



Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 47

God in Control

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day morning, 2nd July, 1989**

Text: *“The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea” (Psalm 93. 4).*

There are three short, beautiful Psalms. They are all very similar and they all begin the same – Psalms 93, 97 and 99. They all begin with the wonderful declaration: “The Lord reigneth,” and then they go on in their different ways. “The Lord reigneth, He is clothed with majesty.” “The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice.” “The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble.”

But the point I find so attractive in the verse I have read to you this morning, beloved friends, is this: “The Lord on high,” that the Lord is on high. Yes, God is above men, devils and sin. “The Lord on high.”

“Our lives through various scenes are drawn,
And vexed with trifling cares,” (they do not seem trifling, do they?)

While Thy eternal thought moves on
Thy undisturbed affairs.”

“The Lord on high.” Now if you get a glimpse of that by faith this morning, you will not need anything else. Your cup will be full. Just to have the sweet revelation that the Lord is on high, that He is there, always there, and that He is in control. All these things in the world, all these things in your lives, they are not taking place by accident or chance or just happening. They are all falling out of that all-wise, all-gracious hand of the almighty God who ever lives and reigns on high. So because He is in charge, He is in control, you will live to prove this, that the things that happen to you are “fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.” You say, “But I cannot see it this morning.” One day you will, and because the Lord is on high, and because He is in control, you will live to prove that “the end of the thing is better than the beginning.” And because the Lord is on high, you will prove this: “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.” We do not always see it; we certainly do not always feel it, but we *know* it. “We *know* that all

things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.”

“The Lord on high.” Of course, this speaks of the three-one God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. But sometimes we get a little glimpse of it as it refers to God’s dear, incarnate Son. Once He was “made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death,” but now He is gone up on high, He has led captivity captive, and we see Him crowned with glory and honour. O that dear Man in heaven that we love and at times we have a sweet hope that He loves us! O to see the crown upon His head, to see that He *is* on high!

“Princes to His imperial name
Bend their bright sceptres down:
Dominions, thrones, and powers rejoice
To see Him wear the crown.”

“The Lord on high.” You remember when God first appeared to Jacob at Bethel, Jacob slept and dreamed and “behold a ladder.” And this is it: “And, behold, the Lord stood above it.” He was above all Jacob’s sins, above all Jacob’s troubles. The whole of Jacob’s life was in His hand. The whole of the unknown way was in His control.

“The Lord on high.” And as you have a glimpse of it by faith, that the Lord is on high, may you see that He is on the throne. It is an eternal throne. It can never be shaken, never be removed. You older ones, how many thrones have toppled and fallen during your lifetimes? I remember when I was a little boy, like most children I tried collecting foreign stamps, and so many different countries of Europe had a picture on their stamps of their reigning monarch. Well, nearly all those monarchies have now crumbled and fallen, and as it seems, for ever. Now this is not a precarious throne. This is not a throne that can ever be vacated. “The Lord shall reign for ever and ever.”

Now He is in control of all that takes place. His all-wise, divine, mysterious providence controls everything – all the amazing happenings in the world, all these disasters that have been taking place, they are all under His control. This divine sovereignty, this reign of God, it touches everything.

“Creatures of every sort and kind
Are all at His control;
The God that fills immensity
Must reign from pole to pole.”

It touches even the movements of the planets. These mighty countries, Russia, America, they make their plans. God is in control. There used to be an old saying, not heard so much today, but it is very true: “Man proposes, God disposes.” “He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?” If He purposes a thing, then it is done. I would that we might be a congregation blessed with believing views of the greatness of God. It is a point that is so missing in present-day religion. If you and I have right views of the greatness of God, then everything else will fall in its proper place. We will have right views of the smallness of ourselves. Gadsby’s hymnbook puts it on a solid basis in the first two lines. It puts God in His right place and man in his right place.

“Great God! how infinite art Thou!
What worthless worms are we!”

