

Bethel

Prayer Meeting Addresses

Number 81 Spiritual Prosperity

Reading: Zechariah 8. 9-15

9 Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, which were in the day that the foundation of the house of the Lord of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built.

10 For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction: for I set all men every one against his neighbour.

11 But now I will not be unto the residue of this people as in the former days, saith the Lord of hosts.

12 For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground

shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things.

13 And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong.

14 For thus saith the Lord of hosts; As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the Lord of hosts, and I repented not:

15 So again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not.

Address

The Speaker here is the Lord of hosts, Almighty God, and He makes very gracious promises. Really, the promises, to be summed up in one word, are prosperity – literally in ancient Israel after the building of the temple, and then looking forward to gospel days. And beloved friends, when we meet for prayer these are the things we need to pray for – personally, here at Bethel, throughout our churches, throughout the earth.

At the beginning of these few verses I read to you, everything seemed to be going wrong. It seemed to be desolation; it seemed to be darkness; it seemed to be captivity. But now the Lord in the riches of His mercy promises a very gracious change. This is what we want, what we seek for, what we meet to pray

for. He summarises it like this: “The seed shall be prosperous.” They had not been having very good harvests. The Lord had been withholding the blessing. There was not any hire for man or hire for beast; they were not needed in the fields at all. But now, “The seed shall be prosperous.” And it is Almighty God who makes it so. It is the Holy Ghost who makes it so. In the preaching of the gospel we seek to sow the seed, and it is good seed; it is the glorious gospel of the blessed God. O but we need the Lord to prepare the ground, to cause the seed to enter, that there might be a taking root downward in our hearts, that there might be a bearing fruit upward. God’s order: “First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.”

“For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit.” There is going to be fruitfulness where everything was barren before. There are going to be the tender grapes on the vine. Before there were not any. But whether you think of it as the new converts, or whether you think of it as the tender fruits of the Spirit of God: love, hope, joy, faith, peace, the fear of the Lord, humility. But, “the vine shall give her fruit,” to the honour and glory of God and to the blessing of His people.

“And the ground shall give her increase.” This is a complete difference. It is God’s work. Only He can do it, the Holy Spirit as He applies the Word and works in the hearts of sinners.

And then we have the secret of it all: “The heavens shall give their dew.” That is the secret of it all. There is no prosperity in the church of God, there is no blessing resting upon the preaching of the Word, there is no real good to our souls apart from the dew from heaven, the sweet, bedewing influence of the Holy Spirit attending the preaching of the gospel. In ancient Israel, one thing we perhaps find hard to understand, the dew was exceedingly precious. There were some parts of Israel where there was hardly any rain at all, but there was a very heavy dew, a copious dew, and it maintained life, and it caused fruitfulness. O when “the heavens shall give their dew” – we cannot think of any greater blessing than that at Bethel week by week. “His grace as the dew shall descend.” That softening and that refreshing and that reviving and that bringing of fruitfulness. “The heavens shall give their dew.” Pray for it; seek it. That wonderful promise: “I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.” They say that the dew can penetrate where nothing else can. That is the secret of all this prosperity. “The seed shall be

prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase.” Why? Because “the heavens shall give their dew.”

And there is one last word in this blessing, and it is a good one: “I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things.” Now in all ages there has been “a remnant according to the election of grace.” Then – now. “One of this remnant I would be.” O but this time of fruitfulness, this time of blessing, this time of spiritual prosperity! The remnant of the people shall *possess* all these things. Now how much do we really possess? How much do we really have that God Himself has given us? How much do we possess that we did not bring into this world, that we will take out of this world with us? Do we possess that “little that a righteous man hath,” which “is better than the riches of many wicked”? In times of darkness and bondage and captivity, whether it is in the church of God or whether it is with us personally, we do not really possess these things feelingly and personally and experimentally. If we are the Lord’s dear people, they are ours in Christ; we can never lose them. O but that word: “The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.” And when the heavenly dew descends, beloved friends, in our midst, in the congregation and upon our hearts, then you will possess these things. You have looked at them, you have desired them, perhaps afar off. But now through mercy you will possess them. Well, may there be a spirit of prayer amongst us for these things.

This address was given at Bethel Chapel, Luton, by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom, on Monday, 3rd September, 2007

