

733a
La D 389

LIBRARY OF THE
GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS
50/D/Richmond

733a

Sermon preached by Mr. J. Delves at Richmond, 14.11.50

Text: 2 Samuel 23.4

"And He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds".

These are said to be the last words of David, who was the sweet Psalmist of Israel as we know, who evidently toward the close of his life gave expression to these remarkable words. We do not understand them to be the very last words that he actually uttered, because the chapters that follow reveal certain very sad things even after this. But evidently David was contemplating the end, and under those contemplations, expressed the sweet enjoyment of his soul in the prospect of death.

The utterances that are made at the close of one's life are often more impressive than they are at any other time, although in regard to the experiences on record of men of God in the Scriptures, we have not very much recorded of death-bed sentences, or of the state of mind of many of the people of God when they came to die; but the testimony of their life suffices to prove that as they lived in faith so likewise they died in faith; although sovereignty appears often in the state of mind that the Lord's people are in when their earthly pilgrimage closes. Some of them have passed through very deep waters, have experienced heavy conflict, have felt much darkness, and have had some hard battles with the enemy; and yet before they left their earthly tabernacle, have made it perfectly clear that the Lord has come and cleared away all the clouds from their mind and has been to them as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds. Oh what a wonderful thing it must be to be prepared to die, to contemplate our decease with composure of mind to feel that the sting of death is taken away, drowned in the atonement, so that as a good man used to say often at Brighton in his prayers 'Lord, when we come to die may we have nothing to do but die'. I have never forgotten that plea.

What a wonderful mercy it will be when heart and flesh fail to feel fully persuaded that God is the strength of our life and our portion for ever, and evidently this was the case with David, for he could speak with a gracious confidence of his own state. There were still clouds evidently in his circumstances and here in all probability with regard to his family, for he says 'Although my house be not so with God', that is, although things are not in my house as I would have them, although there are things that grieve my spirit, and although often I have to mourn on account of certain things concerning my house; whether that was the house of God, his own house or family, or circumstances pertaining to the nation; yet with regard to the state of his soul he could say "Yet hath He made with me an everlasting Covenant ordered in all things and sure, for this is all my Salvation and all my desire, although He make it not to grow". If we are favoured with such confidence it will be a wonderful blessing. I remember hearing an old friend speak of witnessing a death bed, and when this person was dying, she said, 'He is coming, He is coming, He has come' and she expired. And how true that will be when we read "Unto them that look for Him will He appear the second time without sin unto Salvation".

But not only have we here revealed the confidence that David enjoyed, but also the anointing that he was evidently under. It was not just a cold, hard, dry statement that he made, for evidently the Spirit of the Lord was with him and spake by him and His word was in his tongue. What a sweet view the Psalmist had here of the blessed Trinity. "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God". Truly a greater than Solomon is here designed by the Psalmist for he goes on to say that "He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds, as the tender grass springing

out of the earth by clear shining after rain." Now this I believe we may understand, metaphorically, to refer to the Lord Jesus Christ and to what He is unto His people as the Sun of righteousness when He rises with healing in His wings. He shall be as the Light of the morning. Literally, we know that before the sun rises in the morning it is darkness, also that when the sun begins to rise above the horizon it is very gradual and there are the first rays of light that spread themselves over the surface of the earth. That light increases, it is very dim at first, not very much can be seen, but still there is a breaking of light, there is not that dense darkness that marked the night, and as the sun rises higher in the heavens it does eventually shine with clearness upon the earth's surface, and disperses all the darkness. Now that is just how it is spiritually in the teaching of the soul. As in creation darkness was before light, there was darkness upon the face of the earth, then God said "Let there be light and there was light". But when day follows night it is with a gradual illumination; so I believe for the most part it is in the teaching of the soul. Although God is a Sovereign, and does sometimes break forth in the light of His grace and mercy into the soul more or less suddenly, there is always some experience of the darkness before the breaking of the light of His grace. Some of us know, probably all of you know, a little of what Job said, when it was night he longed for the day. When you are in trouble, when things lie with a heavy burden upon your spirit, when you are distressed, whether it be in your soul or body or circumstances, oh how long and weary the hours of the night are, are they not? How anxiously you look for the first rays of light that heralds the approaching day. Is not that true, and if that be literally so, how much more spiritually, when the darkness of night is upon the soul, and when one under a hard, legal bondage gropes as it were for the wall and cannot see his signs.