Always beware of having wrong views of God, dishonouring views of God, making God such an one as yourself. He is there, He is on the throne, He ever reigns. Everything is beneath His control; and it is not just mighty empires and the events of this world: “my life’s minutest circumstance,” the fall of a sparrow, the fall of a leaf from a tree, the crushing of a moth, the movement of the particles of dust. May you feel it and believe it this morning. May it be this: “My times are in Thy hand.” And if this great God ever lives and ever reigns, if He is in control, then He orders everything for His own glory and for His people’s good. He will order everything for your real, lasting, eternal good. As we used to hear quoted so often years ago,

“Bright days, dark nights, the furnace and the flood,
He overrules for Zion’s real good.”

“The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters.” So we have this reminder that the Lord on high is mighty, and as the Word of God tells us in many other places, He is almighty. He can do everything.

He can do anything. Of course, the godly Puritans said that there are three things God cannot do: He cannot die, He cannot lie, He cannot deny Himself. When we say God can do everything, God can do anything, we know what we mean. We mean in holy consistency with His own character. But especially when we say God is mighty, God is almighty, we think of divine omnipotence, divine, almighty power. O again I would that we as a congregation might be blessed with believing views of the greatness of divine power. I think it is thirty years ago this month since the Lord gave me a revelation of divine omnipotence and He burnt it in my very heart. There might be some things I am tried and tempted on, but I have not the slightest doubt God can do the most impossible things. I would that many of you might have that revelation, as I did in Isaiah 40, and it was in the depths of trouble and despair. O but in those days it was as if I could ask God for anything, however hard, however impossible, and He would give it to me. He holds the waters in the hollow of His hand, He metes out the heavens with a span. The nations of the earth before Him are as a drop of a bucket, as the small dust of the balance.

“Keep silence, all created things,
And wait your Maker’s nod.”

“He sitteth on the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers.”

O this almighty God! Have you ever heard Him speak: “Behold I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for Me?” What does it mean for a child of God? First of all, it means this, beloved, that God is on your side. It is a wonderful thing if you can view it, that this great, almighty God is on your side. Then it does not really matter who or what is against you, does it? If God be for you, who can be against you? O but think of having God on your side! That was the revelation that Elisha had. When the Syrians came to seize him and take him, a great army to seize one humble prophet, it is no wonder that his servant was afraid. He said, “Alas, my master! how shall we do?” “Lord, open the young man’s eyes.” And we pray that prayer today for you young ones and you older ones, “Lord, open their eyes, and show them that God is on the side of His people and that He is almighty.” And God did open the young man’s eyes. “They that be with us are more than they that be with them.” What, thinks the young servant, just Elisha and I, and

all that great army? “Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.” And then he saw the hills and the mountains filled with the hosts of the army of the Lord. O may you see it and feel it and believe it this morning, that God is on your side. What says the Psalmist? “The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?”

Now there is another thing. This God on high, ever reigning, almighty, He is the One who is able to uphold you. Now there will be times when you need to be upheld. It is this great, almighty God who will uphold you. “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.” You are divinely upheld. There is that beautiful word, “I bare you on eagles’ wings.” Well, some of you have things before you, tomorrow, and in the unknown way. Perhaps you have your fears. Perhaps there are things from which you shrink. May this almighty God be with you and may He carry you on eagles’ wings. Then how can you sink?

There is another thing. This great God on high who is almighty is the One who keeps you from falling, and He is *able* to keep you from falling. What should we do unless we were divinely kept? Where would we get to? What would happen to us? “Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.”

Now there is another thing. This great, almighty God in heaven, on high, on the throne, “with heaven and earth at His command, He waits to answer prayer.” Now how many of you have come this morning with your hard things? This great God says, “The cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto Me, and I will hear it.” It is not too hard for Him. He can make a way where there is no way. He can open a door, however tightly closed. And if His power, His omnipotence is great, equally great is His love, His mercy, His compassion.

