

Prayer Meeting Address by Mr. J. Delves on Monday evening 5.5.52

Hymns: 196, 959 Reading: Isaiah 64 & Acts 16.13-15

The chapter has a very gracious complaint arising from the withholding of the divine power and presence of God from the church here and her consequent desolation. It is graphically described and the same point may be experimentally felt in the heart of a child of God. A mourning the Lord's absence and making a similar complaint on account of felt desolation occasions this grief and brings this complaint. It is a mercy when a felt sense of desolation in our heart calls forth prayer for the Lord's return. The church here was not indifferent to its condition but painfully sensible of a desolation and a feeling as described in one place here, "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away". This complaint, which indeed is true of all fallen humanity, is only really felt to occasion sorrow where the life and grace of God is and where there is in the heart an earnest desire for the Lord's return. Are there any here this evening who feel their condition or state described by these words? A righteousness just a rag, only fit to be thrown away, covered as it were with a leprosy of sin, fading like a leaf, something with no foundation, no strength, no standing. We have often seen a leaf fallen from a tree in a fading condition, bowing in the wind, helplessly driven this way and that way.

So it is at times with the Lord's people. But notwithstanding this complaint there is something in the chapter that is very sweet. There is a sense of relationship, although such a condition prevails. Now, as though the church here would call the Lord to a point about this, although we are in such a condition, yet she says, "O LORD, thou art our Father". We are in Thy hands even in this, "We are the clay, and Thou our Potter; and we are all the work of Thy hand". It is noticeable that there is a very gracious confession of sin mingled with this complaint and it is attended with a heart felt plea for the Lord to return. "Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence". Thou didst come down, Thou didst terrible things, Thou didst make bare Thine arm and cause Thy power to be known to Thy adversaries, the nations trembled at Thy presence, Thou didst great things, the mountains flowed down at Thy presence. The church here would remember former days, divine interpositions, previous manifestations of divine power in their deliverance when seeming impossibilities were levelled when God appeared in striking ways. That is what is desired here, "Thou art our Father", Thou hast done great things, Thou hast appeared, Thou hast delivered us, Thou hast formed us to be Thy people but O this present desolation, it grieves us, we are wounded, we are in distress, we are desolate. Yet this was

a healthy condition, there was no false contentment here but what might be termed a lawful grief. Do you feel like that? Is the Lord's withholding of that power you have formerly felt, you hope, a grief, and is this prayer in your heart, "O that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down"? It is as though the church would say, Lord Thou art able to do this again, Thou has levelled mountains, O that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that is manifest Thy power above all difficulties, make bare Thine arm in the face of all this desolation and in the face of all our enemies that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence. You may have a mountain, I cannot tell what it is, but it may be something you have to be content with or something you dread, or it may be the Lord's absence, but what-ever that mountain is it will flow down when the Lord comes for nothing can stand in His way. Has He not said, "I will work and who shall let it"?

O that this prayer might be in our souls unitedly, O that the Lord would rend the heavens, do something to occasion wonder and surprise, something that may seem quite unlikely. But nothing is unlikely when a believing sinner gets hold of God and nothing is impossible then, no mountain is impossible. O that He would come down; O that He would come down to the churches, to the ministry, the preaching, the pews, O how we need Him; what a reviving, what a healing, what liberty, what cleansing of the uncleanness, there would be. He is everything. We have met for prayer and what a wonder it would be if this prayer were given us and we were favoured to see a mountain flow down. May the Lord help us; I do not know what you have got or what you may feel pressing upon you but here can be a fitting prayer and a confirming word, "O that Thou wouldest rend the heavens". The language is such as to infer that something great must be done and perhaps this is so, and if the Lord were to come and bless your soul something great would be done. What could we have done greater? "Thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at Thy presence"? Come again Lord and cause fresh mountains to flow down. It may seem as though the walls of Jericho keep rising, what if they do, you need the same power to flatten them. May the Lord give us this night access and power in prayer.

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