

Bethel

Pulpit

Christ and Him Crucified

Sermon Number 487

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day morning, 7th January, 2007**

Text: *"For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2. 2).*

When the famous Welsh preacher, Christmas Evans, was dying, he made this remark. He said, "I have never entered the pulpit without blood in the basin." Beloved friends, with all the faults, failures, sins and mistakes I have made, I believe I can say the same this morning. And it was not just my fortieth anniversary at Bethel on Monday, but last October was my fiftieth anniversary of preaching regularly Lord's day by Lord's day, though I had ventured to preach before. You know what Christmas Evans meant, referring to the solemn passover night, the vital necessity of blood in the basin. I think the reason he said it, and why Paul said it, and why I say it is this: because it is our only hope personally. We have to say, I have no hope apart from a crucified Saviour. But then secondly, because this is the foundation of the gospel of the grace of God. There would not be any gospel without it.

So this *determination*. "*I determined* not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." Now Paul had preached at Corinth and he was writing to Corinth. There are two things about Corinth. One, it was one of the most intellectual cities in the world. They loved philosophy, argument; they loved oratory. The second thing, it was a most evil, wicked city, and Paul was coming there to preach. How do you deal with the situation? "*I determined* not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." People might have said, But that is not the right way. Of course, this is the kind of thing people are saying, especially in the year 2007 in England. This old-fashioned way will not do. Paul says, "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech." They loved to listen to an oration. Now he said, I am not coming as an orator. "Or of wisdom." They loved an argument; they loved philosophy. "Declaring unto you the testimony of God" – a witness. "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."

“And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.” And we can certainly put our *T and P*, tried and proved, there. As I read the chapter, I think I felt this third verse a lot more this morning than ever I did forty years ago: “I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.” “And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words” – they will not do anyone any good – “enticing words of man’s wisdom.” Now this is it (Paul proved it, and we pray for it; I do hope in just a little measure we have proved it): “In demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”

“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” Now as the old divines used to put it so simply, *a Person and a Work*. “Christ, and Him crucified.” So, “I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ” – our only hope, our only plea, our only foundation, the only way to heaven, the only way of forgiveness, the only way of salvation: Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ the Son of God eternally, equal with the Father and with the Holy Ghost; Jesus Christ a real Man; Man to suffer, God to save; Jesus Christ the sinners’ Surety, the one Mediator, our Prophet, our Priest, our King.

“I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” A Person and a work. The apostle did not preach Jesus Christ just as a good example or just His teaching, but the necessity for an atonement, the necessity for a sacrifice, the necessity for death, the necessity for putting away of sin. It could only be by the shedding of blood, and not the blood of lambs and bulls and goats and calves, not the blood of any mere man. It must be a perfect Man, a glorious Man. It must be a Man who is true, almighty God.

So Jesus Christ the Son of God was crucified. May the awful, solemn truth sink deep into our hearts this morning as it sank into the hearts of those who heard it at Corinth two thousand years ago, that Jesus Christ was crucified. The little children’s hymn:

“And those kind hands that did such good,
They nailed them to a cross of wood.”

O the awfulness of crucifixion, the cruelty, the awfulness of that death, and what the Lord Jesus suffered, and not just in His body, but in His holy soul! He bore the punishment His people must have borne eternally so that they

might never bear it. He was a Substitute. It was “He instead of me.” It was Christ in the sinner’s place. “Jesus Christ, and Him crucified,” that a fountain might be opened in His precious blood, for ever to put away the sins of all His people. “Jesus Christ, and Him crucified,” that His Father might be satisfied, the holy law honoured and magnified, Justice receiving the price demanded, a new and living way opened up to heaven itself through the blood of Jesus.

“I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” – the foundation of the gospel. There is hope for sinners here, even for the most guilty, even for “the vilest sinner out of hell, who lives to feel his need.” “Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.”

So a few verses before, this same apostle says, “We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” When we preach Christ crucified, we do not preach a dead Christ. The cross is for ever vacated; the grave is for ever empty. But we preach a Christ who *was* crucified, who did die, but who rose again and ascended, and who lives for evermore, almighty to save, and who says to poor, dying sinners, “Because I live, ye shall live also.” Paul says, This is all I need to preach; this is the glorious gospel. It all centres in Christ.