But you see here there is a comparison, isn’t there? Not just, “The Lord on high is mighty,” but, “The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.” Now let us look at it first of all completely literally. I take it that the word here is used speaking of perhaps the greatest power there is upon earth. I do not think there is any greater power than the mighty waves of the sea. I remember some years ago speaking in Liverpool on a subject similar to this. There

was a gentleman there and he said he had been at sea for about twenty-eight years. I think he was the ship's electrician. "O," he said, "those terrible storms that at times the ship knew and the awful power of the sea, the tremendous power of the waves." Well, we prove it even in our own country. There are some places where the sea from time to time breaks through and carries everything before it. Some of our coastlines have been buttressed with tons of concrete costing thousands of pounds and many hours' labour. And then perhaps a time comes and there is a particularly rough and stormy sea, and it tosses the concrete away as if it were a feather.

I take it here that it means the strongest power that can be known upon earth. Now God is mightier than that. But I have not any doubt that the psalmist, for the comfort of God's people, is thinking of it in a spiritual sense. "The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea." Let me just bring this before you in one or two ways. First of all, there will be times when you will see your sin like a mighty ocean of guilt. Now what can take it away, what can swallow it up? In the preceding verse, "The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice." So these mighty waters, these mighty waves of the sea, have a voice, and that mighty flood of your sins, of your guilt, it has a voice, and that voice at times is this: that you will never find peace in the day of your death, and even before then, you will never find that mercy which you seek, and when you come to the end, your sins will sink you down for ever and ever. Now do you believe it in the gospel, do you believe it as viewed in God's dear Son, that "the Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea," even greater, even mightier than that awful flood of your sins and iniquities? Do you believe that divine mercy is greater than this? What do we sing in that last hymn in our hymnbook?

"What stream is that which sweeps away
My sins just like a flood,
Nor lets one guilty blemish stay?
'Tis Jesus' precious blood."

Now the Holy Ghost apply that to your heart, and then in that day your iniquity "shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah,

and they shall not be found.” “The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.”

And then these waves and billows of temptations.

“Does Satan tempt you to give up,
And call no more on Jesus’ name?”

Or are you tempted to sin? Are you plagued with all kinds of evil thoughts? Can you not find any peace, any comfort? We read in the book of the Revelation of that terrible dragon and the flood that it emptied, that he cast out, that he might swallow up the woman. What a wonderful thing it is that no child of God has ever been swallowed up in the temptations of Satan and none ever will.

“The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.” But let me speak of it especially concerning your problems and your difficulties and your troubles. Now I wonder if there is anyone in this this morning: “The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice.” Well, they did in the days of Noah. But almighty God was on high and He was mightier than the noise of many waters. But He provided that little ark and those who were in it were safe, and those who were out of it were lost. And God in His sovereignty and His love has provided an ark in His own dear Son. The wonderful thing for you and me that really matters this morning is to be found in the ark, found in Christ, the ark of grace. What do we read in the twenty-ninth Psalm? “The Lord sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever.”

“The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice.” Now what is this voice that is speaking to you in your heart this morning? What is Satan telling you? What is unbelief telling you? What is your own heart telling you? What are your fears telling you concerning what is going to happen, what is going to take place? “The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves.” “The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters.” Now He is in control. He binds the floods from overflowing. “Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.”

“The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.” Whatever it is that troubles you – things, people, circumstances, sins, whatever it is that troubles you, “The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.” God can still do what He did at the Red Sea. Have you ever noticed whenever Israel was in trouble, the prophets turned their minds and hearts back to the Red Sea? Remember the circumstances. This pilgrim people just from Egypt freed, Pharaoh with his mighty host pursuing them, and they are hemmed in on either side by the mountains, and before them the Red Sea waiting to swallow them up. No way of escape, no way of deliverance. Literally on that solemn day the floods lifted up their voice, the floods lifted up their waves, the floods of the Red Sea against God’s ancient people. And the Israelites began to murmur, and your carnal heart will murmur. But O to hear that voice saying, “Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.” The Lord made a way where there was no way. He dried up the waters of the Red Sea, and He still does. That is a good prayer: “Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake as in the ancient days. Art Thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?” He still does dry up the waters of the sea. He still does make a way for the ransomed to pass over. “The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.” He spoke and the waters of the Red Sea obeyed His voice and they divided. But He spoke a second time and those waters devoured all Israel’s enemies. There are two sides to God’s word, two sides to a promise.

