



Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 63

God's Pen

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day evening, 18th March, 1990**

Text: *“The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond” (Jeremiah 17. 1)*

God has a pen, that immortal pen of which we have just been singing (hymn 14), and with that pen He writes. He does not write with ink; He certainly does not write in the sand; He writes as with a pen of iron and with the point of a diamond. That means one thing: that His writing is indelible, His writing cannot be erased. The figure here is that of engraving. You could write something and someone could come and rub it out. But if you write with a pen of iron, if you engrave, then it cannot be rubbed out. Or if you write with the point of a diamond, that cannot be obliterated.

“The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond.” So is the sin of England and so is your sin and so is my sin. It is written with a pen of iron, with the point of a diamond. It is written with God's own pen. It is written in one or two places. It is written in the book of God's remembrance. All your sins, all my sins, are recorded in God's book of remembrance and one day it shall be opened, and all our wishes and all our cries and all our repentance and all our tears can never blot out one sin that has been written with this iron pen, with the point of a diamond, in God's book of remembrance. Also, they are written upon our own conscience. However dead, however dull, however asleep it might be, all our sins are written by the pen of God upon our own conscience, and one day, sooner or later, conscience will be awakened and our own conscience will have to bear witness to those sins which we have done, the sins which are unknown, the secret sins, the sins of our thoughts. They are written with a pen of iron and with the point of a diamond.

Now in the chapter before this, God's ancient people said, “What is our iniquity?” Really they asked, What have we done wrong? Where is the witness? Where is the record? Who can prove it? Where have we gone amiss? “What is our iniquity? Or what is our sin that we have committed against the Lord our God?” This is God's own answer: You

say, where is our sin? You say, what is our iniquity? Now see, it is “written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond.”

Now God’s pen never makes a mistake. Sometimes people are adding something up, or putting something down, and they put something wrong. God’s pen does not make any mistakes. Also, the writing of God’s pen is always clear to read. It is not like bad writing when you cannot altogether discern what it says. No-one can misread God’s writing. And God’s pen is a fair pen, a just pen. So often we hear in our newspapers of someone who has been libelling someone else, writing things about them which are not true. God’s pen will never be accused of libel. It is a pen of absolute truth. What then, says Judah, what then, says England, what then, says the sinner, what is our iniquity? Or what is our sin? And God says, your sin is “written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond.” It is there, neither can it be obliterated, neither will excuses do.

There is something else written with the point of a diamond, with God’s pen, and that is the holy law of God. When God gave the revelation of His law, we read it was written with the finger of the living God, and He wrote it on tables of stone. Now beloved friends, though those tables of stone were smashed in pieces, the holy law of God was not erased. It was written eternally with the pen of iron and the point of a diamond. It was for ever written in heaven. There is no escaping it, the writing of God’s holy law with that pen of stern justice. “Do this and thou shalt live; do it not, and dying thou shalt surely die.” And also your sin, my sin, Judah’s sin, written with a pen of iron and the point of a diamond. For one day the books shall be opened and every man shall be judged according to the books. It will not be an unfair judgment in the great day. It will not be an unjust judgment. It will be according to strict justice, to absolute righteousness, and there your sins and my sins will witness against us. “Written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond” – the pen of God.

Now is there anything that can blot out, that can obliterate this terrible handwriting? The blood of Jesus can. And we have that most beautiful scripture – may some of you sweetly feel it tonight – what the Lord Jesus did, what He accomplished at Calvary in making an atonement, when He shed His precious blood: “Blotting out the handwriting of

ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross.” Now that is the only way those sins can ever be atoned for, ever be obliterated, those sins which are recorded even with the pen of God. It is this: “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.” No other hope, no other plea but this. O but to see the blotting out of the handwriting that was against us, to see it completely blotted out, that handwriting even written by the pen of God, with an iron pen, with the point of a diamond! “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us.” And you realise this, your sin, your guilt, and the recording of it by the pen of God, it is against you, it is contrary to you. But taking it out of the way, He nailed it to His cross. Now you know what the secret of it is. That iron pen, that point of a diamond which so solemnly writes in characters of blood on the cross – when the blessed Redeemer died and shed His precious blood to make atonement, there was something else there written with the pen of iron, with the point of a diamond, when stern justice smote the sinner’s Surety: the wounds of Jesus and the salvation of His people. O those cruel nails and the crown of thorns and the soldier’s spear were there as a pen of iron and the point of a diamond. And they wrote some solemn things at Calvary, and yet they wrote some most blessed things. Now this is it in all its fulness and all its beauty. This is good John Cennick writing of a guilty sinner brought to stand before the judgment seat of Christ in the great day, and there he sees all his sins written with an iron pen and with the point of a diamond. What is his hope? What is his refuge?

“Now shouldst Thou me to judgment call,
Though Moses faced me there, and all
My dreadful sins appeared,
I should not fear, but boldly stand;
Through Jesus’ pierced heart and hand,
I know I should be spared.”

