

Bethel

Prayer Meeting Addresses

Number 123 The Day of the Queen's Death

Reading: Psalm 85

1 Lord, thou hast been favourable unto thy land: thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.

2 Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin. Selah.

3 Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: thou hast turned thyself from the fierce-ness of thine anger.

4 Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease.

5 Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?

6 Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?

7 Shew us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation.

8 I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly.

9 Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land.

10 Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

11 Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven.

12 Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase.

13 Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps.

Address

I do not intend in any way to give the little address I was thinking of this evening. May the Lord sanctify this occasion to us. It does not need me to tell you that this is a time of crisis, crisis in our land – the change in high places, a new Prime Minister being appointed, a fresh set of cabinet ministers, and then the news of our Queen's death. So this is a time of crisis to us.

This word came upon my spirit. Those of you who have ever read the speeches of Oliver Cromwell, one of his famous speeches was based on this eighty-fifth Psalm. What amazing days those were, addressing both Houses of Parliament and taking this chapter as his text! And especially those were blessed

days in the country! The Lord had favoured His people, and so Cromwell's emphasis: "Lord, Thou *hast* been favourable unto Thy land: Thou *hast* brought back the captivity of Jacob" (verse 1).

So first of all, that there is a looking back, and as we think of our situation nationally and in the church of God, may it be a time of looking back. What favours we have known! How the Lord has been favourable unto our land, even perhaps favoured above any other country – the Glorious Reformation, and then when those times of spiritual backsliding came, and England once again was in a bad state, suddenly, unexpectedly, Whitefield appearing, and Grimshaw and Venn and Berridge, and the country graciously turned upside down. Of how many people this could be said: "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of Thy people, Thou hast covered all their sin" (verse 2). That is the most important thing of all: resting on the finished work of our Lord Jesus, His righteousness and blood. "Thou hast taken away all Thy wrath: Thou hast turned Thyself from the fierceness of Thine anger" (verse 3).

I have been very struck recently. We do not make enough of our own William Gadsby! When you think of him, not just as a gracious minister, but politically and socially, and the tremendous influence that he had in England. We have never had any one of our ministers since who has ever had such an amazing influence.

O but these gospel blessings! "Send down blessings from above," answer prayer. "Thou *hast* forgiven the iniquity of Thy people, Thou *hast* covered all their sin... Thou *hast* taken away all Thy wrath: Thou *hast* turned Thyself from the fierceness of Thine anger." That is the first thing.

And then the second thing is prayer. Looking to the unknown way, thinking of the future – we must be thinking of the future; we cannot help thinking of the future – but these prayers, simple and intense: "Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause Thine anger toward us to cease" (verse 4). We cannot help but realise the anger of the Lord. He loves His dear people, He loves His little remnant in this land, but He is angry with the sin, the evil, the immorality that abounds on every hand. "Turn us, O God of our salvation." And we must not just think of others; think of ourselves. "Wilt Thou be angry with us for ever? wilt Thou draw out Thine anger to all generations?" (verse 5). Well, what is there instead? What is better? This: "Wilt Thou not revive us again: that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?" (verse 6). There are many things to make us sad. O but may there be those things that cause us even to rejoice, in the church of God and in our nation. But this is something that only the Lord can give.

“Pour down blessings from above,
That we may render praise.”

“Wilt Thou not revive us again: that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?”

And then looking forward in prayer, in hope, the one ground of better days, of our prayers being heard and answered: “Shew us Thy mercy, O Lord” (verse 7). That is it.

“Mercy, through blood, I make my plea;
O God, be merciful to me!”

“Shew us Thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us Thy salvation.” That is the second thing.

Then the third thing: the present. The psalmist has looked back. He has looked forward. He has been looking down – much to make us look down. He has been sweetly enabled to look up. And what of the present? “I will hear what God the Lord will speak” (verse 8). We need to be in that posture, listening, to hear God’s voice, to hear it in the gospel, to discern His will. “I will hear what God the Lord will speak.”

Now this is precious: “He will speak peace unto His people, and to His saints.” Whatever there may be or not be – in the country, in the nation, in our churches, anywhere, everywhere – whatever there might be, this is the divine certainty: “He will speak peace unto His people, and to His saints.” Ah, but this little caveat, this little warning: “But let them not turn again to folly.” There is plenty of folly in our hearts. We often turn to folly. There is an abundance of folly in our country. If the Lord is kind to us in providence or grace, let us not turn again to folly.

“Surely His salvation is nigh them that fear Him; that glory may dwell in our land” (verse 9).

Well, just a few simple thoughts at this solemn time in our country, and the shock that we have received, just a few things, and may the Lord in love and mercy enable us to lay them to heart and sanctify these things to us.

This address was given at Bethel Chapel, Luton, by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom, on Thursday, 8th September, 2022, following the death of Queen Elizabeth II that day, and the appointment of a new Prime Minister earlier in the week.

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Lord, look on all assembled here,
Who in Thy presence stand
To offer up united prayer
For this our sinful land.

Oft have we each in private prayed
Our country might find grace;
Now hear the same petitions made
In this appointed place.

Or, if among us some be met,
So careless of their sin,
They have not cried for mercy yet,
Lord, make them now begin.

Thou, by whose death poor sinners live,
By whom their prayers succeed,
Thy Spirit of supplication give,
And we shall pray indeed.

We will not slack, nor give Thee rest,
But importune Thee so
That, till we shall by Thee be blest,
We will not let Thee go.

Great God of Hosts, deliverance bring;
Guide those that hold the helm;
Support the state, preserve the king,
And spare the guilty realm.

Or, should the dread decree be past,
And we must feel Thy rod,
May faith and patience hold us fast
To our correcting God.

Whatever be our destined case,
Accept us in Thy Son;
Give us His gospel and His grace,
And then Thy will be done.

J. Hart