



# Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 21

The Blessed Man

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,  
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,  
on Lord's day morning, 29th June, 1986**

**Text:** *“Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit” (Jeremiah 17. 7, 8).*

This is the blessed man, the man that God Himself pronounces blessed. This is the man who is truly happy, who possesses real happiness. If you were to go into the streets of Luton this morning and ask the people you met who the happy man is, no doubt you would have as many answers as people to whom you spoke. One would say, a person with plenty of money, and another would say a person with good health; and so you would get your number of answers. I believe also that even in the church of God, if you were to say, “Who is the man who is really blessed?” you would get a variety of answers. But this is what God has said. He has for ever put the question out of question. Who is the truly blessed man? Who is the man who knows true happiness? “Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.” Perhaps some carnal heart says, “What! only that?” Yes, beloved friends, only that. But the emphasis should not be on the *only* because there is salvation in it, there is heaven in it. “The man that trusteth in the Lord.” I would pray this for each of you, that this religion might be yours, a religion in which you are brought to that humble trust in the Lord Jesus, to trust in His infinite merits, as a sinner to trust in His most precious blood, that this confidence might be yours which is not ours by nature.

“Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord.” Of course, in these verses there is a comparison and a contrast. There is also the cursed man, and by nature each of us is under the eternal curse of God. What is the mark of the cursed man? Again, if you went round and asked your questions, you would get a variety of answers. It does not say, someone who is cruel, or an adulterer, or a swearer, or a Sabbath-breaker. It passes by all these things and comes to this man who might be a very moral man, a very religious man; naturally speaking he might be a very good man.

“Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.” You see, there is a two-fold difference between the blessed man and the man who is not blessed, the man who is under God’s curse. One knows nothing of dependence on the Lord Jesus. He depends on himself, or someone else, or something else. The other, by divine teaching, has been brought right away from all that. He cannot trust in man, his own merits, his own supposed goodness: of sheer necessity he has to trust in Christ. And the second difference: one is separated from the world, and of necessity he has to cling and cleave to Christ; now the other constantly finds his heart departing from the Lord. Mind you, the godly grieve over this; they grieve that their hearts so often depart from the Lord. But the man under God’s curse does not grieve over it: it is his element. He says, “Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways.”

This is what faith is, trusting in the Lord Jesus, trusting Him for forgiveness and divine help and salvation and to be prepared to stand before His face. Now how many of you can honestly say that this morning your trust is in the Lord? and how many of you can say *how* you have been brought to trust in the Lord, brought away from trusting in anything else, every false foundation, every refuge of lies? In the light of eternity and your never-dying soul and your sins, you can no longer trust in these. O the blessedness of the man who trusteth in the Lord! Now he may not feel that blessedness, but he is blessed. O may this be a vital exercise with you, not so much, Have I had this experience or that experience, or know that blessing, but is my heart found trusting in the Lord and only in the Lord? And how many of you this morning can honestly 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”?

“Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord.” This is the religion that takes a sinner to heaven. “And whose hope the Lord is.” It is painful work to be brought away from every false hope, every vain ground of confidence, the things in which once we trusted, and to be found now with no hope in self or in any creature, to be found without hope and without help and then to see that sweet attraction in the Lord Jesus in the gospel;

for the Holy Spirit to lead us to Christ our only hope. “Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul.” The apostle says that we have it. It is a wonderful thing to have something, to have anything, that God has given you, a wonderful thing to have something you did not bring into the world with you. “Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.” What is this wonderful “that” within the veil? Well, there is a dear, exalted Saviour there, there is His infinite merit there, His precious blood there, His all-prevailing merits there, His everlasting love there, His mercy there, His power to save unto the uttermost there, all the glories of His advocacy and everlasting priesthood there. This is what the apostle means when he says, “that within the veil,” and this is the anchor ground of hope. Tell me, where is your anchor cast? In something here below, or is it cast within the veil “whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus”? There is a word which keeps hovering round my spirit:

“The man who is blessed with hope in the cross,  
Is freed from the bondage of guilt and the curse;  
The blood of his Surety by faith he reviews,  
While hope in that fountain his spirit renews.”

“Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord.” Now what wonderful promises are made concerning the blessed man! As I have thought about this and meditated on it, it seems to crystallize in my spirit like this: O that I might be this blessed man and O that I might know his blessedness and O that these blessings which he possesses might be mine!

“For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters” – not a wild tree, but a tree that God Himself has planted. Surely the whole point of this verse is that this is a tree of value, an olive tree, or a palm tree, or a vine. “He shall be as a tree planted.” There is a very solemn word: “Every plant, which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.” I remember years ago going to preach at a chapel. There was a godly old man who spoke to me after the service. He said that the previous week Mr. Foster had preached and his text was, “Every plant, which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up,” and it seemed to cut him off. He said, “You read the same chapter, and when you came to those words, O the emphasis you put on them, and I feared lest you should take them as your text; but then instead you spoke of that dear woman who

came and said, ‘Lord, help me.’” Well, you see, she was a tree planted. She was not one of those plants which the heavenly Father hath not planted, that shall be rooted up.

“Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted.” By nature, we grow in nature’s soil and we are happy there, we are in our element there, and then the Lord comes by His Spirit and uproots us, and that is painful work. Any uprooting is painful, but as the Lord uproots you, then He plants you, and He plants you in Christ. There is a word, and I cannot comprehend the fulness of it, but I mention it to you: “If we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection.” “For he shall be as a tree planted.” When the Lord plants a tree, then that tree is well planted, established. We read in Isaiah of “trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified.”

“He shall be as a tree planted.” You see, when this tree is planted, a special place is chosen for it. It is not like the cursed man, the heath in the desert. Whenever the Lord plants a plant of His own right-hand planting, it is by the water. That is, there is a secret supply, and these waters are that wonderful fulness in Christ, the fulness of His grace and love and mercy. Now if you are a plant of the Father’s right-hand planting, if you are this blessed man, then you are planted by the waters – not in the heath, not in the desert – so that you have a supply for all your needs. Like the famous Hampton Court vine, it is nothing to look at, but so fruitful, and they tell you the secret of it is its roots. They go so deep down into the soil; it is said they even reach to the nearby River Thames. There is an abundant supply.

“He shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river.” Seek a religion with good roots. Ever tremble lest that be your condemnation: “Because it had no root, it withered away.” Now have you got a religion with roots? The apostle says, “That ye, being rooted and grounded in love.” “He shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river.” The roots are not the most beautiful part, are they? You cannot see them. The roots are out of sight. They are beneath the ground. You cannot hear them making a lot of noise, but they reach out into the soil, and that is the secret of the life and the growth and the fruitfulness – good roots.

“He shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river.” Roots do two things, don’t they? First of all, they hold the plant, the tree, firm and secure. You will not be tossed about by every wind of doctrine, by every temptation, by everything that you hear. When the wind blows, the tree does not blow away; it has roots. They say that with some trees, the harder the wind blows and shakes, the firmer the roots go down into the soil. What a blessing to the church of God are those that have good roots! The Lord Jesus says, “I will be as the dew unto Israel” – not just *give* it – He Himself will be it. “He shall grow as the lily” – so pure, so attractive, so fragrant, but lest any should think there might be weakness: “and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.” Those mighty cedars of Lebanon have firm, deep roots. That is the safety, the stability of these trees of the Lord’s planting.

“He shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river.” But the second thing is that the roots derive nourishment from the soil, and if planted near the waters, there is that abundant supply of moisture to come up from the soil. O to be a tree planted by the waters, like Joseph – “a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well.” This is the very same point. “Whose branches run over the wall.” This is the abundant supply, the wonderful fulness there is in Christ, and to depend upon Him, to live upon Him. “And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.”

“For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh.” It is a strange word, isn’t it?: “he shall not see.” First of all, it means this: he shall not fear, he shall not be afraid, when the heat cometh. No rain, little dew, the heat cometh – why shall he not see? Why shall he not fear? Because the roots reach down to that nearby river, because there is that abundant supply. That man who has abundant wealth in the bank, he does not fear when there is a shortage of money. That man who has his own farm and his own produce, he does not fear when there is a shortage of food. It is this secret supply, this abundant supply, this never-failing supply, this supply that can never dry up. Good Dr. Ryland comes right to the point of it when he says,

“Why should the soul a drop bemoan,  
Who has a fountain near?”

“And shall not see when heat cometh.” But you notice the word, “and shall not see.” That means there are times when this blessed man is so helped and so favoured, so lifted above all these things, these trials, these sorrows, all these perplexities, that it is almost as if he does not see them. Why? It is because he can see something better. It is like this in the Epistle to the Hebrews: “And took joyfully the spoiling of your goods.” Why? “Knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.”

“And shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green.” I think you will find this, that throughout the Word of God when a tree or a plant is brought forward as an analogy for a child of God, the leaves signify the profession. So we have that very solemn case where the Lord Jesus came to the fig tree and found there was nothing but leaves, and He pronounced that awful curse upon the barren fig tree. Leaves are necessary to a tree: a tree, a plant needs leaves, it must have leaves, leaves are very useful, but it is terrible if there is nothing but leaves, if there is no flower, if there is not any sign of fruit – nothing but leaves; that is a profession and a religion going no further than a profession. We need to beware, each of us, that our religion is more than leaves. We do not want that day to come when the Lord Jesus Himself inspects the tree, the plant, and He finds no fruit to His glory, nothing but leaves. It is a solemn thing if there is nothing but leaves, if there are only leaves and no fruit.

Yet the leaves are important, and so is a profession of the Lord’s name. If the Lord has done anything for us in love and mercy, He calls us to profess it. So when we make a profession of the Lord’s name, it is like the leaves of the tree. O that our leaves might be kept green! What a solemn thing it is when you see a professor of religion who has perhaps been a professor for many, many years, and then the time comes when his love begins to wither and grow dry, when the leaves are brown, and when a few of the leaves begin to drop off. May the Lord in love and mercy ever keep our profession green, that we might not dishonour Christ before the world, that we might ever walk worthy of our high calling. O may it be this: “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.” What is the point, what is the connection here? Ourselves here upon earth, our profession, the leaves on the tree; a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God: now here are the waters; this is the river.

