

Bethel

Prayer Meeting Addresses

Number 135 Six Important Prayers

Text: *“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free Spirit” (Psalm 51. 10-12).*

This is a well-known portion of the Word of God. David had sinned badly, both in the matter of adultery and murder. Here, having had his heart touched by the Spirit of God, he truly pours out his heart in humble confession, seeking forgiveness and seeking cleansing in the Redeemer’s blood. But no-one can sin lightly. People carelessly talk about David and sit in judgment. His sin was great, but his repentance was great, and also he knew much of the chastising hand of God. The sword did not depart from his house. So no child of God can ever be lost, but those who backslide, who fall into open sin, will know the Lord’s judgment, not in a legal way, but in a loving way upon them.

Now then, the burden on my soul this evening: David badly needed forgiveness; he sought it and he found it. He badly needed cleansing; he sought it and he found it. But *it did not end there*. He did want there to be a real difference. He wanted peace restoring. He wanted there to be a reviving. He wanted there to be a renewing. Really, it was the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit that he sought that he might be kept, that he might not be left to go back, that he might honour the Lord, that he might know more love. Surely there is a word for you and me in this. We need forgiveness, we need cleansing in the Redeemer’s blood. But O we do need all these things that David pours out his heart for here.

“Create in me a clean heart, O God.” He realised that he had an unclean heart. O but he did not just want to drift along. He did want through the Holy Spirit’s work to possess a clean heart. He saw what an amazing thing he was asking for, that it was going to be a creation. It is a strong word that David uses

here. He needed a clean heart, but he needed a creation of it. There was one of our old church members at Bethel, and when she was a girl, this was the word that first laid hold upon her: “Create in me a clean heart, O God.” She heard this read, and as it was being read, she felt, Well, David must have had an unclean heart, and she felt she had an unclean heart. But if David prayed on the grounds of mercy for a clean heart, she felt that she was not forbidden to pray for the same, and she felt the Lord answered her prayer.

“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” This point of being renewed comes in. We need our faith, our hope, our love, the tender fear of God, repentance – so many things – we want them to be renewed. But with David here, he wanted a right spirit, and if we are honest, beloved friends, all of us at times have a wrong spirit, and we need not just forgiveness; we need deliverance from it, and we need a right spirit to be renewed. There are so many things: a wrong spirit, a careless spirit, a carnal, worldly spirit, a sinful spirit, a hard spirit, a jealous spirit, not the spirit of Christ. “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” But it is something we really need to pray, and certain times especially. We think of when we assemble in the Lord’s house. We think of our prayer meetings. We think of our church meetings. We think of fellowship one with another. We think of our prayers. Lord, “renew a right spirit within me.”

“Cast me not away from Thy presence.” Now a sinner saved by grace, a child of God, can *never* be cast away from the Lord’s presence. It is an impossibility. “The Lord will not forsake His people for His great name’s sake: because it hath pleased the Lord to make you His people.” But the point of David, and perhaps the point with us: he felt this was what he deserved. He deserved to be cast away from the Lord’s presence, and David valued the Lord’s presence. You find it in so many of his psalms. How he valued the Lord’s presence in the house of God, in the solemn assemblies of His people. It was Moses, when the Lord once threatened to remove His presence from His people, who said, “If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.”

“Depart from Thee? – ’tis death – ’tis more;
’Tis endless ruin, deep despair!”

O let me be favoured with Thy presence and with a sweet, felt sense of it. That was a good answer that Moses received: “My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.” Even if we are living under the blessing of the Lord and

the sweet assurance He will never entirely cast us away, there is this point of His presence, His gracious presence, His promised presence, His felt presence. Lord, cast me not away from it.

“Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.” We do not read too much about the Holy Spirit’s presence and work in the Old Testament. There are various places, and we have it twice in these three verses I have read to you this evening. Some of those Old Testament saints knew a lot by divine teaching. David must have known that there is a Holy Spirit. Mind you, when you come to the New Testament, you have this sacred point opened up so much more clearly. We think of those farewell words of our Lord Jesus, especially in John chapters 14, 15 and 16, when He speaks of the Comforter, the Paraclete.

“Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.” Again, this is a thing the Lord will never do and a thing He has promised He will never do, but it is again something that David valued so much. He could not bear the thought of losing it. Of course, though the Lord will never forsake His people, the Holy Spirit will never leave them, yet sadly, solemnly, there are those times when the Holy Spirit is removed from a professing church here upon earth, and then it is Ichabod. The services may go on, but the doors may as well be closed. I have noticed over the months that quite often, and rightly so, this prayer is prayed concerning us as a congregation, that the Holy Spirit may abide with us, that the Holy Spirit may not be removed from us.

“Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation.” Now there are three things in this prayer. First, that there is a joy in salvation; second, that joy can be lost; salvation can never be lost, but the joy of salvation can be lost; third, the joy of salvation can be restored. There is so much in those three points. God, when He blesses His people with the knowledge of their salvation through the Person and work of our Lord Jesus, does give them joy and peace in believing, some people more than others, and some even in their troubles have still got the joy of salvation. Now I am sure sadly we all realise we do not always keep that joy; sadly we lose it. The world and sin and Satan and self, so many things intervene, and that joy we once knew, we no longer possess. But then the wonderful thing, that the Lord has that blessed ability to restore the joy of salvation.

“Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free Spirit.” So again we have the Holy Spirit here, and we have that desire to be

upheld. “Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.” David knew what took place when for a moment his God did not uphold him. He did not want it to happen again. He could not bear that. This prayer was forced out of his heart, and it is something all of us need, from the moment the Lord first begins to deal with us, and then there are the special times of temptation, the special times of need, and this prayer to be upheld. It is a mercy if we can bear that as our testimony:

“Upheld by Thy supporting hand,
We pass, O Lord, from year to year.”

This is perhaps an unusual word: “Thy *free* Spirit.” Well, the Lord the Spirit is free. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is,” there is not bondage, “there is liberty.” And where He works, He gives freedom, but surely it is lest anyone would think being held fast, being kept safe, being secure: surely this is not speaking of liberty? It is that prayer that as we are upheld, it might be by Thy free Spirit, and we might know something more of the life, the liberty of the gospel.

So really there are six prayers in these three verses, and I think they are prayers which every one of us here, and those listening, needs.

This address was given at Bethel Chapel, Luton, by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom, on Thursday, 8th April, 2021