



Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 44

Christ Exalted

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Thursday, 9th January, 1969**

Text: *“Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5. 31).*

Have you ever noticed what a sacred delight the apostles took in speaking of a glorified Jesus? It is the great point in their ministry, the vital thing. They had known Christ, they had loved Him, they had held communion with Him, and then they had seen Him crucified and seen Him laid in the grave. But how they delighted to set forth His resurrection, His exaltation! It was such a sweet theme to them, it was so precious; and is it not so to every believer, to every sinner saved by grace? What do you want to hear, my friends, when you come to the house of God? Do some of you come to hear of a once crucified but now exalted Jesus?

Peter’s heart seemed to overflow at the very mention of the Lord Jesus. The high priest forbids them to make mention of His name, but Peter says, No, we must obey God, and he goes on to speak of this dear exalted Jesus. It meant everything to Peter. Peter knew his unworthiness, his sin, his shortcoming. He knew how he had dishonoured this dear Jesus, but he knew something else, that Jesus had looked upon him. And there was everything in that look. It melted his heart; it condemned him but it spoke forgiveness to him. So Peter delighted to speak these sacred truths he had tasted and handled and felt: the preciousness of Jesus and forgiveness for the vilest sinner in Him.

“The vilest of sinners forgiveness have found,
For Jesus was humbled that grace might abound;
Whoever repents of his sin against God,
Shall surely be pardoned through Calvary’s blood.”

“Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” Now, first of all, Peter insists on the certainty of the resurrection, and so did all the apostles. “With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.” They knew that Christ was alive; it is one

of the things most surely believed among us. We believe in an empty tomb. We believe in a risen Saviour - risen, exalted, glorified for ever in the same body in which He suffered. And Peter insisted on the certainty of it, and well he might, for he knew the difference it had made. Look at those poor, trembling disciples and look at the difference when they saw the Lord, once crucified, now risen.

“Him hath God exalted.” Yes, says Peter, “Whom ye slew and hanged on a tree,” but “the God of our Fathers raised up Jesus.” Now there is a necessity for the exaltation of Christ. “Him hath God exalted.” It was not possible that death could hold Him. He is the plagues of death, the destruction of the grave, and now is exalted. He is “declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead.” He entered into His glory, that glory which was His eternally. He also entered into and received it as the reward for His mediatorial work.

“Him hath God exalted.” I want to bring before you, as the Lord shall help me, a few things concerning an exalted Jesus. First of all there is this. He is exalted that He might for ever intercede for sinners. Now my friends, what could you and I do without it? You seek to pray, you seek to venture before a Holy God. What ground of hope, what ground of assurance have you? “Christ is not entered into the holy place made with hands, which is the figure of the true, but into heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for us.” The Lord Jesus is exalted there as the sinner’s Advocate to intercede for sinners, to “point to their names upon His breast, and spread His wounded hands.” And the Father lays all His vengeance by, and smiles upon His own beloved Son, and smiles upon the whole church as they stand complete in Christ. “Him hath God exalted.” Do you ever have a view of this? That there is a Man in glory who intercedes for sinners and whose intercession must prevail?

“Him hath God exalted.” There is this:

“With heaven and earth at His command,
He waits to answer prayer.”

Do you believe it, my friends? The Father loved the Son and gave all things into His hand, and exalted there He sits on the mercy seat, and He waits to be gracious. He is exalted as a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God. If you get a glimpse of this, then you will be able

to pour out your heart before Him. You will not hold back. You will be able to press through the crowd. You will be able to call upon Him.

“Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour.” We read that the Lord Jesus is “the Prince of the kings of the earth.” He is “King of kings and Lord of lords.” And He is exalted there at the Father’s right hand. It is not wicked men who reign, it is not Satan who reigns, it is the Lord Jesus, “the Prince of the kings of the earth.” Perhaps at times your heart almost fails because of fear. It will make all the difference if you are able to look upwards and if you have a little glimpse of Jesus exalted as “the Prince of the kings of the earth.”

He is also spoken of as the Prince of peace, the Prince of peace. “Peace by His cross has Jesus made.” Now, exalted, He gives this peace. He is exalted to give it. There are some of you long for peace, are there not? You feel such concern in your heart, a sense of sin, unworthiness, guilt, time passing away, a solemn eternity before you. “Him hath God exalted” as the Prince of peace, and this peace He gives. He gives it to poor sinners who are troubled concerning their souls, and if you feel a little of this peace in your heart, then your soul will be satisfied. He made this peace by the blood of His cross, and He gives this peace by His Spirit. “The Prince of peace.” It is a sweet point to those whose hearts are all confusion, turmoil, tumult, perplexity, under soul concern, that He is the Prince of peace. “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” He is exalted as the Prince of peace. Some of you feel the confusion and turmoil of a disquieted mind at times. You know, things come in your life, trials and disappointments and hard things, and fear and a wondering what to do, and anxiety concerning the unknown way.

