

Bethel

Pulpit

A Foundation Truth

Sermon Number 474

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day morning, 6th August, 2017**

Text: *“For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day” (2 Timothy 1. 12).*

This is a foundation truth, the foundation of every sinner's hope who one day will be in heaven. You might speak of it as a basic truth. Some years ago in the country there was such a movement, *back to basics*. Well, in our most holy faith, now and again we do have to go back to basics – what do we really believe, and why do we believe it, and how do we come to believe it, and what is the foundation of it, what is the ground of it? That going back to basic things.

It is very clear that as the great apostle writes this Epistle, he is very shortly going to suffer a martyr's death. He could tell of some wonderful things he had experienced – he was once caught up to the third heaven – but he goes back to the basic points, despite all that he knew, all his greatness, all the blessings that had attended his preaching. “I know whom I have believed.” He was not counting himself an eminent saint. He was counting himself a true believer on the Son of God. And he says, “*I know*.” Now let us be clear, there were many things that even the great apostle did not know. Doesn't he tell us in one place, “Not as though I had already attained,” but he says, “I follow after.” There are still so many things I do not know, I long to know, I must know. “I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.”

But here Paul says, “I know.” This was one thing he could say: “I know.” O beloved friends, there are so many things you and I do not know, and the older we get, the more things we realise that we do not know that we should know, we ought to know, we must know. But if your religion is real, there will be one or two things and you will be able to say, “I know.” Let me mention one: “One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.” There are so many things I do not know, but I know my eyes have been opened. I am not what I once was. I am not what I would be, what I long

to be, but I know I am not what I once was, that there has been an effect. That poor man, they tried to twist him every way. Some said he had never been blind. Some said he could not see. Some said it could not possibly have happened. Some said the one who did it for him must have been wrong. The poor man could not understand all these things. He said, "One thing I know." You young ones, if you can just hold fast to one thing: "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."

There is another thing. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Of course, we have to be careful we do not say that carelessly and easily. Didn't Philpot once say that that is almost the first scripture that gives encouragement to a beginner, and it is almost the last scripture that holds out when you have to do with many of the brethren, and you have so many problems and difficulties with some of them! O but, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

Here the apostle says, "I know." What Paul says he knows, if your religion is real, you will be able to say you know. He knew where his hope was fixed. He knew where he was looking for salvation. He is not speaking of the full, sweet assurance of it in the gospel, but he knows where his hope is fixed. "I know whom I have believed." It is "none but Jesus." It is Jesus as the Son of God. It is Jesus in His precious blood. It is Jesus in His great salvation. It is Jesus in His willingness to save unto the uttermost the chief of sinners. It is Jesus in His precious promises.

Now Paul says, That is one thing I do know. I do know where my hope is fixed. I do know what my only foundation is. I know where my anchor is cast. "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus." That is it: "Even Jesus."

"For I know whom I have believed." Paul takes it just a little further than that. He does not just say, I know where my hope is; I know where I am looking. But he says really, I know *Him*. "I know *whom* I have believed." He is not just speaking of the knowledge of a *fact*. He is speaking of the knowledge of a *Person*. May we through grace be able to say that: I know Him. Or if you cannot come there, may you pray the prayer that the apostle himself prayed on one occasion: "That I may know Him."

O to know Him personally and savingly! There is very much difference between knowing about a person and knowing that person. Everybody in the chapel knows *about* the queen, but no-one really knows her *personally*. What a difference it would make if you knew her personally, if she were your friend, if she were your helper, if you could go to her in your times of need, if you could tell her your troubles!

Paul is not just saying, I know who He is, but he says, I know Him. In a special way Paul was brought to know Him. He did not want to know Him; he despised Him. Never did a sinner have a greater shock than when Almighty God revealed Himself to Paul on the road to Damascus, and Paul in wonder and amazement cried out, “Who art Thou, Lord?” And he received that answer: “I am Jesus” – the One that Paul was opposing, the One he was seeking to destroy, the One he was seeking to overthrow. It could not be, but it was!

