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Sermon preached at Ebenezer, Clapham, by Mr. J. Delves  
on Wednesday evening 8th February 1956

"In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."  
Isaiah 30, 15

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The Scriptures afford us a vast number of very timely admonitions and directions that come, more or less, into every particular path of experience that the Lord's dear people have to walk in; yet though that is so beautifully true, we have to prove the need of something beyond and more than the letter of the direction or the admonition. We need, in every case, (for such a precept or direction to be graciously effective, beneficial and profitable, sensibly and experimentally) the Spirit of the Lord to bring it into the heart. It is true that there are many directions that would seem, superficially, to imply a power in the creature to respond to them - indeed this is believed by very many people; but I do feel it is safer to state, and experience proves it, that the authority, power and unction of a precept is known only as it is brought into the heart in some particular way. There must be some degree of power attending it, for us to feel the power that is in it. It is something like this - when the Lord Jesus was on earth, He said on one occasion, to a man with a withered hand, "Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth." But did the Lord mean, when He said "Stretch forth thine hand", that the poor man had power in himself, naturally speaking, to respond to that injunction? The poor man could only stretch forth his hand as the Lord gave him strength to do it and brought strength into the withered hand. So His people have to prove, that as the Lord is pleased to apply the word with gracious power, there can be such a sweetness as to overcome all opposition and bring into the heart a gracious response to the injunction, and a sweet enjoyment of it. So with a word like this. If the Lord should be pleased to speak it, or bring it into the heart with power, it would not matter how troubled you might have been, how apprehensive you may still be, or how gloomy and foreboding your future may appear; if the Lord should speak this - "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength" it would remove every mountain, fill every valley, enable you at that moment to be graciously passive in the Lord's hands and know no will but His.

Well now, I can appeal to you like this, Can you bring yourself there? You may come into circumstances terribly disquieting in the nature of them; things may come into your business life, home, relatives, friends, or some affliction upon your body, and you say to yourself, 'I am going to trust in the Lord, I am not going to allow this to disturb me, there are many Scriptures that can settle my mind, I am not going to be disturbed.' Then you may find yourself in more confusion than ever. O, dear friends, all it requires is for the Lord to come and make His strength perfect in our weakness.

As for the circumstances here, the word is in itself a reproving word to those rebellious Jews. It is the Lord's word to the prophet Isaiah saying, "In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not." So there was no enjoyment of this rest, no experience of strength, because of their rebellion and contempt of God's word, and on account of their turning away from Him. They were rebellious Jews, of whom the Lord said, "They take counsel, but not of Me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin: that walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt!" You may look at these foolish Jews and some may say, What fools they were to do this. They were, and to depart thus from that God who had so frequently helped them and appeared for their deliverance; yet when danger faces them from a hostile nation, away they go to Egypt to make a confederacy with another heathen power and 'seek counsel but not of God' They turn away from Him and despise His work. But O, who is there that is not guilty of this, in heart, if not in practice? How prone we are, if left to ourselves, to do the very thing that we may blame these Jews for? So we find the prophet saying of them, "Their strength is to sit still." "The Egyptians shall help in vain." If they come to your help it will be to no purpose, your strength is to sit still, to remain in the City, to commit your case to God. Even so it was when they came to the Red Sea; they could only stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. Yet in contempt of God's word these Jews went walking off down into Egypt, when it would have been much better for them to remain where they were, and quietly wait upon God for Him to appear for their

deliverance, and to commit their case to Him.

"Their strength is to sit still." Has there ever been a time with you when you have proved the same thing? It is, I know, altogether opposite to human nature to sit still, and of course we cannot always sit still; but when the Lord says, 'Sit still,' it is to no purpose to run off down into Egypt, neither is it to any point to seek to put some hope in an arm of flesh. As we read this evening (Proverbs 3) "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart: and lean not unto thine own understanding." So in this word the Lord says, "In returning and rest shall ye be saved", that is in returning to Me. You have wandered away, you have sought to hew out broken cisterns that can hold no water, you have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters, you have departed from Me, forsaken My word, and what wisdom is in you now? Here is wise counsel - "In returning and rest shall ye be saved." Humanly speaking although this refers to their enemies, and deliverance from them by the Lord's divine power and protection, yet even spiritually, the truth has a bearing. When we in heart turn away from God, backslide, go inwardly after other gods, drift astray, become worldly-minded, unexercised, filled with earthly things, all our thoughts of God are corroded with material concerns. If we drift away like that and set up idols in our hearts, we have no enjoyment of the blessed gospel. We bring upon ourselves desolation, darkness, coldness, death, and eventually have to be filled with our own ways. What is the remedy then? "In returning and rest shall ye be saved." Not that the merit of a believer's salvation consists in this, for that is in Christ in all its aspects, but the comfort, peace, confidence, hope and joy of salvation, as experienced in the heart, is in returning unto the Lord, as indeed the prodigal did, when he returned to his father's house, confessed his base backslidings and acknowledged his unworthiness, "But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and ran" and embraced him.