There is something wonderful about this approach of the day,

the dawning of the day upon the soul; the rising of the Sun of righteousness, and the view of faith of the glorious person of the Son of God. I think I shall never forget when I came back from France after the first world war. We were in the Channel and as light began to dawn, I was up upon the front of the ship, eagerly waiting for the first signs of the coast of old England. Presently there appeared what seemed just like a few low-lying clouds upon the horizon, I could not tell what it was, whether it was land or clouds. Presently it became more distinct, more clear, then I could begin to see some outline of the landscape and the delineation of the shore, and as we got nearer and nearer I could see clearly that they were the shores of old England and I think that was, literally speaking, one of the happiest sights I ever had in my life. But oh how much more so spiritually when that blessed Son of God rises upon the soul as the Apostle expresses it; "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." But oh this darkness before the sun rises, how the soul longs for the day, oh when, when will it be day. "When wilt Thou come unto me?" There is a darkness before this, the darkness of unregeneracy, where the heart is shut up in unbelief and ignorance of God and has no desire for the knowledge of His ways. The Apostle speaks of those Thessalonians as at one time children of darkness but now children of light, and the Colossians as having been delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of His dear Son.

But the darkness I would mention particularly is the darkness that is felt in the soul when the conscience is wounded, when the majesty of God is seen and the terrors of His law felt in the conscience and the sentence of death is there. And when one so dealt with can see nothing before him but eternal perdition, when he is brought to feel and know that he deserves it and to

acknowledge the holiness and righteousness of God in His law and to say, and that feelingly:

"Should sudden vengeance seize my breath,
I must pronounce thee just in death;
And if my soul were sent to hell,
Thy righteous law approves it well."

Do we know this darkness? It is, so to speak, a legal darkness; the soul is shut up under the law, suffering the frowns of God. Is there anyone here in darkness like that, unable to see any signs, trembling before God, feeling to be a reprobate? What can bring relief and comfort and deliverance to a soul in such a case? Why, the light of the morning, the rising of the Sun of righteousness upon the soul. As I have hinted, I believe this is a gradual experience. There is at first, although we would not lay down any hard and fast rule, yet there is just as it were a very slight breaking in of light upon that soul. Perhaps a word comes with a little feeling, just a slight relief; or there is something felt under a sermon, or in a hymn, or in a service, or in private, that raises up just a little hope. What is that? Why, it is the Lord Jesus rising as the light of the morning, but just a very dim shadow at first. Yet I believe you will feel this (if any are here in such a case as that), that every little help and token you get that brings relief will direct your heart and your faith to the Son of God. But what is it really? It is the light of Christ shining, just beginning to shine, into the heart. Is He not appearing as it were through the lattice, perhaps very dimly, but there is a ray of hope. Some of you may be able to remember that first ray of hope that broke upon your spirit, that brought some relief, - it may be that the Lord will have mercy after all even upon a wretch like me. Oh yes, you could not tell anyone what you passed through in those days. Some of us can remember the first touch, the first sacred sense of relief, the first ray, as it were, when we felt a hope and even some faith to believe that the Lord would come and bring deliverance one day. See the light of the morning is breaking, the blessed Son of God is just appearing in the early stages of the light of the morning.

Then the sun does not go back, you see; it continues to rise higher and higher; and so later, as you will be led more deeply into soul experience, you may get a more clear view by faith of the Lord Jesus, you may see all you need in Him. He becomes so attractive to your soul His name is made sweet, it becomes like precious ointment and you say, oh if I could but claim Him as mine, You may still rise a little and say Oh He is altogether lovely, in the desire of your soul for Him. Your affections begin to move, as it is in the Canticles, your bowels move for Him, He is as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, and He appears in His suitability and His sufficiency. Difficult things rise before your faith, and there is many a battle, there are many fears lest you should be deceived or will never obtain the blessing, never get the deliverance, many a battle with the enemy, clouds pass before the sun, clouds that bring darkness, that bring shadows over your spirit, that give rise to fears and questions. So you go up and down, down and up, subject to many changes; yet the light of the morning is rising. You know sometimes, in the morning particularly, you may notice how clearly and beautifully the sun shines for a little while, then a dark cloud appears and passes in front of it and all seems so threatening for a little while. If you anticipated anything you have some measure of apprehension, you say, why there may be a storm after all, it looked so promising and now it has changed so quickly, it is so threatening. That is just how it is in the soul's experience, you know. We change, but the sun has risen, the sun has not gone back, the sun has risen and is continuing to rise. Science says the earth moves and not the sun, but that we will leave, and speak as the Scripture has it here; the sun rises, and so it is in the soul.

