

Bethel

Pulpit

“Even There”

Sermon Number 468

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day evening, 18th November, 2018**

Text: *"If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me" (Psalm 139. 9, 10).*

There are some very solemn things and there are some very blessed things in this Psalm. It speaks about a very simple and yet solemn, vital point: that *God is everywhere*. There is no place where anyone can go and God is not there. Springing from that, because God is everywhere, *God knows everything*. Nothing can be hidden from Him, not even our most secret thoughts. These are two foundation truths: God is everywhere. If you want the theological term, He is omnipresent. And because of that, God knows everything, and again, if you want the theological term, He is omniscient.

So the psalmist really opens this up: "Thou ... art acquainted with all my ways"; "Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, Thou understandest my thought afar off"; "For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether." Well, "Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there." And then the words I have read to you: "If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me." This is a beautiful expression; it is a poetical expression: to take the wings of the morning. Different people have interpreted it in different ways – one almost as if you could climb on a sunbeam and fly away with it; another, travelling faster than light. So you might go on. It is a beautiful expression. If you try to get away from everyone and everything, to the uttermost parts of the earth, you cannot get away from God.

Of course, I thought of the little children's hymn that most of us were brought up on. In the old Clifton Hymnal, it was always hymn

number 1, the first hymn. But one verse says this, and it seems to come right to the point:

“If I could find some cave unknown,
Where human feet had never trod,
Yet there I could not be alone,
On every side there would be God.”

“If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; *even there*.” God is even there. His presence is even there. We cannot escape His presence. “Even there.” Some of you older young people at school, you study these various poets. I wonder if you have come across an old classic, later Victorian, Francis Thompson’s “The Hound of Heaven.” He describes himself as the hound of heaven, the figure being a hound trying to get away, flee from God. He fled here; he fled there; but wherever he was, the Lord met him. He could not escape from God.

So there is a very solemn point here: that all our ways, our thoughts, our concerns, are ever before God. He knows. And we cannot flee from the presence of God. David tried it. He did not ask for the wings of the morning; he asked for the wings of a dove. He said, “Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.” Really, David wanted to fly away from his troubles. Beloved friends, you cannot fly away from your troubles any more than you can fly away from God. David realised it before he ended that Psalm. This is not the way for a troubled soul, to try to fly away, to have the wings of a dove. He found this was the answer: “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.” That was the Lord’s answer. “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.”

“If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea.” We cannot flee from God’s presence, from His all-seeing eye, from His perfect knowledge. If, beloved friends, any of you tonight feel the solemnity of this, and it is a real concern to you, there is an answer. You know what that answer is: that there *is* a hiding place from the all-seeing eye of a holy, righteous God, and that hiding place is in the Person and finished work of our Lord Jesus, His own beloved Son.

“To Him, my only Hiding-place,
Let me for shelter fly;
The storm of death draws on apace,
And who can say how nigh?”

“If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there.” That is the solemn side. And then there is the blessed side. It does not matter where we are, how far away, even in lands unknown. The Lord is graciously present there with all His people. He has said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” What a comfort that is! I wonder if some of us have proved it at times. This word was once made very, very special to me. It was on one of our journeys to preach in the United States, and I was most fearful about it, extremely fearful about it. But those two words: “*Even there.*” What a comfort! Wherever you have to journey, wherever you have to go – I am speaking even naturally – some of you on your business, you have to go to a far-off land. You do not want to go there. “Even there.” It is a wonderful point, that the Lord’s gracious presence, His loving presence, His abiding presence, for Jesus’ sake, despite all His people’s sins, that He will never leave them, nor forsake them, that He will always be there.

“If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there.” But beloved friends, we have no need to limit this just naturally, to going to a far-off land. “The uttermost parts of the sea.” Well, there are so many expressions like this in Scripture, and they are describing a spiritual condition. Let me quote one: “Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” Well, “all the ends of the earth”; “the uttermost parts of the sea.” O when you feel there is a distance between your soul and the Lord, when you feel you cannot get near Him, or to take a different view, when you feel you are one of those who is forgotten, one of those who is left out, one of those who is passed by. The Lord has some beautiful, kind things to say to those who feel to be at the uttermost parts of the earth. “Even there.” Even there, there is a good and gracious God and Saviour. Even there, there is One who does not forget you, though others may forget you and pass you by. “Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.”

And then there is another one. “From the end of the earth will I cry unto Thee.” Are there any of you there tonight? “When my heart is overwhelmed” – either by sin, or Satan, or troubled, or oppressed. “From the end of the earth will I cry unto Thee, when my heart is overwhelmed.” And you all know what follows: “Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.” There is a hiding place there. There is salvation there. “Even there.”

“If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; *even there.*” Those two words seem to be very attractive, very beautiful. It is like that word that closes the mysterious Prophecy of Ezekiel: “The name of the city from that day shall be” – Jehovah-shammah – “The Lord is there.” What place? Well, you say, it is referring to the temple – yes – but it is also referring to the uttermost parts of the earth. “Even there.” “Jehovah-shammah” – “the Lord is there.” How many of our congregation have sweetly proved it in hospital! “Even there.” “Jehovah-shammah” – “the Lord is there.” Thinking of the unknown way, something before you, some mountain, some obstacle, some trial, some sorrow. “Even there.” “Jehovah-shammah” – “the Lord is there.”

