

Bethel

Prayer Meeting Addresses

Number 97 The Power of Prayer

Reading: Acts 4. 23-33

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.

Address

The point that specially struck me last evening and has remained with me today is that these wonderful blessings followed a prayer meeting. They held this prayer meeting in a time of difficulty, a time of need in the church and with themselves personally, and the Lord most graciously answered. All these blessings – great power attending the Word, great grace upon them all – these were in answer to these prayer meeting prayers. So that is our encouragement

as we meet for prayer this evening, because these are the things, the blessings we need, the blessings we seek.

This evening in our prayer meeting we think especially of prayer that the Lord might be honoured here at Bethel, that His blessing might rest on His own Word, that it might be so in the lives of people, that the Lord might command the blessing here, even life for evermore. We think of that word we sometimes sing:

“He hears the groans of His elect,
And hates to put away.”

When I was giving an address recently on John Kershaw, I mentioned that when month by month for forty-nine years he used to walk the six miles up in the moors to preach, he himself said that it was a wild, rough way he went over hills and through streams, and usually he did not see a single person. All that he met over his six miles’ walk were sheep. But he said, “As I went along, I used to lift up my heart to the Lord for the conversion of sinners and for the edification of His people.” That really laid hold on one of our older, established ministers. He felt that is just the prayer that we need today in our churches, in our congregations: for the conversion of sinners and for the edification of the people of God.

But this prayer! They saw so clearly that God is almighty. They had their enemies, their foes, their problems, their perplexities and Satan against them but, “Lord, Thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is.” And then they realised that all their problems were just a fulfilment of the second Psalm: the heathen raging, the people imagining a vain thing. And then this need: so simply, “Now, Lord,” they said, “Now ... grant unto Thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak the Word, by stretching forth Thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of Thy holy Child Jesus. And ... the place was shaken.” The Lord was present. His Spirit worked, and in answer to these prayers, “with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.”

But I did notice particularly this: in the following chapters they had a lot of difficulty. They had the blessings of the Lord, but they had a lot of difficulties. First of all, there was this dreadful case where two of the church members proved to be apostates and the Lord dealt with them and struck them down and

purged the church. And then in the following chapter we have this murmuring amongst them (which led to the first election of deacons) – that people were not being treated fairly, some were being treated better than others, some were being neglected. And in the midst of it all you find the authorities were seeking after them to arrest them.

So there was the prayer meeting, and the blessing, and the answer, and Satan's opposition, and the trial. But amidst it all, right in the middle of these trials and temptations and problems which they were having, "Believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." So despite sin and Satan, God's work went on. These are the things we are encouraged to pray for this evening.

This address was given at Bethel Chapel, Luton, by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom, on Monday, 10th June, 2013

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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