And didn’t Paul come to glory in it! He said, “I determined” – that holy, gracious determination. A lot of people are determined, but not always in a good thing. Paul says, “I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” Someone said it was a miracle that Paul could ever put those two words together: “Jesus Christ,” because from his early days, from infancy he knew both those words. They were different words; they were opposite. He knew Christ. He was the promised Messiah. He was the One who was coming in the Jewish nation. He was the One they were expecting, this great Messiah. But then Jesus of Nazareth was the One he despised, but he was brought to put these two together. There was one glorious Person. He said, “I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” O says Paul, I know Him.

It is a wonderful thing if many of us this morning in our little way can say, I believe I know Him. I believe it is through His own teaching. I did not always know Him; I did not always want to know Him; but I believe I do know Him. It is important to me and it has changed my life. I know Him as my Friend, the Friend who loveth at all times, the Brother born for adversity. I know Him as my Saviour, the only One who can save me from my sins. I believe I know Him as He once suffered, bled and died. I believe I know Him as risen from the dead.

Let me just pause and linger here a few moments. Listening to your little testimonies over fifty years, I have found as one by one you have come, you have all been brought to know Him, but some more in a special way than others. I remember one speaking specially of being brought to know God as their Father, and someone speaking of the Advocate, and someone speaking of looking up to heaven and knowing Him at God's right hand as his Intercessor. Then I remember one person who was troubled about all these different things, and he really entered into the hymn,

“But we first after Jesus reach,
And richly grasp the whole.”

What I am saying this for: for your encouragement and for your warning. You might hear someone speaking so beautifully of how they know the Lord Jesus, perhaps in one of His offices, and you feel, I do not really know that; but you might have been shown the Lord Jesus in a different office. You might hear someone speaking of this great and glorious High Priest. You might say, I am not so sure I know that. But perhaps you know the Lord Jesus as the loving Shepherd of the sheep. But it is this: the knowledge of Christ, whom to know is eternal life.

“For I know whom I have believed.” It is to be a believer, and that means all your trust as a sinner is in the Lord Jesus; all your trust is in Him for salvation, because at the end Paul speaks of a *day*. He often speaks of a *day*. He does not tell us what that day is. He just calls it *that day*, and more than once in this chapter he speaks of it, and he calls it *that day*. All through the prophets you have it, especially when you come to Joel, “The day of the Lord,” and when you come to the New Testament, the day of the Lord's appearing, the day of His second coming, the day of judgment, the day of wrath. With Paul in his teaching, the great, the vital thing was to have a religion in the light of *that day*. The great point, to be prepared for *that day*. So Paul speaks of being a believer. It is the one thing vital before that great day.

But not hurrying on here, do you ever think of that great day? If the Lord has not returned, it will come to you personally in the day of your death. That will be *that day* for you, the day of the Lord, the day of judgment. Some of us in our spiritual beginnings, we look back and we wonder, and think there are some things we should have known. But *that*

day did become a terrible day, how we should stand in that great day. It is not a pleasant experience, but it is a necessary experience, and I hope all here, young and old, are brought to think of the last day, the day of the Lord's return, your last day, that terrible day, and how shall I stand when He appears? So it was with Paul. These things he learned, these things he had been taught, he felt they were the only things that were necessary, and he felt they would stand in that great day, because not only did he know the Lord Jesus in His love and mercy, but he knew He was a faithful God who would not let him down, and would not fail him in that last great day.

“Against that day.” It is said in those great days in the Highlands of Scotland when there was so much blessing, that there was a storm, sleet and rain and snow, and there was a poor old shepherd going over the mountains, and he met a traveller who was hastening along, troubled by it all. As he met the shepherd, he said, “Terrible day, terrible day.” And the godly shepherd said, “Sir, there is only one really terrible day. It is your mercy and mine if we are ready for it.”