“If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; *even there.*” And the psalmist does not leave it. He tells us the Lord is there, and the Lord is graciously there, but how sweetly he opens it up. Wherever you are, wherever you go, wherever your journey takes you, in providence or in grace, the Lord is there – not to condemn you, but to watch over you, and to help you, and to be with you, and to support you, and to supply your needs, to bring you along and to help you through.

“Even there.” Especially does the psalmist emphasise two things. “Even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me.” What a subject this, if the minister had the time and ability and grace – the hand of the Lord! “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save.” It is an almighty hand. It is a gracious hand. And the first thing that the sinner shall find when he comes to the end of the earth, is that the Lord will lead him, which means this: the Lord is there, the Lord is with him, the Lord is watching over him, the Lord is caring for him.

There is so much in this point of divine leading. “He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.” He does not let

them wander out of the way. He does not let them go their own way. There is so much in this divine leading. “Lead me in Thy truth, and teach me: for Thou art the God of my salvation; on Thee do I wait all the day.” May we know something of that wonderful blessing of divine leading – leading in providence, yes, the pathway we have to go, but also leading in the gospel, leading in the Word of God, especially being continually led by the Holy Spirit to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

“Even there shall Thy hand lead me.” And then the second thing: “Even there ... Thy right hand shall hold me.” What are we to make of this: the Lord’s right hand? Sometimes we speak about *right hand blessings*. Sometimes Scripture seems to speak of the Lord’s right hand as the hand of divine, almighty power. Sometimes it seems to speak of the Lord’s right hand as the hand of love and mercy and grace. So what is that right hand going to do? It is going to help you, hold you fast, keep you near Him. Whatever would we do if the Lord did not hold us? We should sink; we should wander away; we should fall. “Upheld by Thy righteous, omnipotent hand.” “The righteous shall hold on his way.”

“Even there ... Thy right hand shall hold me.” Hold me fast, yes, but hold me when I am going to turn back. And what else? Hold me up. O what a word that is, and how some of our people have proved it, when they were feeling down:

“The gospel bears my spirit up;
A faithful and unchanging God,
Lays the foundation of my hope,
In oaths, and promises, and blood.”

“Even there ... Thy right hand shall hold me.” But in its deepest, fullest sense, it is this. We sometimes sing of it: “I’m safe in my Redeemer’s hands.” Do you believe it, beloved, and can you say it:

“I’m safe in my Redeemer’s hands,
Who bears my name upon His heart”?

That is its fullest sense.

“Even there ... Thy right hand shall hold me.” The Lord has all His people in His loving hands – those hands which were once crucified, nailed

to the cross, those hands which are almighty. In a sense, they were there from everlasting as the Father gave them into His hands, and then He was bearing them in His loving, almighty hands, when He came to this earth, and He went to the cross, and He died for them, and He rose again for them, that they might be His, that they might be His to all eternity. “Safe” – it is a lovely word –

“Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on His gentle breast;
There by His love o’ershaded,
Sweetly my soul shall rest.”

“Even there shall Thy hand lead me, *and Thy right hand shall hold me.*” There is a specially beautiful verse on this in Isaiah chapter 41. First of all, the Lord says this to His poor, unworthy people: “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness.” But this is the confirmation of it all. It is spoken especially as an *even there* blessing, perhaps to those who have come into a place they did not want to come into, but the Lord has led you there. It is because of His leading you are there, and He is present with you. This is it: “For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand.” It is such beautiful language, just like there is a little child who is fearful, and his loving mother takes him and holds him by his hand. “For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee.”

“What more can He say than to you He has said,
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?”

“For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee.”

“If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; *even there* shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me.” I am sure this evening many of us are thinking of our friends who hope to go to Africa this week. To some of you they are close relations; to others they are close friends. You think of what a venture it is, but we can seek nothing better for them than this: *even there* blessings. “Even there.”

“If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; *even there* shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me.”

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Jesus, Lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the raging billows roll,
While the tempest still is high.
Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
Till the storm of life is past;
Safe into the haven guide;
O receive my soul at last!

Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee;
Leave, ah! leave me not alone;
Still support and comfort me.
All my trust on Thee is stayed;
All my help from Thee I bring;
Cover my defenceless head
With the shadow of Thy wing.

Thou, O Christ, art all I want;
All in all in Thee I find;
Raise the fallen, cheer the faint,
Heal the sick, and lead the blind.
Just and holy is Thy name;
I am all unrighteousness;
Vile and full of sin I am;
Thou art full of truth and grace;

Plenteous grace with Thee is found;
Grace to pardon all my sin;
Let the healing streams abound;
Make and keep me pure within.

Thou of life the Fountain art;
Freely let me take of Thee;
Spring Thou up within my heart,
Rise to all eternity.

C. Wesley