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Substance of Prayer Meeting Address given by our Pastor

on September 3, 1974.

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Lesson. Ecclesiastes 11. vv. 7-9.

Yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many.

This is a rather unusual subject and I think it is the first time I have endeavoured to dilate on it, but the truth of it especially the more advanced people of God know well, painfully, solemnly, blessedly. "Yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many." I will make an initial appeal to you who have known the Lord many years: is this not your experience? The days of darkness are many.

First, what is the meaning of darkness here? The most solemn and terrifying darkness a quickened sinner knows is under condemnation the law, and stripped of all hope, fearing he will sink to hell; prior to a revelation of the Lord of glory, seeing no way of escape from the wrath to come, no hope in the soul. I do not think the Text refers to that particular darkness: it is post-baptismal; it comes after a period of divine blessing in the soul. I will just give you an indication (it may have already occurred to you) Jesus was baptised in the Jordan by John, "and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Then you read at once; "And immediately the spirit driveth him into the wilderness. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan." I believe this is the darkness, or part of it, that is referred to in the Text. The children of God must follow their precious Saviour. As your Saviour, now expect to tread the wilderness.

What is the meaning of darkness here? I believe it is this: days of gloominess and mystery. So if I condense my remarks I will tread a little of the path with you to night, if it is for one soul. I see several things in this, and I could never see them if I knew them not. I know days of darkness.

I want first to show the location of the Text. Jesus was led of the spirit into the wilderness. You, after days of great blessing and favour

thought this would always last. I think I thought I should always be indulged and greatly blessed. He allures you, and brings you into the wilderness, and you are tempted of the devil, and the days of darkness are many. This is when youthful vigour has passed and fleshly zeal and props gone from your religion. They are a thing of the past: it is the day of darkness.

I will first refer to the days that are so gloomy, and why are they? For two reasons, The first is, the sun does not shine into your heart; you are under a cloud; in obscurity. The second reason is, you are gloomy because it is as though He shuts out your prayer. We read in Isaiah 40; "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God?" That is to say, it is so dark in your path and dispensations, as though the Lord takes no interest in you or your affairs: He has left you; forsaken you. You are in good company. Christ Himself cried on the cross; "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" His servant David long before had cried the same. These are the days of darkness which are many. There is an amazing word in Isaiah 49; "But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." These are days of darkness. Why should she ever say it? Because of His silence; because there is no deliverance. It seems as though your prayer is not regarded, and you walk in adversity. Satan takes a cruel and mean advantage of the situation, and you say; "All these things are against me."

"Yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many." There is another aspect. The Lord begins to lead you into the depravity of your nature. "Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these." and you see in each secret cell a hideous monster sits, and these are dark days. You say; "Can ever God dwell here? Is it possible that I am a child of God, with all this host of evil?" These are dark, good days. The Lord sanctifies them and you are fitted for the gospel, for a precious Redeemer.....You are tempted. Satan pursues you, and he is at your right hand to resist you, and to fill your mind with all that is gloomy. If you look at others, he says; "They are all against you." and in all your circumstances Satan presents a gloomy picture. They are dark days. God's ministers walk in this. They are

terribly tempted, and Satan follows them and says; "The Lord has forsaken you. You will be in confusion." These are days of darkness.

So what you come into Satan takes a cruel advantage of, and he says;

"The Lord has forsaken thee quite;
Thy God will be gracious no more." (293)

The days of darkness are many. There is an intense realisation of the utter destitution and depravity that belongs to us through the fall, and they are days of darkness which are many. I have heard from the lips of godly people, speaking of destitution, "I seem to live like that; empty, destitute." When the Lord comes there is a taste of divine love.

It will sometimes be dark to you, as if you have no religion; nothing at all. It is always ^{a mystery} to younger Christians to hear the old confessing their destitution. I will give an explanatory word. Why is it that saints of God who have known days of blessing, come into days of darkness which are many? They are waiting for; "And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again." They are waiting for the Lord to come again, "and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." That is why you feel as you do. You are longing for your Saviour, for Jesus. He seems a long time coming; so long; you say; "Make haste. Make no tarrying, O my God." You are weary, despondent, dispirited, because you wait so long. He will come.

The days of darkness include the time when your mortal powers fail: your strength begins to fail, and your heart begins to fail, and your nervous system is depleted, and you are a poor, broken vessel, and you say; "Forsake me not when my strength faileth." You have restless nights; the functions of your body begin to fail, and you wonder what will happen. They are dark days, and Satan roars. They are the days of darkness, which are many.

I leave you with this. One day you will contemplate the days which have been many. They are over: it is the retrospect. Christ has come: He has appeared and delivered you. You will know the truth of the Scripture; "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." and, the quintessence of all holy promises; "For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Amen.