

Bethel

Prayer Meeting Addresses

Number 143
Great Things

Reading: Psalms 87 and 126

1 His foundation is in the holy mountains.

2 The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.

3 Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah.

4 I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me: behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this man was born there.

5 And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her.

6 The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there. Selah.

7 As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there: all my springs are in thee.

1 When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.

2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them.

3 The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.

4 Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south.

5 They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

6 He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

Address

What a blessed word that is with which Psalm 87 ends: “All my springs are in Thee.” For often we feel so dry and so empty, but all our springs are not in us; none of our springs are in us. “All our springs are in Thee.” The hymnwriter says,

“Lord, help us from above;
The power is all Thy own;
Faith is Thy gift, and hope, and love,
For of ourselves we’ve none.”

There are the springs of faith, and hope, and love, and joy, all our springs – they are all in Thee. Prayer, when we feel we cannot pray, when prayer is shut up, when prayer is retrained. “All my springs are in Thee.” And it is very blessed when the springs break forth and flow, and then we can pray. And when they flow speedily it is more than prayer; it is supplication.

In Psalm 126 there are three points stand out like mountain peaks. One is, *great things*. We have this once or twice: the great things that the Lord does. Then second, *a sowing and a reaping*, and we have this once or twice. Third, there is *captivity*, and that is captivity turned again, and again we have this once or twice. These great things – we need them to be done. We cannot do them, but the Lord can and the Lord does great things. The great thing of salvation – hearing humble confession, forgiving sinners, blotting out guilt in the atonement, softening hard hearts, blessing with repentance, making Christ precious – great things. And these are great things only the Lord can do, and He has promised He will do them.

May we remember this: “Thou only art the God that doest wondrous things.” Often He does these great things, wondrous things, in answer to the poor prayers of His people. He will be enquired of to do these things for them, and how faithful He is to His promise!

“The vilest sinner out of hell,
Who lives to feel his need,
Is welcome to a throne of grace,
The Saviour’s blood to plead.”

Then this sowing, this reaping. There is a sowing in tears. I feel in our preaching we sow, and in our prayers we sow, but not very often dare we say that we are sowing in tears. O that the Holy Ghost might make us more fervent. “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.”

Then captivity. We know what this is – to be in bondage in our souls and not able to come forth; to feel no true, spiritual liberty in prayer, or in hope, or in love, or in assurance. You know what this captivity is. And generally in the churches, what a spirit of bondage and captivity there is – taken captive by Satan and by sin and by unbelief; unable to come forth. Really the whole picture of this world and our country and our churches and ourselves is this captivity. The prayer is that the Lord will turn it again personally, turn again our captivity, say

to each Lazarus, “Loose him, and let him go.” In the churches, turn again our captivity. May the Holy Ghost work, for, “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”

“Turn again our captivity, O Lord.” He puts it in this remarkable way: “Turn again our captivity ... as the streams in the south.” Now I realise this has one or two meanings and interpretations. I confine myself to one. Often in the dry, arid, barren south of Palestine, the streams were just dried up. I understand in the hot season you can visit the beds of many of the streams and they are just completely dry; there is nothing flowing there at all. You can just see the bed that the stream has made. There is no water there, nothing flowing. It is just dry and arid and barren. I understand that when the heavy rains come – and they are exceedingly heavy sometimes – within the space of half an hour those streams are flowing along and overflowing as they go. So the point of emphasis is this: how suddenly at times those streams begin to flow. They were just arid, barren where the stream had once flowed, and suddenly, unexpectedly, the rains come and then the stream flows and it overflows.

Now may we see the Lord’s gracious ability to work quickly. “Shall not God avenge His own elect? ... I tell you that He will avenge them speedily.” Sometimes the Lord seems to wait and delay, and then He makes quick work. May we see this in our prayers, however hard the case personally, or with others, those with whom we are concerned. The Lord in a moment can answer so graciously, so suddenly, and then their captivity is turned, and then the streams of the south flow. And we know from where those streams flow; then we know that all our springs are in Thee – the love, the hope, the faith, the holy fear of God, the humility, the repentance. Now this is what we want – for the Lord to do great things, and for us to be able to sow and reap, and that He Himself will perform His work, His strange work, that He will turn again our captivity and do it as the streams in the south.

This address was given at Bethel Chapel, Luton, by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom, on Monday, 8th September, 1975

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Now, dearest Lord, to praise Thy name,
Let all our powers agree;
Worthy art Thou of endless fame;
Our springs are all in Thee.

Here in Thy love will we rejoice,
All sovereign, rich, and free;
Singing, we hope with heart and voice,
Our springs are all in Thee.

To whom, dear Jesus, O to whom
Shall needy sinners flee
But to Thyself, who bidst us come?
Our springs are all in Thee.

Some tempted, weak, and trembling saint
Before Thee now may be;
Let not his hopes or wishes faint;
His springs are all in Thee.

The poor supply, the wounded heal,
Let sinners such as we,
Salvation's blessings taste and feel;
Our springs are all in Thee.

When we arrive at Zion's hill,
And all Thy glory see,
Our joyful songs shall echo still,
Our springs are all in Thee.

S. Medley