Now this is it:

“My full receipt should there be showed,
Written with iron pen in blood,
On Jesus’ hands and side.”

That is your hope, that is my only hope, when we realise something of the condemnation of sin written by the iron pen and the point of a diamond.

“My full receipt should there be showed,
Written with iron pen in blood,
On Jesus’ hands and side.”

Now it is high language but can you make it your prayer, dare you make it your prayer?

“I’m safe!’ I’ll shout, ‘O law and sin,
Ye cannot bring me guilty in,
For Christ was crucified!’”

O these are the wonders of the atonement, the wonders of the cross!

“Written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond.” Now you see there was something else written with that iron pen and with the point of a diamond at Calvary. Now shall I put it like this? “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?” Can she? “Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands.” You see, when the Lord Jesus bled and died, the names of all His dear people were engraven upon the palms of His hands in characters of love and blood. And that means that they are there for ever. You can visit some of our old chapels. There are ancient tablets on the wall and the letters are deeply cut. You can still read them as clearly as the day when they were first engraved. You can go into some of the old churchyards and see graves going back centuries and the letters can still be discerned. They were deeply cut. They were engraven there.

And the Lord introduces it with a *Behold*. *Thee*, such a sinner, so guilty. *Thee*, thy unworthy, worthless name. “Behold, I have graven *thee* upon the palms of my hands.” So Toplady sings,

“My name from the palms of His hands,
Eternity will not erase,
Impressed on His heart it remains,
In marks of indelible grace.”

Now there is the safety, the eternal security of the people of God in Christ. “Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands; thy walls are continually before Me.”

“Written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond.” Now let us go to the Book of Job and hear Job’s noble testimony concerning the resurrection and his own hope in it in the well-known words, “I know that my Redeemer liveth.” There are two sides to real religion, and if ever any man knew the heights and the depths it was Job. I think you will find some of the highest assurance in Scripture in Job, and you will find some of the most awful, the darkest places. There was a time when Job said, “O that I knew where I might find Him!” Perhaps that is your cry tonight, beloved friends. “O that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to His seat!” Well you see, Job did find Him. He had sins against him, his friends against him, circumstances against him, Satan against him, his wife against him. “O that my words were now written! O that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.”

Now who told Job that? It is often thought that the Book of Job is the oldest book in Scripture. Look at Job right back in those distant ages. He was not an Israelite, he was not a Jew. Now who taught him the truth of the resurrection, the resurrection of the body? “Though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.” Who taught Job that there was a Redeemer and that that Redeemer should die and rise again? O but to have the three points that Job had: I know that He is the Redeemer; I know that He lives; and I know that He is mine. It is no wonder that Job said, “O that my words were now written! O that they were printed in a book!” Many of Job’s words he wished they could have been forgotten, but not these: “O that my words were now written! O that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!” Literally they were not written down with an iron pen. Literally they were not engraved as lead in the rock. But in reality they were, as the Holy Ghost engraved them in the pages of Holy Scripture. All these thousands of years later they are still there, and O

what a comfort they have been made to many of God's people! Now may some of you be blessed with that good hope, that sweet assurance: "I know that my Redeemer liveth." "O that my words were now written! O that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever." A testimony like that, the work of God's grace in the sinner's heart, it can never be obliterated. It can never be erased.

"Written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond." Now let us pass on and come to the promises." What did we sing just now?

"Engraved as in eternal brass,
The mighty promise shines;
Nor can the powers of darkness rase
Those everlasting lines."

All the promises of God which are yea and amen are written with a pen of iron and with the point of a diamond. They are written with God's pen; they cannot be broken. That promise which is yours, that God Himself has sealed in your heart, that promise that you have locked up there or that promise your soul hovers around, that promise you try to rest upon or that promise you plead. What is it? "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." What is it? "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." What is it? "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 say, can't you come lower? What about this? "Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." What about this? "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass." You see the certainty of all God's promises. Mind you, it is so in judgment as well as in mercy. Those awful promises, those awful threatenings. Not one of God's promises can ever be broken. The faithful God. "Hath He said, and shall He not do it?"

"Engraved as in eternal brass,
The mighty promise shines;
Nor can the powers of darkness rase
Those everlasting lines."

“Written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond.” O these things are such a blessed answer to those who in their conscience feel that their sins are written for their condemnation with the finger of God.

“Written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond.” Then, you see, we go to the Corinthians. “Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.” Now here God says that all His people are His epistles. The Epistle to the Romans is God’s epistle. The Epistle to the Ephesians is God’s epistle. All His people are so many epistles. God’s writing is in the Epistle to the Romans. God’s writing is in the Epistle to the Ephesians. God’s writing is in the hearts and lives of all His people. He says, “Ye are our epistle ... known and read of all men.” People in Luton do not read the Epistle to the Romans, but they read you. That is what it means. They read you and they read me, and they understand what they read. Now what kind of epistles are we? “Ye are our epistles known and read of all men.” “Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.”

