

Bethel

Prayer Meeting Addresses

Number 94 Prayer for our Children

Reading: Psalm 78. 1-7; 1 Samuel 1. 19-28

1 Give ear, O my people, to my law:
incline your ears to the words of my mouth.

2 I will open my mouth in a parable: I
will utter dark sayings of old:

3 Which we have heard and known,
and our fathers have told us.

4 We will not hide them from their
children, shewing to the generation to
come the praises of the Lord, and his
strength, and his wonderful works that he
hath done.

5 For he established a testimony in
Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which
he commanded our fathers, that they
should make them known to their children:

6 That the generation to come might
know them, even the children which
should be born; who should arise and
declare them to their children:

7 That they might set their hope in God,
and not forget the works of God, but keep
his commandments:

19 And they rose up in the morning
early, and worshipped before the Lord, and
returned, and came to their house to
Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his
wife; and the Lord remembered her.

20 Wherefore it came to pass, when the
time was come about after Hannah had
conceived, that she bare a son, and called
his name Samuel, saying, Because I have

asked him of the Lord.

21 And the man Elkanah, and all his
house, went up to offer unto the Lord the
yearly sacrifice, and his vow.

22 But Hannah went not up; for she said
unto her husband, I will not go up until
the child be weaned, and then I will bring
him, that he may appear before the Lord,
and there abide for ever.

23 And Elkanah her husband said unto
her, Do what seemeth thee good; tarry
until thou have weaned him; only the Lord
establish his word. So the woman abode,
and gave her son suck until she weaned
him.

24 And when she had weaned him, she
took him up with her, with three bullocks,
and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of
wine, and brought him unto the house of
the Lord in Shiloh: and the child was
young.

25 And they slew a bullock, and brought
the child to Eli.

26 And she said, Oh my lord, as thy soul
liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood
by thee here, praying unto the Lord.

27 For this child I prayed; and the Lord
hath given me my petition which I asked
of him:

28 Therefore also I have lent him to the
Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent
to the Lord. And he worshipped the Lord
there.

Address

I hope all of us believe in prayer – the ground of prayer, the power of prayer, the promises of prayer – and I hope we have all come this evening to pray. Of course, there is this special burden: our Sabbath school, our teachers, our children, our young people, and this week thinking of the distribution of the calendars in the district with the holy Word of God in them.

What has laid hold on me: those few verses in Psalm 78. There are these who are brought to know and fear the Lord, but then we read of another generation, and then they are telling their children, and those seven verses I read, it must have been about five generations one after another who feared the Lord and who were blessed. It has been so, so often in our churches: one generation after another. Some here can trace godly ancestors back to the 1700s, one or two I believe to quite eminent ministers as long ago as that.

Now let us be clear, beloved friends: grace is not hereditary. We do not believe in any kind of apostolic succession. We do not believe in any doctrine that one generation can sprinkle the infants and the next claim the baptismal water on their forehead. We do not believe in things like that at all. And yet in the history of the church of God, grace has often run in families, and if it is none of all these extraneous things, what is it? I believe that so often, though we have to attribute it to the grace and the sovereignty of God, but so often it is the prayers of the godly, and one generation has wrestled in prayer for the next, and then that generation has wrestled in prayer for the next, and that is the godly succession there has been down the ages in the church of God. (There are also the: “other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring.”)

Thinking about our meeting tonight, dear Mr. John Stevens, all his life he was deeply interested in the Sunday school at Clapham, where he was superintendent, and at Bethel even in his old age. Remember how often he prayed for our children, how interested he was in them, how he rejoiced if he heard anything in our young people, how he used to quote that beautiful hymn, “Jesus, who lived above the sky,” as being suitable for the aged as well as little children. We do not know what influence his prayers had.

But you see, that praying, these silent pillars, these mothers in Israel, and then, “For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of Him.” But we do not know – when a person, a young one or an older one, is blessed by the Lord, these secret, silent pillars cannot stand out and say,

“I was praying, and this is the answer to my prayers.” But the Lord knows, and I hope there are many of you here secretly, silently praying for the Lord’s blessing. For it is not just preaching; it is not just teaching. It is the effect of the Word, and so often it is the effect of the Word in answer to the prayers of the Lord’s people.

I could not help but think of the case of Mrs. Wiltshire. She was the wife of the eminent Dr. Wiltshire. When she went to university, she had no religious background whatsoever. She belonged to a titled family. Sir George Scott, the great architect, I think was her uncle. She had no religion at all, but they had to put down in those days, what religion are you? She put, “A seeker after truth,” and she found it, and she was very much blessed. But later she found out that she was, I think, the great granddaughter or great, great granddaughter of the famous Thomas Scott, the commentator. So she decided to read his life, and she found that he had wrestled in prayer for his descendants, I think to the third and the fourth and the fifth generations, and she realised that though she was brought up in ignorance of the truth, that she was embraced in that godly minister’s prayers. When he spoke of that certain generation, it was the generation in which she was born.

Just one last thought: seeking to pray for our Sabbath school and our children, our young people, not just that the Lord will deal with them savingly and graciously, but that He will teach them, and that He will help them, and He will keep them.

This address was given at Bethel Chapel, Luton, by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom, on Monday, 28th November, 2016, at a special prayer meeting for our children, young people and Sabbath school.

