

Bethel

Prayer Meeting Addresses

Number 69 Praying for God's Servants

Reading: 2 Corinthians 1. 1-11; Colossians 4. 1-6; 2 Thessalonians 3. 1-5

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia:

2 Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;

4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

6 And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.

7 And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.

8 For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life:

9 But we had the sentence of death in

ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:

10 Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;

11 Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

1 Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.

2 Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;

3 Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:

4 That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

5 Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

6 Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:

2 And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.

3 But the Lord is faithful, who shall
stablish you, and keep you from evil.
4 And we have confidence in the Lord
touching you, that ye both do and will do

the things which we command you.

5 And the Lord direct your hearts into
the love of God, and into the patient
waiting for Christ.

Address

It has been remarked what a large part of the Word of God is given over to the subject of prayer – so many exhortations to pray and so many promises, and so many examples of prayer heard and answered in the Old Testament and then right through the New. And if so much of Scripture is devoted to this subject, then it is clear that it is something of the greatest importance in the mind of Almighty God and to us.

Well, the Apostle Paul very clearly saw all this: the value, the importance, the privilege of prayer. He saw the willingness of God to answer the prayers of poor, unworthy sinners. He saw something of His wonderful promises that He would do so. He saw the faithfulness of God. He saw the divine, almighty power, that with the Lord nothing is impossible.

“Thou art coming to a King;
Large petitions with thee bring;
For His grace and power are such,
None can ever ask too much.”

And he saw the ground and foundation of prayer in the finished work of Jesus and His intercession now in heaven, a great and glorious High Priest.

“That rich atoning blood
Which, sprinkled round, I see,
Provides for those who come to God
An all-prevailing plea.”

Paul clearly saw the value of prayer and he emphasised it, and surely, beloved friends, we believe in the value of prayer. It is very easy for us just to say that, but it is very easy to be tempted and very easy to be led aside and very easy to become careless and very easy to fall under the Lord’s loving condemnation: “Thou hast not called upon Me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of Me, O Israel.”

The one point on my spirit this evening, and Paul brings it in so often, and he did in all the passages we read this evening: the intimate connection between the prayers of the people and the effect of his preaching, that there was an intimate connection. Let us be clear, if anybody knew the sovereignty of God and divine decrees and everlasting predestination, Paul knew that, and if anyone knew that it must be only the work of the Spirit of God, Paul knew that. But he saw this clearly: the value of prayer, and God had decreed to give His blessing in answer to prayer, and the wonderful effect of the prayers of God's people in Paul's own ministry. He speaks very, very strongly of it. Some of these expressions – I do not think you and I would hardly have dared to use – when he was speaking how wonderfully the Lord delivered them and He performed these miracles, and he said, “Ye also helping together by prayer for us.” Does Almighty God need the help of poor prayers? I do not think you and I would dare have used that expression, but Paul did, writing by inspiration, and we know what he meant.

So this is my burden tonight. I trust here at Bethel we do know something of the blessing of the Lord, and perhaps people sometimes say, Well, there is the preaching. Well, there might be. And then of course, the godly look beyond that and they say, The Lord fulfilling His purpose, and the powerful, sovereign work of the Holy Spirit. But do not forget this. I believe many of the blessings that we have known over the years have been in answer to the prevailing prayers of the people of God here. This is a secret ministry, but when one and another are blessed, I believe there are some of you here in your hearts can say, “For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of Him.”

Now never forget that. It is not just the preaching; it is the wrestling in prayer of the people of God for the blessing on mercy's ground, for Jesus' sake – for yourself, your sins, your soul and eternity, and then for those whose cases are laid upon your spirit, and then that God will bless His own Word (as we read just now), that it might “have free course, and be glorified.”

It also has been on my mind to say this. As we think of our congregations, and as we think of our ministers, many of them known to us, some not known to us, but spread here and there throughout our country, and sometimes we think of God's people throughout the world – if only we might be blessed with a spirit of prayer, and not just vain repetition, that the Lord might give us a spirit of prayer.

“For prayer indited by the Lord,
The Lord will surely hear.”

And then above everything else, it might for the honour and glory of God and that the Saviour might see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

*This address was given at Bethel Chapel, Luton, by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Monday, 29th October, 2012*