“I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” Now there is something here which – would you say it is interesting? or would you say it is remarkable? The church at Corinth was in an appalling state. The things that were going on, they seem almost incredible: extremes of immorality and all kinds of dreadful things even among the church members, and Paul has to deal with it. Now how are you going to deal with a church like that? And the way that Paul took it: he said, “I [am] determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” And he planted the cross of Christ in their midst. Perhaps you would not have thought of that; perhaps I would not have thought of that; but that is the way Paul was led. You read his second Epistle to the Corinthians and see if it has succeeded. It did the deed under the power and the influence of the Holy Spirit. It put things right.

He did it again later on. He put it like this. He speaks to them of most awful things. Just for instance: “It is reported commonly that there is

fornication among you” – sexual immorality – “and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles” – even the world would be ashamed of it – “that one should have his father’s wife.” And he said, “And ye are puffed up” – you are glorying in it. How did Paul deal with it? “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.” The holy Lamb of God dying on the cross, Christ crucified at Calvary that sin might be forgiven, sin might be put away. “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.” What happened in the Old Testament when the passover took place? Well, they had to put away every shred of leaven in the house, and I believe the orthodox Jews still do it. They go through with a candle or a torch, to make sure that there is not a shred of leaven in the house. Well, says Paul, “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.” Then, “Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

“I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” Once in my life I witnessed an amazing thing take place. It was many years ago, a meeting in London. There was a difficulty to be sorted out and the case seemed impossible. The person concerned became more and more angry, even wild, and intemperate in his speech. Whatever arguments people used or what pleas or what suggestions, they had no effect. He waxed worse and worse. Dear old Mr. Jesse Delves was there, and in the end he said to this person, “Could I have a word with you?” Almost angrily he replied, “Yes, go on.” Mr. Delves said, “I have one question to ask you. Have you ever been to Calvary, stood at the foot of the cross, looked up into the face of a crucified Saviour? That is my question.” I have never seen such a change in my life. The man was softened in a moment. The lion changed into a lamb. It was the very same principle the apostle sets forth here.

“I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” Now some may say, But Paul, are you not using exaggerated language here? There are a lot of things for you to preach about. You say you are not going to preach about anything except the cross of Christ. Paul would say: In the first place, this is vital. Other things matter, other things are important, but this is the one thing that matters, the one thing vital. “To know my Jesus crucified, by far excels all things beside.” That is what I mean when I say, “I [am] determined not to know

any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” But I think Paul would have said this also: *Everything else centres here.*

Some may say, You have to preach the law; you have to set out man’s lost, ruined condition, how he is lost and ruined in the Fall, how he is guilty, how he is liable to eternal wrath. I am sure Paul would have said yes to preaching that, but what is the purpose of it? That a sinner might be brought to feel it, to know it, acknowledge it and then be led by faith to Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The preaching of wrath and condemnation is not an end in itself. It is not for this one to glory and say, I have such a sense of my wretched condition. The end of it: that a sinner might so feel his need that he might flee for refuge to Jesus Christ and Him crucified. No, says Paul, “I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.”

But someone might object: What about the eternal counsels of God in the covenant of grace, the plan of salvation, election, predestination? I know what Paul would have said. There was a condition in the covenant of grace. God’s people were loved with an everlasting love, everlastingly chosen, predestinated to eternal life, everything ordered, everything planned, nothing left to chance, all ordered, all of grace. But Paul would have said, There was one condition from everlasting, one condition in the covenant of grace, and that condition was that Jesus the Son of God should die. That was the sealing of the covenant of grace. It was sealed at Calvary in the blood of Christ. All the blessings from everlasting, all the eternal purposes of God, the whole plan of salvation, it all rested on that one point, and the only reason that Adam was blessed and Abraham and David and the Old Testament saints, was because in the everlasting purposes of God the Lord Jesus Himself, the eternal Son, undertook and became the sinner’s Surety and He gave His covenant promise to His Father that He would fulfil the condition of the covenant at Calvary, that He would seal the covenant with His own blood. And so all the eternal purposes hang on this one point. Paul would say, I am not ashamed of it. I am determined, even in preaching the everlasting counsels of God, even when I come to Romans 8 and Romans 9, I am “determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” It is the centre of everything.