The old prophets, especially Ezekiel, when they spoke of the new covenant, spoke of how God would write the truth in the hearts of His people, and He does. He writes the truth in His people’s hearts, with that divine pen, with that pen of iron, with the point of a diamond. Now if the truth is written in your hearts, then beloved friends, you can never deny it, you can never part with it. You can take up with religion and lose with it. You can make a profession and give it up, but if the Holy Spirit writes the truth on your heart with a pen of iron, it is there for ever. The godly martyrs could not deny the truth. The truth was written by God’s own pen in their hearts. That is what you and I need and what the churches need and that is the solemn thing which is lacking in religion today. The truth is written in the Bible, and in the hymnbook, and in the commentaries, but O to have it written in our hearts!

What did Paul say to the Corinthians? “Not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of your

heart.” Now get this point clear: there is only one letter’s difference but we are not being pedantic. Sometimes the New Testament says fleshly, with an “l” in, and it means sinful, carnal, of the world. Sometimes it says fleshy with the “l” missed out, and it means something completely different, the very opposite. Do not confuse the two. Fleshly means a heart that has been made soft by the Spirit of God. So pray to be delivered from a fleshly heart and pray that the Holy Ghost will give you a fleshy heart. And it is there that the Holy Ghost writes with the pen of iron and the point of a diamond. Those truths that He writes, they are there burnt into your heart. They are indelibly impressed there, both concerning yourself, concerning sin, concerning the world, concerning God, concerning salvation.

“Written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond.” Whenever I read of writing with the point of a diamond, I am reminded of the well-known story concerning the eminent George Whitefield. He was once preaching, and he was lavishly and kindly entertained in a wealthy home. But he discerned that they were completely destitute of any vital knowledge of the truth and that they had no concern over their salvation. He wondered how he could seek to alarm them, to awaken them. Before he left he took up a diamond ring and engraved on a pane of glass in the bedroom: “One thing is needful.” Just before I came to chapel I had a look at the picture, the photograph of it (in *The Life of George Whitefield*). I think the pane of glass is still intact after all these many, many years. What he engraved with the point of a diamond on that pane of glass, the Holy Ghost was pleased (so we believe) to engrave upon their hearts and to sanctify it, to bring them to feel their lost condition, and later to lead them to the Lord Jesus.

“Written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond.” We have that very truth in our well-known hymn,

“Jesus engrave it on my heart,
That Thou the one thing needful art.”

Now may we be able to pray for ourselves and for our young people and our children and for those we love, that the truth might be engraven on their hearts. Because if it is, it will be there for ever. We can speak to them, talk to them, preach to them, teach them. Only God Himself can engrave the truth on their hearts. But especially this: may we each have it

deeply engraven on our hearts, that one thing, and only one thing is needful. Perhaps today we think there are a thousand things that are needful. In a hundred years' time, it will be this: one thing was needful. It makes the difference between heaven and hell, between being lost and being saved. When we come to our last day on earth, it will be the only thing that really matters. One thing, and the emphasis is on the one: "*One thing is needful*" – a personal, vital, saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus. Now may that be written with the pen of iron and with the point of a diamond on our hearts, and then we shall feel it, we shall realise it, that one thing is needful. Why? Because by nature we are sinners, we are lost, we are ruined, we are unfit to die, we can do nothing to fit and prepare ourselves for eternity. "One thing is needful" – to know Christ, to be forgiven by Him, to have an interest in His precious, sin-atonement blood, to know the riches of His grace in salvation. Now may it all be sealed home. May it be engraven in our hearts. "One thing is needful."

There are some of you here who know it and feel it. You have already got it engraven on your hearts, "One thing is needful." Well, as surely as God teaches you your need, so surely in Christ will He supply that need. You know what we sing:

"Come ye needy, heavy laden . . .
All the fitness He requireth,
Is to feel your need of Him."

It is needy sinners who are welcome. It is needy sinners who are invited. It is needy sinners for whom salvation was accomplished. It is needy sinners to whom salvation is to be applied. Those who have had this sealed on their hearts, that one thing is needful, so surely will the Holy Ghost seal home the remedy, Christ and Him crucified, bring the application and secure that, fasten that, seal that in your heart, and that for ever.

O you see, if He engraves on your heart, "One thing is needful," there will be something else engraven there, and that will be the name, the precious name, the worthy name of the Lord Jesus. They said when Queen Mary died, there was one word engraven on her heart – Calais. In those days there was a war between England and France and she was heart-broken because Calais was lost to the French. Well, a sinner saved has one word engraven on his heart: Jesus. That will take you to heaven.

“Then let His name for ever be
To us supremely dear;
Our only, all-prevailing plea
For all our hope is there.”

“Written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond.”