

Bethel

Prayer Meeting Addresses

Number 36

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me”

Reading: Isaiah 61

1 The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;

3 To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.

4 And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.

5 And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers.

6 But ye shall be named the Priests of the Lord: men shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast

yourselves.

7 For your shame ye shall have double; and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them.

8 For I the Lord love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

9 And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed.

10 I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.

11 For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

Address

When the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ began His earthly ministry at Nazareth, He took the first two verses of this chapter as His text, the word being a messianic prophecy, a prophecy of His office and work. But the remarkable

thing in Luke chapter 4: when the Lord began His ministry, He did not read the full text. He stopped halfway through verse 2. He stopped at the comma. “To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And He closed the book, and He gave it again to the minister, and sat down.... And He began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.” Of course, beloved friends, the point was this: when the Lord Jesus came to earth, it was to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. When He comes a second time in power and glory, it will be to complete the verse: “And the day of vengeance of our God.” And what a wonderful mercy that we are living between the two halves of the verse! “This is the welcome gospel-day wherein free grace abounds.”

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me.” This was the anointing of the Saviour by the Spirit without measure for His prophetic ministry. And do not forget that: the prophetic ministry of the Lord Jesus, that He is the great Prophet.

“Great Prophet of my God,
My tongue would bless Thy name;
By Thee the joyful news
Of our salvation came.”

So in all its fulness this word was fulfilled in the Saviour. Then in lesser measure right down the ages to the end of time it is fulfilled in the ministry of the everlasting gospel. And that is what we seek for, and that is what we meet to pray for this evening, that the Spirit of the Lord might be upon us in preaching and in hearing. The Lord Jesus spoke of His own ministry and the ministry of the everlasting gospel in its suitability, and He mentions the two cases. Samuel Medley says in one of his hymns, “Though sin and sorrow make you sad.” Some are sad through sin; some are sad through sorrow; some are sad through both.

The gospel is going to be preached to “the meek.” Here it says, “Good tidings.” When the Lord quoted it, He said, “The gospel.” And it is for the meek – not those who are naturally quiet and humble and meek, but those who are made so in the fear of God.

Well, those who are burdened concerning sin, there are some here spoken of as being “captives,” and others are spoken of as being “in prison,” and we have them here at chapel: the captives, and those who are in prison. When the prophet wrote this word by divine inspiration, “the acceptable year of the Lord,” the obvious reference was to the year of jubilee. That is what we pray for here

at Bethel: a year of jubilee. “The acceptable year of the Lord.” The jubilee trumpet sounded on the great day of atonement and it proclaimed “liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.”

Whence comes this liberty? Whence comes this opening of the prison? There is a lot of deep divinity in those two lines:

“Behold my soul at freedom set;
My Surety paid the dreadful debt.”

Now that is the ground and foundation of the gospel, the ground and foundation of the ministry of the Word, and the ground and foundation of liberty to the captives. “And the opening of the prison to them that are bound.” O to hear the joyful sound! Those of you who are prisoners to sin and Satan, those who are prisoners of hope, because you *know* you are prisoners, those who hear that word: “Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope.”

“Prisoners of hope, to Jesus turn;
He’s a Strong-hold, ordained for you;
Gird up your loins, and cease to mourn,
And to the Lamb your way pursue.”

The captives; the prisoners. “Proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.” But what we need is the Spirit of the Lord to be upon us to seal the Word, to open the prison doors and to break the chains and to set the prisoner free.

But then there are these in deep sorrow, the “brokenhearted” and those that “mourn.” Well, there are some of these here this evening. The Lord is going to bind up the brokenhearted. The Lord Jesus put it, to heal them. That precious balm in Gilead, that “oil of joy” we read of, that “garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness”; and then those that mourn, to comfort them. The Lord Jesus preached as a minister of consolation and He sends His ministers like Barnabas, the son of consolation. Well, it is a joyful sound to those who mourn, to those who are brokenhearted, but we need the Spirit of the living God to breathe on the Word and to seal it home.

Now one last word: “To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion.” There is an appointment, a divine appointment. It must be kept, and it is kept when the Spirit of the Lord is with us and upon us. “To appoint unto them that mourn in

Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes” – that is the beauty of Christ’s righteousness for the ashes of your own – “the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.” Well, may the Holy Spirit be with us this evening to seal these things in our hearts.

This address was given at Bethel Chapel, Luton, by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom, on Monday, 4th February, 2008