O to be brought here: “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.” Now we have two of Paul's favourite words here. One is *persuaded*; one is *He is able*. In real religion, it is not always a clear word; it is not always a definite leading. Sometimes there is such a thing – shall we call it *a gracious persuasion*? You are praying about something. It is something personal. It may be your soul, your sins and eternity. It may be tomorrow and next week. It may be some mountain. It may be some difficulty. And you are praying, and the Lord gives you a gracious persuasion. Sometimes it is a gracious persuasion of His will. More often it is a gracious persuasion of His lovingkindness, that He will be with you, that He will help you.

Now Paul not only says, “I know,” but he says, “I am persuaded.” Let me just mention twice where you have it: when he is speaking of Abraham, and that promise – to flesh and blood it seemed a foolish promise – that his aged wife, ninety years old, was going to have a baby boy. But we are told, Paul says, that Abraham was *fully persuaded* that what God “had promised, He was able also to perform.” That is a good word. You may have things, and they seem difficult or impossible. “Being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform.”

And then the other: that well-known chapter, Romans 8, and the end of it, where Paul gives that great catalogue. “*I am persuaded*, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” May we have a congregation at Bethel, a lot of you, where you are graciously persuaded. You young ones, if someone asks why you are doing something, why you have made that decision, why you are going that way, why you have that friendship, and if you could really say that the Lord has graciously persuaded you. But if it is just somebody has persuaded you, or your own carnal heart, that will not do.

Paul says, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able.” This is another of Paul’s sayings. He loves to view the gracious ability of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, what He can do. He “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.” “He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.” It is a good thing to be well persuaded, but it is a good thing to view our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and firmly to believe He is able. So often you and I are not. There are things that we are not able to understand, and we are not able to manage them, and we are not able to deal with them. You have perhaps got them tomorrow or next week, but He is able. Our hymnwriter says,

“He is able,
He is willing; doubt no more.”

“For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.” Now Paul saw that day. He saw the importance of being right. So he had to pray about it. What was it he had to commit to the Lord, into His hands, into His safekeeping? What was it? Well, it was the welfare of his immortal soul. It was his sins and his soul and a never-ending eternity. He could not manage them himself, and he could not handle them himself, and he could not deal with them; he could not prepare himself; he could not get rid of his sin, and he knew this was a safe place to take his concerns. Where do you have to take your soul’s concerns? Where do you have to take your sins? Where do you have to take your salvation? He says, “That which I have committed unto Him.”

“Jesus, my God, I know His name,
His name is all my trust;
Nor will He put my soul to shame,
Nor let my hope be lost.”

That was the Apostle Paul’s confidence, his only confidence, that all his everlasting concerns were no longer in his own hands. He could not bear to leave them there, but he had been sweetly enabled to deposit them in the almighty, gracious hands of the Lord Jesus.

“That which I have committed unto Him against that day.” And why he was encouraged to commit these things there: because he knew they would be safe; he knew they would be secure; he knew they could never be lost. That is why he says, “I know whom I have believed.” He knew His mercy. He knew the value of His precious blood. He knew His divine power. He knew His faithfulness. He knew He was worthy of confidence, worthy of trust. So he says. “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.”

Now there are many things that we have to commit to the Lord. One of the great things in the life of prayer of a believer is day by day, hour by hour, committing things into the hands of the Lord – great things, small things. And so that very, very well-known word – you are all familiar with it and some of you love it, many of you have proved it: “Commit thy way unto the Lord” – *thy way*, that which lies closest to your heart, that which is important to you; you cannot manage it yourself. Whatever it is you have this morning, providence or grace, great or small – “Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass.” There are many, many things we have to commit to the Lord, but do not be so tied up with providence when you are committing all these little things in your life. “One thing is needful.” That is the great thing we need to commit to the Lord – our eternal welfare, our souls’ concerns, our sin, our souls, eternity – that way. It is by faith; it is in prayer; it is in humility; it is in dependence; it is in humble confession.