You might say, What about truths like the eternal security of the people of God; “Once in Him, in Him for ever”; that blessed truth, “They

shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand”? Surely we have to preach the everlasting security, we have to preach the eternal safety of the people of God. You tell me, why are they safe? You can give a lot of reasons, but the greatest reason of all why the people of God are eternally safe and why you as a poor, trembling sinner hanging on Jesus are eternally safe, is because Jesus died and in dying He paid such a tremendous price, and no-one will ever lose anything, if they can help it, for which they pay a tremendous price. “Ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price.” That is the ground of your everlasting safety and security, despite all your sin and all your failure and all your backsliding. This is the ground of it. “Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine.”

“I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” You can bring everything in. The promises, we have to preach these precious promises. They are all sealed with the blood of Christ. They were all sealed and secured at Calvary. O you say, What about effectual calling, the doctrine of effectual calling, that all whom God chose, they will every one of them be called by grace? Well, it is this – it is all bound up – “He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.” Those for whom Jesus died, they cannot be lost, they must be saved, they shall be brought, and they must be effectually called. All the glorious doctrines of the gospel of the grace of God are bound up, all centre here.

“I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” Now what does it mean to you this morning? You notice that Paul did not just say, I determined not to *preach* any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. He meant that, but he said, “I determined not to *know* any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” So this comes down not just to preachers but to the feeblest lamb in Jesus’ fold. Now beloved friends, may you, each of you, be determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. That will shut the world out for ever. That will crucify you to your past life. That will rid you of your vain hopes. But the point here is this: there is mercy; there is salvation. Every blessing that God could ever give, every blessing that you as a sinner could ever need, is all to be found in “Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” It all flows from Calvary. It all flows from the cross of Christ.

“Pardon and grace, and boundless love,
Streaming along a Saviour’s blood;
And life, and joy, and crowns above,
Obtained by a dear bleeding God.”

Now, “What think ye of Christ?” I have always pressed you on this. Be thankful for every little you receive – a little sense of the Lord’s presence, any answer to prayer, any deliverance in providence, any token for good, whenever you have a soft heart, whenever you have a good hearing time – but do not rest on *this* foundation; rest on Christ and Christ as crucified for sinners. I know what some of you will say to me: if only I knew He was crucified for *me*. Well, that is the full assurance of faith. But the venture of faith is to see Jesus crucified for sinners, and I am a sinner, and so I venture to Him and beg that through His precious death and resurrection He will have mercy on me and save even me. That will take you to heaven, because venturing faith will take you to heaven just as much as the full assurance of faith. One will have much more joy, happiness, consolation, but the least grain of faith, if it is real, will take you to heaven. And what it is: knowing your need of a Saviour, to be sweetly enabled to look to Jesus, to Jesus alone, to Jesus only, and to rest your hope there. In a word it is this – I wonder if there is one person here this morning can say this:

“To Christ for help I fly,
The Friend of sinners lost,
A refuge sweet, and sure, and nigh,
And there is all my trust.”

And beloved friends, if you can say that, you will get to heaven.

“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” But you say, What about providence? You perhaps say, I have come this morning and I am feeling sad; I am feeling lonely; I am feeling disappointment. Many of you are bereaved and many of you have deep sorrows in your life. I know many of your sorrows, and many of you are full of grief, and then there are those whose heart knows its own bitterness. Well, we have no need to go an inch outside this verse. Is there anyone who can sympathise more with your sorrows than a once-crucified Saviour who is now risen, exalted, glorified in heaven, who still retains that human, loving, understanding heart, touched with the feeling of

your infirmities? He understands your loneliness; He understands your sorrow. No-one can ever comprehend the depths of sorrow into which the dear Lord Jesus entered in Gethsemane and at Calvary when reproach broke His heart and when He said, “Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow.” So, “whatever be your state or case” this morning – it may be providence; it may be your health; it may be your family; it may be those you love – whatever it is, nothing but Christ and Him crucified, a once-crucified, but now risen, exalted Saviour. It is the best remedy. And still, “With heaven and earth at His command, He waits to answer prayer.”

“Him your Fellow-sufferer see;
He was in all things like to you.
Are you tempted? So was He.
Deserted? He was too.”

“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” It is the ground of prayer. It is the foundation of prayer. And this glorious Person lives to answer prayer. It is His tender, loving heart. It is His wonderful compassion. It is His understanding.