It says here, "Even a morning without clouds", well, there are not many mornings without clouds, are there? Just now and again occasionally there is a morning when we go outside of the door, and look up to the sky, a beautiful blue sky, the sun shining in the firmament of the heavens, and say "not a cloud to

be seen." Why, even in nature that is a very attractive sight, but oh, has there ever been that in your soul? Has there ever been a moment, when so to put it, in your spiritual experience there was not a cloud in your sky; when you felt as though there was nothing between your soul and God; when by faith you saw that Mediator for you between God and man, the man Christ Jesus; when your sins were put away? Well, it is a morning without clouds experimentally speaking when the Lord Jesus reveals Himself to the soul in a full deliverance, when He comes, and sheds His love abroad in your hearts, so as that it may be as much as you can bear, even in your very body. Then He opens the windows of heaven and pours out a blessing, that there is not room enough to receive it. Sometimes in the morning it may be very cloudy and yet gradually these clouds disperse and there is the sun shining in its clearness, even a morning without clouds. And surely it is when the Lord shines into the soul as the light of the morning, when your faith does not only look to Him in humble dependence upon Him, but when you can say "My Beloved is mine, and I am His". Yes, when you can say that without reserve, then it is a morning without clouds. It is not a morning without clouds is it, in our lives with regard to the trials and difficulties and afflictions that lie upon the Church. Many heavy, dark, threatening clouds hang over us, and yet at times the Redeemer, spiritually speaking, shines, breaks through the cloud. Sometimes the rainbow is seen; you see, there is never a rainbow without a cloud or without rain, and sometimes the rainbow is seen set in the cloud as a wonderful testimony of Divine faithfulness. "I do set my bow in the cloud", as a token of the covenant made between God and all living creatures, that the earth should never again be deluged by an overwhelming flood.

"A morning without clouds". But is there not a point here? It was a morning without clouds when the Lord Jesus Christ rose triumphant from the grave, the mighty conqueror over death, when He rose as the justification of His Church; that was a morning without clouds. Heavy and dark clouds had, as it were, covered

the heavens with blackness when He was in the garden and on the cross, and when He rose from the dead those clouds of sadness and sorrow dispersed, and He rose a mighty living Jesus, able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. At times the Lord Jesus Christ is as the light of the morning in this way to the soul, when your faith does get a sweet view of a living Christ according to that word the Saviour says, "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more, but ye see me, because I live, ye shall live also". It was a morning without clouds; He rose no more to die, He rose to live after the power of an endless life, to exercise His triumphant priesthood and victory over sin and death and hell. Oh, what a wonderful mercy, that by a touch of omnipotence, the mighty stone was rolled away from the sepulchre, and the pure, holy, sacred body came forth, rose triumphantly from the dead.

But there is another point that I might just mention, and that is that to a believer it will be a morning without clouds when the soul redeemed by blood enters into the presence of God. What words are those of Paul when he says "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens", and this, "Absent from the body, present with the Lord". In that glorious estate where the former things will have passed away, where there will be no more sin, or sorrow, and no more trouble, will that not be a morning without clouds? It will be a morning without clouds when this corruptible does put on incorruption. At the great resurrection morning as Paul records in the first epistle to the Corinthians, "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed". Have you ever thought of those striking words? It does not say after many years of getting ready, as it were, a trumpet will sound and the dead shall gradually rise. No, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed, "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory". That will be a morning without clouds.

It will be a morning without clouds when the whole number of the ransomed shall hear that word "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world", but it will be a black night to those who hear that word "Depart ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels". Oh the tremendous issue that awaits us! It will be a morning without clouds when in that glorious, blessed, holy place the redeemed of the Lord fall before the Lamb, and putting the crown upon His head, as we read, will sing a new and everlasting song. Thou art worthy for Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us by Thy blood, out of every nation, kindred and tongue. That will be a morning without clouds never, never to be followed by a dark night of trouble and sorrow and affliction, but one eternal estate of unspeakable happiness, blessing and joy. Amen.