

Bethel

Prayer Meeting Addresses

Number 1 Job's Answer

Reading: Job 42. 1-6

1 Then Job answered the Lord and said,
2 I know that thou canst do every thing,
and that no thought can be withholden
from thee.
3 Who is he that hideth counsel without
knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I
understood not; things too wonderful for
me, which I knew not.

4 Hear, I beseech thee, and I will
speak: I will demand of thee, and declare
thou unto me.
5 I have heard of thee by the hearing of
the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.
6 Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent
in dust and ashes.

Address

Beloved friends, this is the posture we should always seek to be found in, especially when we come before the Lord in prayer, whether it is in secret, or in family worship, or in the house of God. Now this should ever be our posture: realising the greatness of God and our nothingness, realising the holiness of God and our vileness, and yet the wonderful mercy that through the blood of Christ and through His glorious office as the Mediator, we are permitted to draw nigh. "Now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Now may we be saved from dead formality and O may there be that spirit of worship and adoration as we are enabled to prostrate ourselves before our God.

"Then Job answered the Lord, and said." During the past few chapters God has been saying many, many things to Job, asking Job many questions, revealing to Job His greatness and His majesty and His glory. "Then Job answered the Lord." And you know, when we hear, the Word of God requires an answer from us. When God speaks, He requires an answer from us. When He reveals His glory, His majesty, He requires an answer from us, an answer from our soul. What kind of an answer is it? Well, the answer really is this: "Behold, I am vile." Job does not try to answer all these questions that have been asked:

“Canst thou draw out leviathan with an hook?” and, “Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacocks?” and, “Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds?” and, “Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?” It is not an answer of wisdom; it is an answer of ignorance. It is an answer of helplessness. “I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear.” This is Job’s answer. “But now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” May this always be our answer when we come before God, the answer to His glory, the answer to His holiness.

And you see the vital distinction here. “I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear.” We have all done that, haven’t we? We have often heard of God – His greatness, His holiness, His majesty – with the hearing of the ear. O but what a change: “Now mine eye seeth Thee.” If we have a glimpse of the greatness of God, that will humble us. So Isaiah when in the temple he saw the Lord high and lifted up and heard the seraphim crying, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts.” He too prostrated himself at the Lord’s feet. “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips. Now may there be that amongst us, that sense, that solemn, awful sense of the greatness, the glory, the holiness of God, and our nothingness, our weakness, our vileness. It will awe us. There will be reverence. There will be holy fear. But there will be an attraction in it. That is as we see it in Christ; as we “worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness”; as we see that His justice has been satisfied in the atonement; as we see there is a way by which a guilty sinner can come before a holy God and live. And we shall desire to be nothing, Christ everything.

“Self-renouncing, grace admiring,
Made unto salvation wise,
Matchless love their bosoms firing,
O how sweet their songs arise.”

And what are they?

“None but Jesus!”
From His blood their hopes arise.”

Do not misunderstand this when Job says to God, “Hear, I beseech Thee, and I will speak: I will demand of Thee, and declare Thou unto me.” That first of all sounds rather strangely: “I will demand of Thee, and declare Thou unto me.” But it is not irreverence. Rather the meaning of Job here is, Lord, I do not know the answer to all these things. I cannot speak. I am going to demand of Thee. I am going to beg that Thou wilt tell me. I am going to beg that Thou wilt declare it to me. In other words, That which I know not, and there are so many

things that I know not, that which I know not, show Thou me. That is the spirit of Job here. Do not misunderstand it. “Hear, I beseech Thee, and I will speak: I will demand of Thee, and declare Thou unto me.”

Have you noticed this, that this word Job speaks to God, “Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge?” is the opening word that God spoke to Job in chapter 38. When God began to take Job in hand, to deal with him, that was the first word. “Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?” And you see Job here right at the end repeats that question of the Almighty: “Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge?” Really, his answer is this: guilty, Lord; guilty. It was me. With the words I spoke, I did hide counsel without knowledge. “Therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.”

I always feel that is grace when a person is willing to acknowledge that he is in the wrong. You see, people take up a position and they realise they are mistaken, but they will not acknowledge it. I always feel there is a lot of grace when a person is willing to say they are completely in the wrong. I was thinking recently about James Shorter at the time of the Eternal Sonship controversy. He was one of the best-known of London ministers. He denied that Christ was the eternal Son of God. It was a great grief to his friends because he was so highly esteemed, and it was a special grief to J. C. Philpot. But you know, one day James Shorter fell down before God and said something like this: “Lord, J. C. Philpot and I cannot both be right. Either I am right – Lord, I am sure I am right. But if I am not, please show me, and if J. C. Philpot is right, show me. If he is wrong, show him that he is wrong. If it is me that is wrong, show me that I am wrong.” But he was so sure he was right; and the Lord immediately answered that prayer and very kindly showed James Shorter that he was completely in the wrong and Philpot was completely in the right concerning the Person of Christ. James Shorter said, “Now it was hard to stand up before the congregation and tell them I had been completely in the wrong, but I had to do it.” And he made an open, free confession and wrote a letter that anyone was free to publish declaring that what he had been contending for, he was completely in the wrong. Now that is grace. I do feel a lot of the trouble in the churches ever since the Reformation to the present time has been that people have taken up a position, a wrong position, and the time has come when in their heart of hearts they knew that their position is wrong, but they have not had the grace openly to confess it. It does need grace. Job here does not make any excuses.

Then one last word. You notice that I have really spoken through these six verses back-to-front this evening, from verse 6 to the beginning. But this to me is a beautiful verse. Job says, “I know that Thou canst do every thing.” I believe there have been times in my life when I could say the same, that the most impossible thing with God is easy. I thought when you were singing that opening hymn yesterday morning, how once in the depths of trouble and sorrow I looked up at the Haslingden hills and that word came so powerfully:

“Before *those* hills in order stood,
Or earth received her frame –
From everlasting Thou art God,
To endless years the same.”

I could say with Job then, “Lord, I know that Thou canst do everything.” Bring me out of the trouble I am in. And the Lord did it. Well, in our prayers, in our concerns, in our problems, in our troubles, in everything, may we see this: that our God can do everything. “For with God nothing shall be impossible.” There is not any sin that He cannot forgive, any heart He cannot soften, any soul He cannot save. There is not any door He cannot open, any problem He cannot solve, any question He cannot answer. There is not any foe He cannot defeat, any sin He cannot quell, any deliverance He cannot grant. “Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for Me?” “Then Job answered the Lord.” May it be your answer and mine tonight, and may it encourage us to pray.

“Thou art coming to a King;
Large petitions with thee bring;
For His grace and power are such,
None can ever ask too much.”

Lord, “I know that Thou canst do every thing.”

*This address was given at Bethel Chapel, Luton, by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Monday, 30th April, 1984*