

Bethel

Prayer Meeting Addresses

Number 93

The Building Up of the Church of God

Reading: Psalm 102. 16-28

16 When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.

17 He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.

18 This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord.

19 For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord behold the earth;

20 To hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death;

21 To declare the name of the Lord in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem;

22 When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the Lord.

23 He weakened my strength in the way; he shortened my days.

24 I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days: thy years are throughout all generations.

25 Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands.

26 They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed:

27 But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.

28 The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.

Address

As through the Lord's mercy we come through another year and come to our anniversary prayer meeting, the burden on my spirit is *the building up of the church*, thinking of course of Bethel, but then thinking of the building up of the church throughout our congregations. This word says, "When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His glory." Notice it says, *when*, not, *if*. It is not, *if* the Lord shall build up Zion, but, "*When* the Lord shall build up Zion," which seems to imply a promise.

Now thinking not just of the last year, but the last fifty years, through God's mercy there has been this building up here at Bethel. If you think of the analogy here – the building of a wall, or the building of a house – I take it there cannot

be any building unless another stone and then another stone keeps being added and put in its place. That was solemn: we read in the days of Zerubbabel when for fifteen years building the temple there was not one stone laid upon another.

So there has been that building up, but then secondly, it is not just bringing a lot of bricks and throwing them together. They need to be put in their place and they need to be fastened there with mortar or cement, that the building might be stable and solid. It is this point of establishment. “It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace” – personally and in the church of God.

Of course, we have these two things together in Psalm 87, speaking like this, about Zion – “When the Lord shall build up Zion”; “And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her” – that is the bricks being added one by one – “and the Highest Himself shall establish her” – that is the cementing, making the building sure.

So there is much to pray for still at Bethel. May the Lord’s work still go on, but may there be that gracious establishing of our souls. We all need it. But I have thought so much recently about our congregations. I do not think most of you know just how low so many are brought, impoverished. But it is not only that. For the most part there seems to be a satisfaction with it. Some years ago one congregation which had only two people attending, the visiting minister was rebuked for praying that there might be an increase graciously amongst them. They said, “We do not want it. We like it as we are. There is complete union. Our services are quiet. There are no interruptions.” Now may the Lord appear in His glory still here at Bethel, and throughout our churches, and build up Zion.

Now the next verse perhaps comes slightly as a surprise. What is this building up of Zion? “He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.” Beloved friends, that is how Zion is built up. That is how churches are built up. I think that would cause a shock if it was announced in many places. This is just the quiet, personal, gracious work of the Holy Spirit. There is nothing dramatic here. They are not introducing new things. There are not what the world would call gimmicks. It is just that going on quietly in prayer before the Lord. That is the secret of it. That is the secret of Zion being built up. It is the Lord’s work.

There are these sinners who have been made alive, who have been awakened. They have prayer in their hearts. They are not people who are talking a lot or making a lot of noise or display. The Word calls them *destitute*,

which I take to mean that spiritually they do not feel they *are* anything; they do not feel they *have* anything; they do not feel they can *do* anything savingly. That is the Holy Spirit's work in a sinner's heart. That is the building up of Zion, not what the religious world thinks.

There is a God in heaven. He is in control. He is the One who is building up Zion. This is what He is looking for; this is what He is listening for: the prayer of the destitute. They have no righteousness. They need one. They must have one. They pray for one. It must be in Christ, not in themselves. "He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer."

I hope as this anniversary prayer meeting has come, and before you came, and when you go home, I hope many of you are praying for God's blessing at Bethel. O beloved friends, this will be real blessing at Bethel in this coming year if this word is fulfilled: "He" – a gracious God – "He" – for Jesus' sake – "He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer."

And then one final word. "This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord." Mr. Frank Gosden said, "That scripture is the safeguard for the future of the church of God." Whatever happens, whatever does not happen, as the Lord to the end of time will continue to build up Zion, "this shall be written for the generation to come" – those not yet born – "and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord."

This address was given at the Anniversary Special Prayer Meeting at Bethel Chapel, Luton, by Mr. B.A. Ramsbottom, on Monday, 12th June, 2017 – hence the special references to Bethel.

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Dear Shepherd of Thy people, here
Thy presence now display;
As Thou hast given a place for prayer,
So give us hearts to pray.

Show us some token of Thy love,
Our fainting hope to raise;
And pour Thy blessings from above,
That we may render praise.

Within these walls let holy peace,
And love, and concord dwell;
Here give the troubled conscience ease;
The wounded spirit heal.

May we in faith receive Thy Word,
In faith present our prayers,
And, in the presence of our Lord,
Unbosom all our cares.

And may the gospel's joyful sound,
Enforced by mighty grace,
Awaken many sinners round,
To come and fill the place.

J. Newton