So we have it when Israel, forty years later, came to Jordan. I have often thought, and sometimes said, they must have wondered and must have hoped that when they came to Jordan, Jordan would be flowing very gently. But when they came there, they found that Jordan was in flood at that time. Well, there was no turning back. They had to go forward. “The floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves.” Well, perhaps you look forward and you see Jordan flowing. You see that deep, icy river in flood that you cannot cross. There was not any bridge over; there was not any boat; they could not swim across. Perhaps, beloved friends, you look right to the end of your life. “If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst

thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" Now has the Holy Ghost ever burnt that solemn question into your heart, "How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"

"Ye have not passed this way heretofore," says God to Joshua, and Joshua painfully knew it and felt it, and perhaps you do, whatever is in your pathway. "Ye have not passed this way heretofore." "The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea." How did God dry up the waters of the Red Sea? "Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan," representing Christ. And as soon as the ark went down into Jordan, Jordan divided: then Israel could follow and pass safely through Jordan and into the promised land. Perhaps, concerning Jordan's swellings some of you at times say and feel:

"O that in Jordan's swelling
I may be helped to sing,
And pass the river, telling
The triumphs of my King."

How many a dear, dying saint has been able to say, "It is well"! And we think of how Bunyan speaks of Mr. Fearing, how he trembled all his life lest he should be lost at last. When at last he came in sight of Jordan, then he almost fainted. He felt he just could not venture. You remember Honest and Great-heart asked whether there was any report of what happened when he came there. "Ah," said one, "when he came there, Jordan had never been known to be so shallow before and poor, dear Mr. Fearing passed Jordan, scarcely wetting his feet." It is dying grace in a dying hour. Samuel Medley says,

". . . yet, when I come there,
I can't be confounded, The Lord will appear."

"For He is faithful that promised."

"The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea." And then this morning I read that beautiful account of how the Lord Jesus said, "Let us pass over unto the other side." If we had read on to the beginning of the next chapter, we read, "And they came over unto the other side." But there was a storm in

between. And beloved friends, when the Lord took you in hand to lead you, really He said, "Let us pass over unto the other side," and one day it will be said of you, "And they came over unto the other side." But there will be many a storm in between. And what a storm it was! We read of the wind arising and the waves beating, and they had everything against them; but they had one thing for them. They had Christ in the vessel. You cannot perish with Christ in the vessel. "The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea." "Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" Now this is it: "The Lord reigneth, He is clothed with majesty; the Lord is clothed with strength." "And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." Has the Lord ever done that, ever said, "Peace be still," in your heart, in your circumstances, and you felt there was a great calm? They tell me that with the Sea of Galilee, if there is a terrible storm which suddenly ceases, the waves are not immediately still. It is about an hour later before the sea settles down, when the wind drops and the storm ceases. But it was not here. "Peace be still," and the wind stopped, and the waves stopped, and the sea of Galilee was completely calm. "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" "This same Jesus." "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

"The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea." Well, beloved friends, what is it that is troubling you this morning, in your soul, in your home, your family, your loved ones, your children, your circumstances, the church of God, whatever it is? Now what is it? On the top of Beachy Head, there is one of those lovely little text plaques which has been erected, and it has this text on it. It is in such an appropriate place. You can see the sea raging down below, and hear the sound of the waves. On that plaque these words are engraved: "The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea," and then underneath just this comment: "God is greater than all your troubles."