

Bethel

Prayer Meeting Addresses

Number 20 Problems in Prayer

Reading: 1 John 1, 2. 1, 2

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;

2 (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)

3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

4 And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie,

and do not the truth:

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

Address

There is a verse of one of our hymns that begins like this: “To pray, he thinks too bold.” I wonder if some of you at times have these problems concerning your prayers. I mean, perhaps you feel that you must pray, you have got something to pray about, some burden, some anxiety, something spiritual or providential, or something that weighs heavily upon you, and you seek to pray, but then there is that check in your conscience. “To pray, he thinks too bold.” Why? Perhaps it is some fresh-contracted guilt on your

conscience. Perhaps there has been some fall into sin, inward if not outward. Perhaps there have been wrong thoughts, evil thoughts, and you seek to pray, but then there is that check. "To pray, he thinks too bold." Or it may be that you are troubled about your prayerless prayers. You feel that so often you come in prayer and it is just repeating words, and you dread this. "To pray, he thinks too bold." Or it may be the hardness and deadness of your spirit and you hardly feel how you can venture. Also it may be that you never feel to have any answers to your prayers. I am sure of one thing, that Satan would keep us from praying.

Wasn't it good Thomas Hardy who used to say, "Try what your poor, hard-hearted prayers can do"? There are some wonderful accounts in Scripture of poor prayers receiving blessed answers. I think especially of Elijah under the juniper tree in the Old Testament when he said, "Take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers." It was a poor prayer, but it received a good answer. And then we think in the New Testament of the disciples in the storm on the Sea of Galilee: "Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" It was a poor prayer. There was not much prayer in it. They even misunderstood the Lord and said He did not care. But it received a blessed answer. Now try what your poor prayers may do.

Now may it be to come just as you are, a sinner hoping in the mercy of the Lord Jesus. May it be to come with the name of Jesus as your only plea and then plead the blood. But there is that temptation, when you feel sin and guilt and hardness on your conscience, to wait until you feel better, feel in a different spirit. Now this is one of Satan's temptations to keep you away from prayer. How can you hope to be in a better spirit? Are you going to work it up yourself? Are you keeping away from the only One who can give you a better spirit? Now it is to go just as you are. You see that sense of guilt on your conscience. Do not let it harden there. It is like that wound. If you have some dirt inside it, you must get that dirt out, not let it harden, heal up with the dirt still in it.

So if any of you feel that fresh guilt on your conscience, seek to go just as you are as a sinner pleading the blood of Christ on mercy's ground. Come back to the old foundation: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "And the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Now that is the foundation of our hope and that is the foundation of our prayers. You see what it says: "If we confess our sins." I have seen this point now for many years, that confessing sinners are forgiven sinners. Now that is clear enough, isn't it? "If we confess

our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” Confessing sinners are forgiven sinners. But O, am I really a confessing sinner? Well, the Lord knows.

But as you seek to confess your sin, He is faithful and just. We might think it would say, “merciful and kind,” but it does not. It says, “faithful and just.” *Faithful*, first of all, to His word and promise, and then *just* because divine justice is satisfied in the atonement. It is a just forgiveness. “And to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” And those of you who feel that guilt on your conscience, remember this: “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” That is why your prayers will be heard and that is why they will be answered, and that is why you will be accepted. “An Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”

Let me read you all that verse.

“To pray, he thinks too bold;
While he in silence moans,
His bones keep waxing old,
By reason of his groans.

Now what about this:

“And by such means, though strange to tell,
The Lord will teach him Jesus well.”

“When self and nature die,
And all our beauty’s gone,
The Saviour brings us nigh,
To trust in Him alone;
'Tis then we trust His righteousness,
And rest alone on sovereign grace.”

*This address was given at Bethel Chapel, Luton, by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Monday, 21st September, 1987*