“Him hath God exalted” as the Prince of peace. There was the occasion when He stood as the Prince of peace, and He said to the winds and the waves, “Peace be still, and there was a great calm”; and He is still the Prince of peace. Has He ever spoken peace into your troubled heart? Then the world cannot take it away. Everything may be tumult all around, but it is peace within. “The Prince of peace.”

“Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour.” Then we read of Him as “the Prince of life.” He is the

resurrection and the life. Once He died, but now He lives for evermore, and if as the Prince of peace He gives peace, as the Prince of life He gives life everlasting. “Because I live, ye shall live also.” O that life which is in Christ! Eternal life, life begun in time, life enduring for ever, beyond the grave, a sweet hope of immortality! Christ is the Prince of life, and He is exalted that this life may be bestowed on sinners. “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this?”

“Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour.” There is one thing an unworthy sinner needs more than anything else, and that is a Saviour. How many of you have a religion which cannot do without a Saviour? Which wants a Saviour? O the preciousness of this, that Jesus is exalted as a Saviour! “This Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able also to save them unto the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.” “A Saviour.” And as a Saviour He is almighty. That word was much with me on Tuesday (I tried to speak on it in the evening): the Lord Jesus says, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.” Do you believe it? The Lord Jesus is almighty. Do you ever get a glimpse of it? Exalted at the Father’s right hand, He is almighty.

“This same dear Man in heaven now reigns,
Who suffered for our sakes.”

He is almighty, and He is an almighty Saviour, and this is just what some of you need, is it not? An almighty Saviour.

“Him hath God exalted” as a Saviour. You feel the greatness of your need, and the greatness of eternity, and the greatness of your case, and the greatness of your sin. When you look around, and when you look within, you can see no ground of hope; but then when you look upwards, you see there is a great Saviour, and there is a great salvation, and the Lord Jesus is for ever exalted as a Saviour. What do you think of what the hymnwriter says:

“Mighty to save! He saves from hell;
A mighty Saviour suits me well”?

The Lord Jesus “is, and was, and is to come, the Almighty.” It speaks of His unchanging character as an almighty Saviour. He saved Mary Magdalene, He saved Paul, He saved the Philippian gaoler, and His power to save is eternally the same:

“Dear dying Lamb! Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved, to sin no more.”

“Which is, and was, and is to come, the Almighty.”

“Exalted as a Prince and a Saviour.” We read in the prophets, the Lord sent them “a Saviour, and a great One,” and there is such a suitability in this, it is so suited to those who feel their need, that there is a Saviour. He is exalted. He ever lives. He ever reigns. He is almighty as a Saviour. He is unchanging as the Saviour. There is a suitability in it. O my friends, I would that these sweet simple tidings might find an abiding place in your hearts. There is salvation in them. There is heaven in them.

“Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour.” The suitability of it! Now this is the anchor ground of a saved sinner’s hope. It is in Jesus, once crucified, now exalted. The hope of a child of God is cast within the veil, “whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus.” We are taught that “we are saved by hope.” Remarkable words, this! What does it mean? It means that where we find a sinner blessed by the Holy Spirit with a good hope through grace, that there is a saved soul, saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. Hope is a wonderful thing. Now, my friends, what is your hope? Beware of vain hopes, empty hopes, false hopes! Have you been brought away from them? Have you been brought to feel that your case is hopeless in yourself? But has there been a little precious faith given to cast your anchor within the veil? Is your hope anchored in the merits of Jesus, once slain, now exalted? It is a sure ground for hope. Wonderful thing, to have a hope which is cast within the veil and which anchors in Christ!

“Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour.” Now my friends, there are two other ways in which Christ is exalted. The Father has exalted Him in raising Him from the dead, in glorifying Him in heaven, but there are two other ways in which Christ is exalted. One is in the gospel. The gospel exalts Christ. You know, I felt that was a most solemn word we read this evening (Luke 24). I read it when preaching last evening, and in reading it through, that little clause struck me as being very solemn. We read of one or two of the disciples viewing the Lord Jesus, and then we read that there were some others of the company who came and went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the disciples had said, “*But Him they saw not.*” There seemed to be something very solemn in it. If we are made honest before the Lord, much of our religion is like this. We come to the house of God, we read the Word of His grace, we sing, we hear, we pray, and outwardly we believe everything is as is testified; but Him we see not. Well, does it touch you my friends? Does it condemn you? How many occasions are there when you come to the house of God and you find that everything is outwardly right, it is as the Word of God testifies, but Him you see not? The godly Scots of old used to mourn if on the Sabbath they did not get a glimpse of Christ, if “Him they saw not.” That sermon is most precious which has most of Christ in it.