There is a vital connection between the two. “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.” May we, beloved friends, as a church be exercised on this point, that our leaves shall ever be kept green. The profession is outward; decline begins inwardly. Decline begins when we do not live on Christ, live upon His fulness, but eventually it is seen in the browning, the withering of the leaves. O that the Lord might bless us as a church with a green profession, a God-honouring profession.

“But her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought.” Careful, of course, is used here in its old-fashioned sense, meaning full of care, overburdened, anxious. “And shall not be careful in the year of drought.” Just now we have been speaking about the heat coming. This is more than the heat. This is the year of drought, when it is the constant heat day after day. It speaks of sore trial. It speaks of burning temptation. The midday sun is high. You feel the heat of it. You wonder how you can endure, how you can continue. It may be some special trouble. It may be some deep trial or sorrow. It may be Satan in a special way harassing you. It may be an awful loss. It may be that things have been taken away, things have been withered up. But the point about this drought is this – that it goes on. Some trials and temptations are sharp and short, but this is the drought. You cannot have a drought that lasts for just one afternoon. People would smile at you if you said, “Yesterday we had a drought, just for the day.” A drought is something that goes on and on. I have often spoken about long, drawn-out trials. We have had friends at Bethel with long, drawn-out trials, and some have known that they would have to carry on in these trials right to their dying day. I think of dear Mrs. Gurney when she had that severe stroke. She knew it was something she had to carry, having no use in her limbs, right to her dying day. And some of you know these trials, these problems and perplexities, these difficulties, these grievous sorrows – not just for a moment, or an afternoon, or a day, but it is the year of drought. It goes on and on.

“And shall not be careful in the year of drought.” Why? Because of this river close by which has not run dry and which never can run dry. There are some of the dear children of God, and you look at them outwardly and everything seems to be going wrong. Their hopes are dashed; their providences are disappointed; they are crossed and crossed again. Perhaps things in their home, their life, their family, their business,



all go wrong. But, she “shall not be careful in the year of drought.” Why? Because there is that secret supply, that secret support, the Lord Himself in all His love, in all His fulness, that ocean, that river of His love and mercy and grace, which can never dry up, which ever flows in a way of forgiveness and cleansing and healing and blessing and reviving and refreshing. There is a hymn which is hardly ever sung, but may we know something of the experience of it:

“On the Saviour’s fulness living” – now that is being the tree planted, with the roots reaching to the river –

“On the Saviour’s fulness living,  
All His saints obtain delight;  
With the strength which He is giving,  
They can wrestle, they can fight.  
Happy moments!  
When King Jesus is in sight.”

“And shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.” God has appointed that every tree that He has planted shall be made fruitful, shall bring forth fruit to His glory. What are these fruits? Things like love, humility, and prayer, holy gratitude, thanksgiving, the tender fear of God, hope, and faith, and faithfulness. O we do want to be fruitful, don’t we? We do not want to be that barren tree that brings forth no fruit. The Lord has promised this: “neither shall cease from yielding fruit.” We spoke just now about a drought. It is something that goes on and on and on. You see, fruit-bearing of a tree of the Lord’s planting in greater or less measure will go on and on, right to the journey’s end. There will not be a time when no longer you are fruitful, if you are a child of God. Mind you, you are not a good judge of your own fruit, your own fruitfulness, but the Lord very beautifully in John 15 speaks of the fruit-bearing, and also very solemnly: “Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” That is the reason for this trial, this bitter pain, that it might bring forth more fruit.

But the point here is continuing, enduring, going on. We read of these trees in the ninety-second psalm: “The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree.” A palm tree is completely straight. It reaches straight up from earth to heaven. It is very, very fruitful, and I think I once read that

the Arabs have about seventy different uses for the palm tree. “The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.” Here is the strength again, the roots again. Now this is it, this is the continuing, the enduring: “those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.” So above all, they are planted in Christ, but also they are planted in the house of God. Have you ever known one of them who did not love the house of God, one of them who could not say, “Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth”? “Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.” Now listen: “They shall still bring forth fruit in old age.” That is especially a word for the aged ones, isn’t it? And it is also a promise to the young ones of enduring, continuing. “They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing.”

“Neither shall cease from yielding fruit.” We do want to be kept, we do want to continue, we do want to endure to the end. I do feel that prayer of Dr. Fawcett’s is a good prayer:

“Lord, hast Thou made me know Thy ways?  
Conduct me in Thy fear;  
And grant me such supplies of grace,  
That I may persevere.”

There is the river again – “such supplies of grace.”

“Neither shall cease from yielding fruit.” This, then, is the blessedness of the man that trusteth in the Lord, whose hope the Lord is. But there are two vital points to emphasise. First of all, are there any of you who feel an echo, that you long for it? You see such an attraction in it, and say, “Lord, may this blessedness be mine.” And then secondly, the Lord Himself has promised it. He has promised that He will do it. He has promised that this thing shall be, despite your sins and unworthiness and guilt, in accordance with His love and mercy. He has promised that the thing shall be. “For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.”