

Bethel

Prayer Meeting Addresses

Number 63 Trial, Deliverance, Blessing

Reading: Acts 4. 23-37

23 And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

24 And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:

25 Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?

26 The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.

27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,

30 By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

35 And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

36 And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus,

37 Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Address

Let us be clear, these early days in the Acts of the Apostles were the most blessed days the church of God has ever known, such days as will never be repeated – the glorious display of the almighty power of the Holy Ghost in

salvation. But have you noticed one thing: that Satan opposed the early church at every turn? Because when the Lord works, Satan is angry, and when the Lord blesses, Satan opposes. You find it chapter after chapter, and it comes in different ways. There is the outward opposition we have here, and we have the outward opposition again, and then we have the outward opposition when Stephen was put to death.

But these were not the only things. There were two other things which almost caused more trouble than this outward opposition and persecution, because Satan is not limited to means. One was when two of the church members told a lie to Peter, and those two were struck down in their sin and in their wickedness. That was a great trial. That failed. The church was purged. And the other one that nearly succeeded was such a simple thing: when the Greeks in the church murmured against the Jews in the church. They thought they were given preferential treatment, when their old people were being cared for, when their widows were being cared for, they thought theirs were not as well looked after as the others. There was this trouble in the church. Satan stirred it up from such a little thing. Once again, the Lord most graciously appeared in the appointment of the first deacons and there was peace again.

Now having said that, in this chapter as it begins after that wonderful miracle of the healing of the lame man and then the preaching of the gospel, the gracious effect, but then Peter and his companion were thrown into prison. When they were let out, they were forbidden under pain of death to preach again. Here is the church and there has been all this blessing, and now there comes this problem and this difficulty and this trouble. It seems God's work is going to be overthrown. They heard these tidings. They heard what had happened, and what did they do? "When they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord." They did not spend a lot of time discussing it, or making decisions, or complaining about it, or talking about it. They heard of the distress they were in and "they lifted up their voice to God with one accord." Really that is what our prayer meetings are for: with one accord to lift up our hearts to God, when there is something that concerns us all and when we are able to lay it before the Lord.

But it was a great difficulty and it almost seemed an impossibility. Now just notice their prayer. First of all, they were reminded that the God to whom they were praying was great, almighty, and nothing with Him was impossible. They said, "Lord, Thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is." And it is a good thing in our prayers if we not only say that;

we believe what we do believe. And the second thing: they quoted Scripture; they pleaded Scripture, the second Psalm. “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?” That is just what was happening. The heathen were raging, and God’s people pleaded the second Psalm, because what does the second Psalm say? “Yet have I set My king upon My holy hill of Zion.” What does the second Psalm say? “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.” And the third thing: they just cast their case utterly and completely into the Lord’s hand.

And what followed? Prayer heard, prayer answered, deliverance granted. “With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.” This is prayer heard and answered. This is a good effect of the prayer meeting. What else? You see such a blessed spirit in the church of God, this sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, the love they had one to another, and how they sacrificed, helped one another, and how they were upheld and how they were blessed in it. May we too be blessed with that spirit of real prayer. What did we use to pray for? That the Lord would make bare His holy arm, and that is exactly what He did here: make bare His holy arm, and in answer to His people’s prayers.

This address was given at Bethel Chapel, Luton, by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom, on Thursday, 10th May, 2012