Now there is an exalting of Jesus in the gospel. “Even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” Is this what you want to hear? Christ exalted. Is this what sometimes you feel? “Christ exalted is our song.” He is to be exalted in all the glory of His Person, in all that He is, in all that He has done, in all His precious merit, in all His power to save. “Him hath God exalted,” and He is lifted up on the pole of the gospel, exalted there. There is a word which says this: “And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.” Well, where do we stand in it, my friends? When Christ is exalted in the gospel, is there a drawing of our affections after Him? Is this what we want, what we long for? Count those seasons precious when under the gospel ministry you feel some drawing of your souls’ affections towards the dear Lamb of God. “Whom, having not seen, ye love.” This is where we come short, in our knowledge of Christ, and in our love towards Him, in our communion with Him. How do we stand when weighed in the balances? Are we found wanting? But does

it bring you here: “O that my soul could love and praise Him more.” We would know Him more. We would grow in grace. We would love Him. We would serve Him better. “Him hath God exalted.” An exalted Jesus in the gospel of His grace. He is the glory of it. He is the foundation of it.

Then the other thing. “Him hath God exalted.” Christ is exalted in the heart of every sinner saved by grace. Now this comes close. Is Christ exalted in your heart?

“Unworthy dwelling, glorious Guest,
Favour astonishing, divine!”

In your affections, is it your desire that Christ might have the chief place? And in your life, is it your desire that in all things He might have the preeminence?

“Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” Here are two inestimable blessings which flow to unworthy sinners from an exalted Jesus: repentance and forgiveness. “To give repentance.” The Word of God insists on the necessity of repentance. No salvation without it. I read that word to you this evening: “Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” Repentance is necessary for salvation. The Lord Jesus preached it. John the Baptist preached it. The apostles preached it. But then you come to this. You see the necessity of repentance, but you come like this: If only I could repent! I remember in my early days how often this was the point. Did I repent, or did I not repent, and if only I could repent! There are the two sides to it. There is outward repentance, there is leaving the world, there is a giving up idols, there is a forsaking besetting sins, and there is inward repentance, sorrowing for sin, confessing it.

Well, I believe there are some of you here and perhaps you are tried as to whether you really know repentance. Perhaps some of you feel you have not any, and perhaps some of you feel you cannot repent. Those who do know something of repentance mourn because you know so little. Well, this is a sweet point here: repentance is the gift of an exalted Christ.

“He is exalted to give repentance.” Then, feeling your need of it, you can fall at the Saviour’s feet and you can beg that He might bestow it on you. He is exalted to give repentance. I wonder how some of you heard last Sabbath evening: “Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” Perhaps you are tried about it. Perhaps you feel you cannot forsake your way. Perhaps there is something that cleaves very hard, and perhaps you feel you cannot forsake your thoughts; you are plagued by sinful thoughts, you cannot be rid of them, you cannot grieve over them as you would. He is exalted to give repentance. This is the truth. Repentance is needful and you are brought to feel your helplessness concerning it, your inability; but then to view that the Lord Jesus freely gives it. You know our old legal selves want to conjure up so much repentance and come to the Lord thinking He will be pleased with it, but we have got to receive our repentance from Him. O to know more of it! Both outwardly,

“Repentance is to leave
The things we loved before,
And show that we in earnest grieve,
By doing them no more”;

and inwardly.

The place where repentance most freely flows inwardly, feelingly, is at the cross. It is the Spirit’s work. “I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and supplications, and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him.” If the blessed Spirit leads you to Calvary, shows you something of the sufferings of Jesus, and teaches you that your sins were the cause, the nails and the spear and the crown of thorns that wounded Him, then repentance will flow,

“Till we viewing whom we’ve pierced,
Melt in sympathetic tears.”

O for more repentance!

“Him hath God exalted to give repentance and forgiveness of sins.” There are two things here Christ has joined together, repentance and

forgiveness. You cannot have the one without the other, and where we have repentance then forgiveness must follow. Let us be clear on this point. It is not that the Lord forgives His people *because* they repent, as some kind of reward. Sinners are forgiven on one ground only, for Jesus' sake. But it is repenting sinners that are forgiven. Then O to be found as a repenting sinner, looking to Jesus, not a repenting sinner trusting in his own righteousness, or his repentance. "But, be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins."

"Him hath God exalted to give repentance and forgiveness of sins." It is a precious gift, forgiveness. It is a gift of mercy. It is a gift of free grace. None ever deserved it; none ever will. None can merit it. It is a free gift of the Lord. "If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared." The Son of Man still hath power on earth to forgive sins.

"To give repentance and forgiveness of sins." And this repentance, this forgiveness, is always joined to the death of Christ. The Lord forgives, but His justice is not dishonoured. That sin which is forgiven is atoned for by the blood of Jesus. You want both things when you are exercised concerning your guilt. You want the Lord to forgive, and you want Him also to put away your sins, your guilt. Both of these things are in Christ. It is in this dear Man exalted. "Through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." And the preciousness of the gospel is this, that the most unworthy sinner is welcome on mercy's ground.

"Come, then, repenting sinner, come;
Approach with humble faith;
Owe what thou wilt, the total sum
Is cancelled by His death."

This is the glory of the gospel. Forgiveness for the most unworthy sinners who come with real repentance to the Redeemer's feet. There is salvation in it, there is heaven in it.

"Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."