

Bethel

Prayer Meeting Addresses

Number 50 God in Control

Reading: Psalm 104. 1-13

1 Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty.

2 Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain:

3 Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters: who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind:

4 Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire:

5 Who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever.

6 Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment: the waters stood above the mountains.

7 At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice

of thy thunder they hasted away.

8 They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys unto the place which thou hast founded for them.

9 Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth.

10 He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills.

11 They give drink to every beast of the field: the wild asses quench their thirst.

12 By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches.

13 He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works.

Address

The theme is the greatness of God, and so the psalm begins, “O Lord my God, Thou art very great.” And the psalmist opens up the greatness of God, first of all in creation, and then in nature, and then in providence. At the start he has so much to say about the mighty seas, the oceans, the waves, the tides, the rivers, the streams, the mighty waters. The point is this: that they are all under God’s control. It is a wonderful theme, everything is under God’s control.

Of course, we have this same point in a few places in the Word of God. Let me just mention two of them. “Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.” That is one. And the other: “He bindeth the floods from overflowing” – the Lord in complete control. Of course, we all know the famous story of King Canute when his flattering subjects told him he

was so great that if his throne was put on the sea shore and he bade the sea stop, it would. And of course, it ended in disaster.

I take it that when the psalmist and the Word of God in other places are speaking about the mighty waves of the sea, the mighty waters, this is perhaps the greatest power that has ever been known on earth. I think I have told you in the days when I used to go to Liverpool a lot, there was a man attended the chapel there and he had been a ship's carpenter for thirty years on a merchant ship. He said if you had a storm in the Pacific, the power of the wind and the power of the waves was so great, it was very, very difficult to control even the largest of ships. We think of our own coastline, places where all kinds of bulwarks have been built and concrete slabs and all kinds of things, and then perhaps there is a high tide and a strong wind and it is all just torn away in a moment.

The word we have in this psalm is: "Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over" (verse 9). "All creatures obey God's command." The sea obeys His command; the mighty waters obey His command. And there is the power of His word. He speaks and the thing is done. "Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over."

Well, just two or three things this evening. The first is this: what a comfort this truth is in this very dark, evil day in which our lot is cast, in which we live – the forces of evil, the wickedness in the world, the atheism, the desire to overthrow good things in every way, the assault against the name of Christ. And then you have this: "O Lord my God, Thou art very great." *They* are not very great. They think they are, but they are not. O but Thou, "My God, Thou art very great," and, "Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over." They can only go as far as the Lord permits, and the Lord stops them, and the Lord overturns them, and the time comes when their little lives on earth will be finished. That bound – may you see it this evening. May it be an encouragement to you with all the evil and all the wickedness, and it does concern us and burden us, and it should. But the Lord has set that bound and they *cannot* pass over it. The Lord is in control. The Lord will have the last word.

You have it in the second psalm, the mighty of this world rising up against the Lord and against His anointed. The Lord shall laugh at them; "the Lord shall have them in derision." "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." There is the bound. They cannot pass over it. You remember when you come

to the Acts of the Apostles, when the early apostles were forbidden to speak in the Lord's name, "they went to their own company" and there was that wonderful prayer meeting, and it was that second psalm they pleaded, and this truth we have here that they pleaded. There is a bound, and you remember what happened immediately afterwards. There was this earthquake. The whole place was shaken. The Lord revealed Himself in His divine, almighty power. He showed Himself on their side. This bound – they cannot pass over it. These great, these mighty men in the world, these presidents and rulers and prime ministers and politicians, they think they are in charge, but there is that bound and they cannot pass over.

And of course ultimately it touches on the everlasting salvation of the church of God. "Upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." So you see it in the world, and then you see it in our own lives. Sometimes it is in a way of judgment and sometimes it is in a way of mercy. And sometimes we think it is judgment, but it is not; it is mercy. What do I mean, the Lord in our lives setting that bound and we cannot pass over it? You go back to the days of unregeneracy, unconcern. There we were and we were going on our way headlong to a lost eternity. We were not thinking about the Lord and we were not thinking about His grace. We were not thinking about Christ. And the Lord had set a bound and we could not pass over it. That was in love and mercy. That was "the appointed time that rolled on apace, not to propose but call by grace." That bound that was set so we could not go on one day, one hour, one moment longer than the appointed day, the appointed time. We could not pass over it. Sometimes you read these old books and autobiographies and magazines and it seems so clear, and many of the Lord's people struggle and they fight and they try to go back to their own ways and they try to go back to the world, but there is that bound and you cannot pass over it. I would say this: if the Lord is dealing with any of you here for the first time and He has set that bound, and it is like a hedge of thorns – if you are struggling, you will never be allowed to pass over it. God's work will stand in your heart. You will not be able to go back, and you will look back and you will bless that hand that stopped you, and you will bless that bound that He set.

There is another bound that the Lord has set in our lives which we cannot pass over, and that is the day of our death. Wasn't it Queen Elizabeth I who said, "All my kingdom for one day on earth"? But that bound she could not pass over. There is an appointed day, an appointed time and we cannot pass over it. We cannot remain on earth any longer. And it is your mercy and mine if we know it and if we feel it and if we want to be made ready for it, we want to be

prepared for it, to be forgiven, to be washed in the Saviour's blood, to be clothed in His righteousness.

Now another thing. The Lord often stops up the way of His people, and they do not like it. But if you are going a wrong way, it will be your mercy for the Lord to set that bound and you cannot pass over it. We need to pray to the Lord that He will close wrong doors for us and open right doors. But how often a child of God has been backsliding, wandering away, turning back, and suddenly he has come across this bound. He does not like it; he tries to cross over it; but the Lord will not let him cross over it. He cries aloud, "Return, thou backsliding Israel." Return in repentance, in humility, in faith; return to the Saviour; return to your first love. But the Lord is in control and the Lord will have the last word.

And just one other thing. You may have things against you tonight, people, even friends, even relatives, things, circumstances, and they all seem to be going against you. The Lord has put that bound. They cannot go any further. The prime example in Scripture: Job. Satan asked permission and he got it, but there was a bound. The Lord set a hedge about His servant Job. First of all, Satan could not touch him at all, touch his body. And then later he was allowed to go even as far as that, to touch his body with those excruciating boils, but "save his life." And beloved friends, whatever you have or whatever you do not have, there is one thing that Satan, sin, the world, unbelief can never touch, and the Lord has set a bound there, and it is this: "Your life is hid with Christ in God."

This address was given at Bethel Chapel, Luton, by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom, on Thursday, 7th May, 2009