"In returning and rest shall ye be saved." That is from your enemies. So it is experimentally. There is no rest, peace, comfort and joy in the blessed gospel known and experienced, except as we are brought nigh through the Saviour's precious blood,

enabled to lie low at His dear feet, confess our guilty sins and receive a sweet touch of His healing mercy. When that is the case the two come together and embrace each other in love and affection; the poor returning sinner, sickened of his ways, repenting, falling before the Lord, acknowledging his unworthiness, is received, blessedly received, by this "man who receiveth sinners and eateth with them". When that is brought to pass, there is rest, peace, comfort and joy in the blessed gospel. This is the kingdom, this is Christ's kingdom. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

"In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength". It is to this then, that I would, more particularly apply myself. O how sweet it is when a child of God is favoured and enabled to be still amidst tempestuous motion! There is a stillness that can only be known when the mind is stayed on God. At such a time you can look into the dark, uncertain future, and feel your spirit resting in a sweet hope of interest in a prayer-answering and promise-performing God. A blessed place to be in! Naturally speaking, you may say, How shall I get through this trouble? How shall I overcome that difficulty? What shall I do if so-and-so happens? It all looks so dark, confusing and perplexing to me; what shall I do? That is what nature may say. Yet if the Lord is pleased to drop something in and bring faith into exercise, you can be still, and know that He is God, and see by faith a faithful God above all your difficulties, fears, enemies, and perplexing things, as Jacob saw God above the ladder. "In quietness and in confidence." So that there is no human boasting, or trusting upon something in ourselves or our own accomplishments that we may or may not be very pleased with, but a sweet reliance of faith upon a promise-performing God; it is only where this is the case, that such a word as this applies.

"And ye would not." That is, these rebellious Jews would not. They disregarded God's word, turned away from Him, went after the heathen to get help, thus adding sin to sin. "Ye would not." This refers, of course, to their circumstances and the coming against them of the Assyrians with all their strength and might.

Every time as godly kings cried unto the Lord, (as in the case of Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Asa and others), the Lord regarded them and delivered them in remarkable ways, out of the hand of all their enemies. What a wonder-working God He is! Some things may seem altogether impossible to you, but even so, they are not impossible to God. Whatever the Lord's purposes may be, (even should those purposes involve disappointment and mortifying doubts), faith in the heart can say "Thy will be done", and feel assured that all is ordered for the best. When you can come just there, you can enter into this and feel that "In quietness and in confidence is your strength." This is an experience entirely peculiar, spiritually viewed, to exercised people. Although we can not, by any natural effort of our own, bring the comfort and quietness of this, the strength of this, yet even in a moment, (I know this is true by my own experience), the Lord can bring it, so that however disturbing, distracting and bewildering things may be outwardly in your life, at such a time you can be as quiet and passive in the Lord's hand, as though you had no trouble at all. In quietness and confidence is your strength. Yet that same person at another time, may seem so to be left to himself, as to run this way and that way, almost as though there were no God; seem to lose his footing, try to find a standing here, or some protection there. O what a mercy it is when the Lord comes over all our wretched sin, guilt and unworthiness and speaks a confirming word! In the case of Elijah, you see, that still, small voice came to him, but before the still, small voice there had to be the wind, the earthquake, and then the fire; there had to be a storm, a shaking and a burning first, but after that there was a still small voice that brought Elijah to the entrance of the cave with his face covered with his mantle. Even then, poor Elijah had been under the juniper tree and was disposed to think he was alone and desolate; but when the Lord is pleased to come and speak a word into a poor desponding heart and mind, under any discouragement whatever, it can have a very quietening effect.

"In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength". It is very hard for me to preach about this, because I know so much of the opposite; but even then, it may be, those poor things who have known so much of the opposite, feel the quietness, when it is given, to be particularly sweet. Can you believe that?

In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength? May the Lord help us to lay hold of this then, in a right way!

What is there in this quietness? There seem to be some ingredients in this quietness - I believe there are. In the first place I believe there is knowledge. Not that knowledge in itself can command the quietness - it must be the Lord's own gift, but still there can be quietness with the knowledge, because it consists in, or is connected with, a knowledge of God. The knowledge of Him that the Spirit gives, when it is revived, brings a holy reliance upon Him. So in Psalm 46 the Lord says, "Be still, and know that I am God:" as though He should say, Now it is in this stillness that you will experience and enjoy knowledge. It is in the stillness. O, I believe I know how true that is! If the Lord just gently whispers in your heart, "Be still", the influence of that word will direct your faith to Him in some sweet revealing of His glorious attributes, His mercy, grace and love, so that you can be quiet. It is a sweet quietness. Do you ever know anything about this? Do you get a few minutes sometimes when, though your circumstances cause so much restlessness, you just feel you can cast your burden on Him for a few minutes? There is a quietness, beloved friends, that arises out of a sweet sense, particularly felt, that the Lord is your God. By this I do not mean just a general conclusion of the fact, trying to make it in your own mind, but a gracious sense of that assurance felt in your heart. If you can feel that, it may bring a wonderful quietness, because at such a moment you can, as helped, see everything under His control and your times in His hand. Then there is a little quietness. Well has there ever been just a moment? Has there been an occasion in the silence of the night with you when the Lord has come (perhaps you have been going over things, with all the difficulties connected with them) and said, "Sit still, My child", or "Be still, and know that I am God?" Have you ever known this and the difference that it makes, the quietness it brings, the peace that is felt just for a few minutes? Perhaps you have felt, I can leave everything now, Lord; whatever the position may be, according to Thy gracious purpose, help me to fall under it, and do not allow me to be stubborn in my spirit or rebel against Thy sovereign purposes. O, at such a time, when you get a little

