

Bethel

Prayer Meeting Addresses

Number 43 A Few Lovely Prayers

Reading: Psalm 79

1 O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps.

2 The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth.

3 Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and there was none to bury them.

4 We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us.

5 How long, Lord? wilt thou be angry for ever? shall thy jealousy burn like fire?

6 Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name.

7 For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling place.

8 O remember not against us former

iniquities: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us: for we are brought very low.

9 Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake.

10 Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God? let him be known among the heathen in our sight by the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed.

11 Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee; according to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to die;

12 And render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord.

13 So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks for ever: we will shew forth thy praise to all generations.

Address

There is a little word right in the middle of this psalm which sums it all up, and it is this: "We are brought very low." And no doubt many of you can enter into that. What a wonderful mercy that the Lord has promised to remember His people in their low estate, because His mercy endureth for ever!

So really this is a psalm of desolation, especially the desolations of Jerusalem, but then thinking of desolation in the nation, the church of God, in our own lives, in our own souls. “We are brought very low.” Yet beloved friends, there are some really lovely prayers. Often in these very short prayer meeting addresses I just take up one point, but this evening, just a few of these really lovely prayers, these short prayers, and how they suit us so much – providential things, spiritual things, soul matters, sorrows! So just one or two odd things one after another.

What about this: “Remember not against us former iniquities”? Does that sometimes plague you? You think of the past, that sin, that fall, that guilt. Perhaps it has never really been cleared up. Perhaps you are in trouble and you think of these things. Perhaps you try to pray and Satan reminds you of them. “Remember not against us former iniquities.” Beloved friends, there is a two-fold answer to this prayer. One is that the Lord will remember His people, never forget them, and the other is that He will never remember their sins. That is a promise of the covenant of grace: “Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more,” for ever. It is only God who can forget by an act of will. You might have something in your life and you would love to forget it, but the more you try to forget it, the more you remember it. But the Lord can blot it out of His remembrance book. “Remember not against us former iniquities.”

Now another lovely prayer: “Let Thy tender mercies speedily prevent us.” I take this word *prevent* here in its old-fashioned sense: going before. O the Lord does go before His people and His mercies do go before His people. “When He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them.” But, “Let Thy tender mercies speedily prevent us.” I do not know whether any of you remember, but it was probably in the early days of my pastorate, Mr. Tyler was preaching here at one of the services, and he specially preached on this word: “Tender mercies.” He said, “It is strange really. I thought all mercy was tender. You cannot really have mercy that is not tender.” Now, the Lord says, “tender mercies,” and he said there are three kinds of people to whom normally we are tender: tiny children, aged people, those in sorrow. And he said, so it is with the Lord. It is a lovely word: “tender mercies.” It comes a few times in the Psalms, and then in that wonderful song of thanksgiving of Zacharias in Luke chapter 1.

Thy tender mercies, let them come, Lord! Let them prevent us. We have something tomorrow – may Thy tender mercies prevent us; may they be already there, as Thou art already there. Next week, the unknown way – O Thy tender mercies, may they be there as Thou art already there. And the psalmist is not

being irreverent, but he says, “Speedily,” Lord. The Lord is not offended when you are enabled to pray like that, like a little child sometimes will ask his mother, and say, “But do it quickly; do it now.” “Speedily.” “The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” “Let Thy tender mercies speedily prevent us.”

Now what about this; this is a good word: “Help us ... and deliver us.” “Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Thy name: and deliver us.” To have a little glimpse of Almighty God, the God of our salvation, to see the dear Lord Jesus, the God of our salvation, to see that really it is for the honour and glory of His name to answer our prayers. But this: “Help us, O God.” I should think “whatever be your state or case” this evening, you can come in with that: “Help us, O God”; that “Lord, help us.” O how many times have I reminded you of it, but it bears repetition: not just a little help, a little aid, a little assistance: you want Almighty God to do everything for you.

“And deliver us.” It is a wonderful thing that our God is a delivering God. “Is thy God ... able to deliver thee?” “Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me.”

“Then let our humble faith address
His mercy and His power;
We shall obtain delivering grace,
We shall obtain delivering grace,
In the distressing hour.”

And then what about this prayer, and this is essentially spiritual: “Purge away our sins, for Thy name’s sake.” In a gospel sense we would say, “For Jesus’ sake.” O sin is at the root of everything, but we want those sins to be washed away, to be washed away in the blood of Christ, the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. But he says, Purge them away, Lord. I take it really to be this. Some stains take a lot of washing, but purging is something stronger. So we have David’s prayer when he was under a deep sense of guilt: “Purge me with hyssop” – hyssop being the little plant with which they applied the blood. “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” Purge away our sins. Can any of you enter into that this evening? “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” Do you believe that the blood of Christ is sin-purging blood? And what about that word: “If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more

shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" "Purge away our sins, for Thy name's sake."

Well, it is a prayer meeting. I am not going to go on long. Let me just mention one other: "Let the sighing of the prisoner come before Thee." Remember John the Baptist, literally in prison, and his sighing came before the Lord, and if you feel to be a prisoner to trouble, sorrow, sin, Satan, unbelief, you will be sighing. Ezekiel asked that great question: "Wherefore sighest thou?" And we ask that question this evening: "Wherefore sighest thou?" "Let the sighing of the prisoner come before Thee." Let it enter heaven. Let it bring down answers of peace. There are some answers of peace: "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him." But I am going to finish.

"If you are returning to Jesus, your Friend,
Your sighing and mourning in singing shall end."

Well, this evening perhaps a little bit different, but just a few scattered thoughts and a few lovely prayers.

This address was given at Bethel Chapel, Luton, by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom, on Monday, 31st March, 2008