“My soul into Thy arms I cast;
I trust I shall be saved at last.”

“Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass.” And Paul says, There are many things I do not know, many things I am not sure of, many things I long to know, but this I do know. I do know where of vital necessity I have had to commit all my eternal concerns: into the hands of the Lord Jesus.

“Firm as His throne His promise stands,
And He can well secure
What I’ve committed to His hands,
Till the decisive hour.”

“I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.” There is His faithfulness on the one hand; there is His divine, almighty power on the other.

“That which I have committed unto Him against that day.” Now I know that some of you have heard this on various occasions, but it is so apposite to what Paul has to say here that I cannot help but repeat it again, and especially for you little ones and children and young ones, that remarkable dream that the famous John Newton once had which has always seemed to me to be the best commentary you can find anywhere on this scripture: “He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.” I think most of you know that in his early days, John Newton was a ship’s captain, and on one occasion he had a most remarkable dream, that he was in Naples harbour on board his ship, and suddenly he saw a glorious person approaching him whom he had not seen before, and he wondered what his purpose was, coming on board the ship. When he came, he showed him a most precious jewel, and John Newton in his dream admired it and wondered at it. This man in his dream said, “This is yours,” and Newton said he could not believe it. He was overwhelmed with gratitude that this precious gift should really be his. He thought he would treasure it all his days.

Then another person appeared and began to reason with Newton, and said, “What is that silly thing you have in your hands?” He began to mock it. He said, “What good is it going to do you? It is only a piece of glass. You have been deceived. If I were you, I would get rid of it.” Newton said, “Foolishly I threw it over the side of the ship into the sea.” He

said, “Immediately the sky went black. It began to thunder. My soul was filled with horror and amazement. It thundered and the sky went black.” He said, “I trembled and didn’t know what to do.” Then he said, “I saw that first glorious person coming up to me, almost with a frown on his face, and he kindly asked me, ‘How are you getting on with this jewel?’” Newton could not bear to look at him. He said, “I have thrown it away.” He wondered what was to happen, the look of sadness and condemnation. He said that what did happen, this man went right over the side of the ship into the deep water and came back and appeared carrying this precious jewel in his hands.

Newton said, “I could not explain the happiness and delight when I saw that jewel, and immediately I reached out my hands to receive it back from him. But no. He smiled and he shook his head. He said, ‘No.’ He said, ‘It is yours; it will always be yours; but it is not going to be in your hands to keep it safe. It is going to be in my hands, and it will be there for you. It will always be safe.’” And Newton said, “I woke up.” It was a most remarkable dream to have all those details in it. But what an exposition, what a commentary on this scripture!

“I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able.” I am not able; no-one else is able; but “I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.”

Well, I said at the beginning, beloved friends, this is a foundation truth, and this is something that Paul said “*I know.*” It is something that is vital. It is that *back to basics* – your sins, your soul, eternity. But where is the safety? Where is the security? Where is the hope? Now may you and I be led and taught by the Holy Spirit and have our eyes opened and shown that this is the vital thing, the one thing that matters, and may we be sweetly enabled in prayer, of necessity, to take our everlasting all and to commit it into the Saviour’s arms, for He can deal with it. It is in safe keeping there. And to see His mercy in being willing, and then His faithfulness, and to see the blessed end of it in “that day.” “Saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.”

“For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.”

I'm not ashamed to own my Lord,
Or to defend His cause,
Maintain the honour of His word,
The glory of His cross.

Jesus, my God, I know His name,
His name is all my trust;
Nor will He put my soul to shame,
Nor let my hope be lost.

Firm as His throne His promise stands,
And He can well secure
What I've committed to His hands,
Till the decisive hour.

Then will He own my worthless name
Before His Father's face,
And in the new Jerusalem
Appoint my soul a place.

I. Watts