quietness, you will feel your heart flow out with love to Him, get a little worship and feel full of wonder that the Lord should favour you as He has. That will bring you right into this word, "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."

Then another point in this quietness is faith. The Lord said to His disciples in John 14, "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in Me," As though, He would say, Now it is this faith in Me in the exercise of it, that will remove this disquietude of mind, this inward disturbance, and bring into your heart a little quietness. "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." O but, you may say, I have this or that matter; I have to attend to this, I have a great difficulty in my life, I have a heavy cross in my life, in my office, or something else. Yes, I quite understand, but here we have to come back to it again; if the Lord says, Let not your heart be troubled, if the Lord says it, you cannot be troubled. He can bring a peace to move away the disturbance from your mind. "When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" There may be many ready to make trouble, but if He gives quietness, no one else can make trouble, and it is very, very sweet.

But just for a moment or two, here is another ingredient in this quietness - and that is patience. The Psalmist said, "I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry." The prophet Jeremiah said, "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." This waiting implies that there is something that has not yet come to our desire or satisfaction. Patience is needed in waiting, sometimes under much deferment too, as when "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick." But still, when patience is given, there can be a sweet quietness linked with it, and patience will say, The Lord will come in His own time, He will not fail thee, wait on Him still. You may feel a little confidence spring up in your heart, and a quietness with it, which helps you to cast your care upon Him. "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."

Then another point is submission. There is no quietness when the spirit is not submissive to the Lord's will, but can

you make yourself submissive? When a trying cross lies upon you, when something comes into your heart that nature resents, which you fight against, and that stirs up a lot of bitterness in your spirit against the Lord's ways, can you give yourself that submission? Can you say, I will be submissive? I will not entertain any of these feelings, I know they are altogether wrong. Can you gain that submission? But if the Lord brings it, it gives submission, quietness, even though the cross still lies hard upon thee. It brings a quietness though perhaps not for long; but it is a peculiar privilege the Lord's people are favoured with, at times at least, although we have, alas! to know so much of the other side.

Quietness and confidence. These two points go so well together, do they not? When they are enjoyed there is not much the matter. You can say, The Lord has brought me hitherto, He will not fail me now, my trust is in Him, He will not fail me. There can be a fleshly confidence in a child of God, as evidently Peter had, when he did speak so boastfully of what he would suffer for the Lord's sake, and had to prove after all, how weak he was. But there can be a very sweet confidence linked with this quietness which, when it is enjoyed, may put the crooked straight in your life and resign you to the Lord's will. O, how sweet it is! It is a confidence in God, when you can feel in a gracious way, that He is your God. Then there can be an attraction, a beauty in those blessed attributes and perfections that constitute Him what He is. Faith sees them, and as they are seen in Christ in the covenant of grace, and so felt in some application of them to your own case, O what confidence they bring! what quietness they give! There is a confidence in His power, His power to save and to deliver. "I am the Almighty God" He says, He may say that to you, and it may mean there is much to go through, many temptations, many hard battles; yet still, it is as though the Lord would say, I will bring thee through. I am above them all. I am sufficient for your need. I will not fail thee. "I am the Almighty God, walk before Me, and be thou perfect."

There is a confidence in His wisdom. Has He not said, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with Mine eye." When faith can lay hold of that, or rather when in some power it can be felt in your heart, you enjoy this quietness and confidence, and say, The Lord will help me according to His promise. "Fear not, worm Jacob, I will help thee." It is true, and it can apply to circumstantial things sometimes; yet the most important consideration is the salvation of our souls. It is so sweet to feel that, and have some quietness in our souls, confidence that the Lord will bring us through, and that we shall be overcomers at last; shall receive the promised reward, not because we deserve it, but because it is what He has graciously promised, "For surely there is an end and thine expectation shall not be cut off."

May the Lord look upon us in all our matters and under every dark and threatening cloud, disturbing as it may be in itself, under despondency or disquietude of mind. May He be pleased graciously to lift the vail, disperse the cloud, and whisper in the heart "Be still", and where this is, the rest will follow. "In quietness and in confidence will be our strength."