. So these are precious things.

“Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs.” This is it: “But

one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on Him whom they pierced.” One final word:

“This same dear Man in heaven now reigns
That suffered for our sake.”