“I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” Then there is this very important point of Christian behaviour, the Christian life, the Christian profession. Now again Paul comes on this very same ground. Some people would lay down the law and set up its standard of morality. Do you believe it – there is a sanctifying effect in the cross of Christ? Justification, that is a sinner’s standing in the sight of a holy, heart-searching God, standing complete in the righteousness of Jesus. That is justification. It can never alter. Sanctification is the Spirit’s work in a sinner’s heart which separates him from the world, from his old life, makes him die to sin, makes him live to God, a new principle within, causing him to walk tenderly in the fear of the Lord. But never separate justification from sanctification – *that* is the work of Christ and *that* is the work of the Spirit! Sanctification is all bound up with the cross of Christ.

Tell me, when does a sinner walk most tenderly in the fear of the Lord? When is it he does not want the world? When is it he does not want to grieve the Saviour? Isn’t it when he has just a glimpse of what sin cost the Saviour when sin was laid upon Him, when He suffered under its

weight? “I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” If you and I have a sweet hope in a crucified Saviour, it will kill us to the world and to our idols and to our lusts and to our pleasures. John Berridge puts it to a person under sore temptation to do evil: “Look on Him, my soul, and gaze on His smart”; (it is a word Berridge often uses, meaning the sufferings of Christ).

“Look on Him, my soul, and gaze on His smart;
His cries may control the lusts of thy heart.”

Do you believe that the cries of a dying Saviour will control the lusts of your heart?

“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” “Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.”

“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” Now if your religion is real, that is the preaching you want. When you feel your sin, you will want a Saviour. When you are concerned about your soul, you will want a Saviour. When you think of the judgment day and eternity, you will want a Saviour. When “past offences pain your eyes,” you will want a Saviour. So I am like Paul. I have to preach this on the two grounds: it is the glory of the gospel, the only thing that will meet a sinner’s need; but then personally, daily, feeling so many shortcomings and sins, how can I go on, how can I preach at all, how can I live, how can I die, apart from this wonderful work of atonement that the Lord Jesus accomplished at Calvary? “I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” This is what *every* born-again sinner needs, *every* sinner saved by grace needs: an interest in Christ and Him crucified.

“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” And this preaching will separate. I have found this, that my preaching has separated. I have always tried to speak quietly and not cutting this one off, and cutting that one off, but the preaching of the cross separates. Some ministers stand up in the pulpit and all their preaching is cutting the wicked off, cutting the tares off, cutting the goats off, and the people glory in it because they think that they are *not* the

wicked, they are *not* the tares, they are *not* goats; they feel that they are always on the right side. But preaching of a crucified Saviour – there are many who rebel against it, many who are angered by it, many who reject it. The preaching of the cross will separate.

Just after this in the epistle the apostle says that whenever he spoke of the cross of Christ, it was a sweet savour to God in heaven. Never forget that. If there is not a single person receives the preaching, if it is Christ and Him crucified, it is a sweet savour to God in heaven. But, says Paul, it will always separate. To some it is the savour of life unto life. What does he mean? Well, if there is beautiful rose with a lovely scent in a room, if there is a dead man in that room, it does not mean anything to him. A living person is attracted by it. “To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life.” And the apostle concludes: “And who is sufficient for these things?” Who is?

“I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” But tell me, beloved friends, is there a sweet attraction to your never-dying soul in Christ? Does it mean anything to you? Is it just the savour of death unto eternal death? O blessed souls, blessed characters here this morning if you have this one point in your religion, that you can view an attraction in Christ. I believe it is one of the best evidences of grace you can have, if when Christ is exalted, your soul is drawn to Him, as Jesus Himself said: “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.” Why? Because, “I must have Christ as All in all, or sink in ruin, guilt, and thrall.” Blessed souls who feel a sweet attraction in Christ and blessed souls who have to pray, “Draw me,” and then I “will run after Thee.”

“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.”

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Christ and His cross is all our theme;
The mysteries that we speak
Are scandal in the Jew's esteem,
And folly to the Greek.

But souls enlightened from above
With joy receive the word;

They see what wisdom, power, and love
Shine in their dying Lord.

The vital savour of His name
Restores their fainting breath;
Believing, they rejoice in Him,
The Antidote of death.

Till God diffuse His graces down,
Like showers of heavenly rain,
In vain Apollos sows the ground,
And Paul may plant in vain.

I. Watts