

Bethel

Prayer Meeting Addresses

Number 46 The Lord's Sweet Smile

Reading: Psalm 2

1 Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?

2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying,

3 Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.

4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.

5 Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.

6 Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

7 I will declare the decree: the Lord

hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

8 Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

10 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.

11 Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

Address

This short, beautiful Psalm speaks of Christ as Zion's exalted God and King. "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." There He is on the throne, and it is no precarious throne. And then we have all these enemies. They were there then; they are there today. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" But it does not take the Lord by surprise. The Lord will have the last word. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." I remember Mr. Frank Gosden, when speaking of this verse on one occasion, saying there is all the difference between that terrible laugh and the Lord's sweet smile.

Now that is my subject this evening: the Lord's sweet smile. To me the second hymn we sang yesterday morning was very special ("How charming is

the place!”), and in two of the verses we sang of the Lord’s sweet smile. One was this:

“Here, on the mercy-seat,
With radiant glory crowned,
Our joyful eyes behold Him sit,
And smile on all around.”

And the other:

“To them His sovereign will
He graciously imparts;
And in return accepts with smiles,
The tribute of their hearts.”

Have you ever noticed that the word *smile* never appears in the whole of the Word of God? Yet I find that so many of our hymnwriters use this expression: the Lord’s sweet smile. Different ones, different denominations, different times. I looked up a few of them. There is Dr. Stennett, John Berridge, Joseph Hart, Anne Steele, Dr. Doddridge. There are a few more. You will find this expression comes in again and again. “And see Thy smiling face.” “Lord Jesus, smile.” “Dear Jesus, show Thy smiling face, and Calvary’s peace impart.” “Smile on me, gracious Lord, and show Thyself the Friend of sinners now.” You can go on in so many places. Were all these godly men and women mistaken in using this expression when it does not come in Scripture? The word itself does not appear, but the truth and experience do. I think perhaps the nearest is in the words: “Lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us.” That is it; to fear the Lord’s frown, to seek for His smile. I felt yesterday morning that desire as we sang it that the Lord might smile upon us, and I trust, I believe that He did.

Well then, when we meet for prayer and when we are in secret and when with our families, it is a good prayer, to seek the Lord’s smiling face, to beg that He will smile upon us. What do we really mean by it? Well, a few things. A smile of acceptance, that He does not refuse our earnest plea, that we are accepted for Jesus’ sake. The smile of forgiveness. A smile of reconciliation. That is what Jacob had. He was dreading that terrible face of Esau, that cruel face, that frowning face, and in answer to his prayers, when he met him it was a smiling face, and he said, “I have seen thy face as though I had seen the face of God.” Reconciliation, this smiling face, the Lord’s favour, the wonderful

favour that He shows to His people, the smile of His love. These are the things that we seek. So it is not an unscriptural prayer, but we beg that in love and mercy the Lord will smile upon us, for it is a terrible thing if He frowns, a terrible thing if He rejects us, a terrible thing if He turns us away.

I think I have mentioned that little story to you in years past, if I can remember it aright. I think it was during the Napoleonic wars when the French fleet capitulated and surrendered and the Lord High Admiral of France came on board Nelson's flagship to surrender. He came all smiles. Nelson stood there with an icy look on his face, not a glimmer of a smile. As the French admiral came smiling, Nelson said, "First of all, sir, your sword," and the French admiral took out his sword and laid it down at Nelson's feet. Then Nelson smiled and shook hands with him and embraced him. That is it. We are aliens, we are rebels by nature, and approaching a holy God. But to be brought through grace by the Holy Spirit, that full surrender, to lay our enmity at Jesus' feet, and then as Berridge says,

"And Jesus smiles at such a guest;
And bids him to the heavenly feast."

It is a wonderful thing, it is a wonderful prayer. When you go home, just have a look in your hymnbook at how many of our beautiful hymns use this expression, the *smiling face* of a Father in love to His dear children. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." The heavenly smile of the dear Saviour of sinners as He looks with such love and such affection upon those whom He has redeemed with His own most precious blood.

So may we dread this terrible laugh and may we dread the Lord's frown, but may that be our greatest favour, as one of our little-known hymns ends:

"Amazed to see myself so vile,
And Jesus smiling all the while."

*This address was given at Bethel Chapel, Luton, by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Monday, 3rd August, 2009*

