

Special Prayer Meeting Address
given at
Old Baptist Chapel, Chippenham
by Mr. G. D. Buss
on Monday evening, 7th June, 2010

Text: *“Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.”*
Colossians 4, verse 2.

The Apostle Paul, here, gives us three exhortations apposite to the occasion upon which are gathered this evening. First of all, we are, with the help of the blessed Spirit (without whom no breath of prayer would ever rise God-ward) to “continue in prayer.” However discouraging, and however disappointing, however unpropitious the situation may be, we are exhorted here to “continue in prayer.” We have that example of the man who had a friend who came at midnight – an unpropitious time. He was asleep; his family was asleep. To be woken up at such a time and asked to provide a meal was, to say the least, inconvenient. And yet, what could he do? He had nothing to give him. He didn’t wish to send him away. The Word of God says he was very importunate. So he goes to the next door and he asks his neighbour if he will give him what is necessary for this friend who has come, as he has nothing to set before him. The word ‘importunate’ which the Holy Ghost uses in those circumstances is ‘continued knocking’, ‘continued asking’. He was a man who would not take ‘no’ for an answer; a man who would not go away until he had received that which he felt so deeply to need. And the Holy Ghost – who works at both ends of the matter in prayer – gives it and answers it. He gives that grace in the hearts of His children to be so aware and so conscious of their need that they cannot rest without the answer. That is the mark of real prayer. Sadly, too often our prayers are spoken and forgotten, and we just go on as if we really desired nothing. But, dear friends, when the Holy Ghost indites a prayer, you will not be satisfied until you have the answer. “Continue in prayer.” May God give us the grace of continuance. “Ask,” He says, “and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” He gives the very apposite example of the father.

Would he give his son a serpent if he asked for a fish? Or a stone if he asked for bread? No. He says: ‘No kind, earthly father would do that to a child he loves.’ “How much more shall your heavenly Father” – whose love is from everlasting to everlasting, who sent His dearly beloved Son for each of His dear children, and made them His children by His Holy Spirit because He is the One that quickens the life of the child, spiritually speaking, in the heart – “give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” In Matthew’s gospel it is: “*Good things* to them that ask Him.” So we have, as it were, a spectrum. But Luke concentrates on the best of all gifts that we may ask for – the Holy Spirit. This is so vital if we are to continue in prayer. “Continue in prayer.” That is the first exhortation.

The second exhortation is: we are to “watch in the same.” That is, we are to watch, first of all for opportunities to pray – those things about which we should be praying – for the Lord has said: “I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.” We should ever be asking the Lord to teach us to pray, as we read in Luke’s gospel. And if the Lord teaches us to pray, He will teach us *for what* to pray, and *how* to pray. He will give us grace to continue in prayer and to “watch in the same.” “Watch” to see if there is an answer. Of course, you have the case that was hinted at in prayer about Elijah and what he said to Ahab. Remember the Lord had given Elijah the promise: “Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth.” Elijah had shown himself to Ahab, and God had stood by him. Four hundred prophets of Baal, and more, had been on the other side and God had vindicated his servant. The fire from heaven had consumed his sacrifice, whereas their idolatrous sacrifice remained untouched, as every idolatrous sacrifice will. But now, where was the Lord’s fulfilling of the promise? Elijah says to Ahab: “Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain.” Where was the sound coming from? There was not a cloud in the sky. There was no wind, as yet, that accompanies a storm. It was as it had been for three years and six months. Friends, it was the ear of faith in Elijah that heard the “sound of abundance.” There was that realisation; that expectation in Elijah’s heart that the Lord would do as He had said. Over forty years ago, there

was a young pastor who had taken up a pastorate a long way away from here. They needed to find room for a safe. One of the deacons suggested that they removed one or two seats to make room for the safe. But, the senior deacon said: ‘No. I will not agree.’ They said: ‘Why not?’ He said: ‘I am so persuaded that the Lord will fill every seat in this chapel, it would be wrong to take a seat out.’ They smiled, almost as if he was being rather optimistic. Well, dear friends, that chapel is now full to overflowing. He had an expectation. There was “a sound of abundance of rain” given to him. It would be a mercy if we had the same here, wouldn’t it? Not seats just filled with people – more than that. We want sinners hungering and thirsting after righteousness. What an “abundance of rain” that would be!

But what did Elijah have to do? He goes to the top of Mount Carmel, and he sends his servant up. Oh, at first – how disappointing! “There is nothing.” ‘Where is your “sound of abundance of rain,” Elijah? There is no hint of it!’ What does he do? He puts his face between his knees. He says to his servant, “Go again seven times.” The servant was like the watchman, while Elijah was continuing in prayer. They were watching – watching “in the same.” Elijah believed that God was a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God. And, on the seventh time – the perfect time, God’s appointed time – a little cloud like a man’s hand appeared. That was enough for Elijah. His expectation had been fulfilled. He knew it was the beginning of further things. He who giveth more grace, and more grace, and more grace would not withhold what was needed. “Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not. And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain.” They watched “in the same.” May God give us this grace of watchfulness and alertness to believe that what we ask, as God has helped us, we shall surely see.

But then, finally, “with thanksgiving.” You say: ‘Well, we will thank God when the prayer is answered.’ I hope we will, if God enables us. But, dear friends, we should thank Him *before*. We have so much to thank God for! Even here tonight – we have a comfortable house of

prayer. I believe we are well-favoured with a godly remnant here – in Church and congregation – of loyal, loving, praying souls. There is much more “land to be possessed”; there are prayers waiting to be answered – I know. There are seats yet to be filled, there are sinners hearts yet to be broken, there are prodigals to be brought back, and yes, the pastor needs much, much more grace to preach more effectually to you; all that is needed. But let us be thankful that the Lord has not cut us off in our sins. We are not in a deserved hell. I firmly believe that “Ichabod” is not written over the door. “It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness.” We have *much* to thank God for. So, like the Apostle Paul, when he came to The three taverns, we read: “he thanked God, and took courage.”

“Brought safely by His hand thus far,
Why dost thou now give place to fear?
How canst thou want if He provide,
Or lose thy way with such a Guide?”

J. Newton

May God help us to “continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.”

Amen.