

Bethel

Prayer Meeting Addresses

Number 138 Prayer for Revival

Reading: Song of Solomon 4. 8-16

8 Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards.

9 Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck.

10 How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices!

11 Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon.

12 A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.

13 Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard,

14 Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices:

15 A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.

16 Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.

Address

Years ago, we used to hear a lot about “revival meetings.” Sometimes a service was advertised as that – a revival meeting. Sometimes it went further: it was advertised that a revival would take place from one date to another. Usually what it was: very many people coming forward and openly professing the Lord's name.

Now pondering this point concerning revival, in Scripture it really means fresh life being given. The actual English word *revival* means *living again*. So not excluding all other things, but especially God's work of revival is in the hearts of His own people, that is something we all need. We become more careless, taking things for granted, and not the zeal that there used to be, and

when service time comes, not that same eagerness to be there – and so we might go on and on. But we do not need to go on and on, because I am sure you all know this. It is what we read of in the parable: “They all slumbered and slept.” Beloved friends, we slumber first and then we sleep.

So really what I have read to you now is a longing prayer that the Lord will graciously, mercifully revive His own work in the hearts of His people. I am thinking especially of the closing verse: “Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out” – the church of God compared to a garden; the soul of every believer compared to a garden.

And the point here: it is what people call an aromatic garden. It is not a garden so much with plants for beauty; it is plants that have the savour, the scent. The spices – we have a long list of them (verses 13 and 14) – all these various spices that are planted there. I think you will find even today where there is a blind people’s home, often they have one of these aromatic gardens, because the people who live there, being blind, could not see any beauty in the plants, but they know the difference if there is a sweet savour, a fragrance from them. That is the point here.

And the analogy: it is one of those days when everything is calm and quiet and sultry, and nothing moving, and there is not much of the fragrance being known. But then a little breeze appears. It begins to blow. Sometimes it is strong; sometimes it is more gentle – the north wind, the south wind. It blows on the garden, and then there is the effect, the fragrance. The spices begin to flow. There is something happening. There is something taking place. There is something moving. There is life where everything seemed death before. That is the picture. This is the prayer: “Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south.” It is a prayer to the Holy Spirit to perform His gracious work in true reviving. We have it in one of our hymns:

“Come, Holy Ghost, and blow
A prosperous gale of grace.”

Those spices are there. “Grace once received can ne’er be lost.” But we sang just now, “And every grace be active here” (hymn 363). Well, we hope we have some of these graces, but they are not always very active, in the church of God, in our own hearts. Things like this: the love of Christ, zeal for His honour and glory, the tender fear of God, living faith, humility, holy joy, sacred gratitude. So we might go on. All the Lord’s people have all these things in

their hearts, but they are not always active; they are not always flowing. And there is that deadness, sometimes, in the services of God's house. There is a difference. Don't you feel it sometimes on the Lord's day morning? Sometimes things seem lifeless, dead, and sometimes it seems as if everything is alive. It is the Spirit of God that makes the difference. Don't you find it in your own home? If you read and pray, sometimes it seems automatic, but other time your soul seems graciously drawn out. And then in secret prayer, sometimes, if you are honest, it is a burden, but it is your duty, and at other times it is a sacred delight to come to the blood-sprinkled mercy seat, the throne of grace.

Well, this is an urgent, longing prayer for this reviving in the church of God, and not only here, but throughout our churches and especially in our own hearts. "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden," and then the spices flow out. So I hope this evening in our prayers we might long, desire for this.

This address was given at Bethel Chapel, Luton, by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom, on Thursday, 4th May, 2017

* * *

We are a garden walled around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground;
A little spot enclosed by grace,
Out of the world's wide wilderness.

Like trees of myrrh and spice we stand,
Planted by God the Father's hand;
And all His springs in Zion flow
To make the young plantation grow.

Awake, O heavenly wind, and come,
Blow on this garden of perfume;
Spirit divine, descend and breathe
A gracious gale on plants beneath.

Make our best spices flow abroad,
To entertain our Saviour, God;
And faith, and love, and joy appear,
And every grace be active here.

Let my Beloved come and taste
His pleasant fruits at His own feast.
“I come, my spouse, I come,” He cries,
With love and pleasure in His eyes.

Our Lord into His garden comes,
Well pleased to smell our poor perfumes;
And calls us to a feast divine,
Sweeter than honey, milk, or wine:

“Eat of the tree of life, My friends;
The blessings that My Father sends;
Your taste shall all My dainties prove,
And drink abundance of My love.”

Jesus, we will frequent Thy board,
And sing the bounties of our Lord;
But the rich food on which we live
Demands more praise than tongue can give.

I. Watts