

# Bethel

## Prayer Meeting Addresses

### Number 106 A Message for the New Year

**Reading:** Exodus 33. 12-23

12 And Moses said unto the Lord, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight.

13 Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people.

14 And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.

15 And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.

16 For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.

17 And the Lord said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken:

for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name.

18 And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.

19 And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.

20 And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.

21 And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock:

22 And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by:

23 And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.

### Address

Israel had sinned exceedingly greatly. It was that matter of the golden calf so soon after the Lord had given them the ten commandments, and so as a punishment, the Lord said He would no longer go with them. He would not break His promise – He would send an angel – but He Himself would not go with them. That would not satisfy Moses. Moses could not be content with just an angel. He wanted the Lord Himself. He knew nothing short of this would do, because of their unworthiness, their helplessness, the difficulties of the way, the

hardness of the pilgrimage, the enemies they would meet. So this was the burden of his heart: “If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.”

Beloved friends, I am sure that many of you here this evening find an echo with that in your own hearts as we pass from year to year, as we contemplate the year 2019. What it holds for us, we do not know. We do know this: that according to the Lord’s own word, the way will not be any easier. We know we still have our pilgrimage to walk out. We realise how weak we are, and how strong sin, Satan and the world are. Then some of you have your particular personal burdens and cares. You have things before you. Some of them you have already written down in your diary. Perhaps your heart cries, “How can I stand that trying day?” Then there are those of you with your loneliness, and those with ill health, and those in old age – thinking of many of our aged friends in Bethesda. Then of course there are the spiritual burdens. If the Lord is not with me to keep me from falling, to uphold me, where shall I be.

So this is the very burden of your heart, and I am sure I speak for many of you. Lord, “If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.” In other words, Lord Jesus, I feel I cannot go on without Thee. May it not just be a burden, but may it be a heartfelt prayer. “Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you.” “Less than Thyself will not suffice.” Lord, it is an urgent, pressing case – the solemnity of it, the reality of it, tomorrow, next week, the unknown way, perhaps the solemn article of death. O, “If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.” And Moses found that his God was merciful and gracious, and so will you, despite all your fears and all your failures, and all your sins. You will find that blessed “notwithstanding” here (see 2 Timothy 4. 17). “Notwithstanding all.”

“And He said” – do not leave out these little words at the beginning. I believe the Lord once spoke that word to me: “For He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” But O the weight, the divine authority of that beginning: “*And He said*”! “What more can He say than to you He has said?” “And He said.” It is a word of mercy; it is a word of comfort; it is a word of faithfulness. “And He said, My presence shall go with thee.” That satisfied Moses. He had all that he wanted. I know afterwards he took the opportunity – the Lord had answered him, and he said, “I beseech Thee, shew me Thy glory,” and he received another promise: “I will make all My goodness pass before thee.” O but if we have the Lord’s presence in the unknown way, in the new year, then we have the Lord Himself.

“And He said, My presence shall go with thee.” He was going forward. There was no standing still. It is a pilgrimage. With us it is a going forward. There is no standing still. It is a pilgrimage. We are not strong enough for it. We cannot manage it. “And He said, My presence shall go with thee” in that pilgrimage. What is it? My presence, to help thee, to be with thee, to guide thee, to uphold thee, to forgive thee, to keep thee, to supply all thy needs. O, “My presence shall go with thee.” Now there is everything there. You can lean on a word like this. It is as a staff for your pilgrimage. It is that support in the wilderness. “My presence shall go with thee” – the mercy of it, the certainty of it!

“And I will give thee rest.” I believe literally when the Lord spoke this to Moses, it was a promise that the Lord would not leave Israel till He had brought them safely into the Promised Land and given them a resting place there. That was its immediate meaning, and so it is today. “Is He a Sun? On thee He’ll shine.” And what follows? “Is He thy God? He’ll bring thee through.” Now that is what the Lord meant immediately when He spoke that word to Moses. Do not be afraid, Moses. My promise shall stand. I will be with my people to the end, despite all their sins, and I will bring them safely through at last into the Promised Land.

“My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.” But we must not omit completely the beautiful significance we often feel. It is a beautiful word: *rest*. That promise: “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you.” William Gadsby never spoke a truer word than when he said, “I cannot rest without my resting-place.” Neither can you; neither can I. O but what a blessed resting place for a sinner in Christ! “I will give thee rest.” And that word still rings out down the ages: “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” And that lovely word: “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.” I am sure some of you breathed out that word:

“O that I” – me personally – “that I now the rest might know,  
Believe and enter in!”

Because I am sure some of you feel like Noah’s weary dove, just coming short. Can I ever reach the ark? Can I ever enter in? And then that gracious hand that reached out and it pulled her in.

“Draws us to His loving breast,  
There we find the gospel rest.”

So beloved friends, may some of you know the sweetness, the blessedness, the comfort of this word, and may we sweetly prove it as a congregation, the Lord's gracious presence. "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." Really, in a way, that is the end of my little address. O but I cannot forbear mentioning that bit at the end: "I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with My hand." As we wish you every blessing for the new year, we can wish you nothing better than that: that the Lord will put you in a cleft of the rock and that He will cover you with His hand.

*This address was given at Bethel Chapel, Luton, by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom, on Monday, 31st December, 2018, New Year's Eve.*

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Though we walk through this wilderness  
God's promise is our stay;  
His goodness He will make to pass  
Before us in the way.

Goodness, immortal and divine,  
The bliss of endless day,  
The Lord our God will make to pass  
Before us in the way.

The boundless treasures of His grace,  
He surely will display,  
And all His goodness make to pass  
Before us in the way.

Though hosts of enemies rise up,  
To fill us with dismay,  
The Lord will make His goodness pass  
Before us in the way.

To keep our eyes on Jesus fixed,  
And there our hope to stay,  
The Lord will make His goodness pass  
Before us in the way.

To make His saints His glory view,  
And sing their cares away,  
The Lord will make His goodness pass  
Before them in the way.

W. Gadsby