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Prayer meeting address by Mr. J. Delves on Monday evening 12.11.73
at "Ebenezer" Clapham

Hymns 393, 383

Reading Nehemiah 2 from v.11

These verses make encouraging reading when we consider the prevailing conditions at that time in Jerusalem and the difficulties and the desolations witnessed when Nehemiah saw the wall broken down, and the gates burned with fire, it was enough, naturally speaking, to move him to say, The case is hopeless; but Nehemiah knew his God and it is beautiful to notice how he repeated those words, "The good hand of my God was upon me". Thus nothing was looked upon as impossible with Nehemiah, and so, amidst all the difficulties, the work proceeded. Quite a number had returned previously with Ezra but they do not appear to have done anything in relation to the surroundings of the city and the wall.

There are one or two things that are confirming with regard to prevailing prayer in the case of Nehemiah, and undoubtedly many also of his men, so that although Tobiah, Sanballat and Geshem laughed them to scorn and said, "What is this thing that you do?", nothing affected Nehemiah, - the good hand of his God was upon him. It was in answer to prevailing prayer that the king gave consent for Nehemiah to go to Jerusalem. Nehemiah prayed before the God of heaven before he said anything to the king. This may be a guide to some of us, and to some of you when confronted with difficulties and things that seem hopeless, you are disheartened, and feel you must give everything up. Nehemiah prayed to the God of heaven, and the Lord answered him, and the king gave him consent to go to Jerusalem.

Another feature consists in the fact that the work was accomplished in the course of time, although there were those stones lying about all over the place so that Nehemiah could not get through with the beast he was on, there was no place where he could pass, and yet eventually the wall was built, and gates were set up. So

those difficulties, apparently insurmountable, were overcome, because the good hand of his God was upon him. This links up with what the hymn writer says about prayer,

"Prayer can force a passage through,
Iron bars and brazen gates".

I do not know how matters may be with some of you, but possibly even in your case you have had iron bars and brazen gates to use this figure. You will not need to go to Jerusalem, to have an iron bar or a brazen gate, of which you say I shall never get over this; but if the good hand of your God is upon you He can lift you over it; and some of us have seen something even of this.

One more point is that Nehemiah prevailed in prayer and watching against those scoffers and mockers. They are still prowling about, plenty of them, but although they mocked and scorned, Nehemiah prevailed against them. "The God of heaven He will prosper us"- if there are a thousand Sanballats, Tobiahs and Geshems - "therefore we His servants will arise and build", but as for you - "ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem". So the good hand of God was upon him to prevail over those heathen mockers. Now these things are not just merely of private interpretation. I do not know but that some of you may have been opposed by scoffers and mockers in your time, but here is a wonderful guide and a confirming prediction so that whatever the opposition may be, if the good hand of your God is upon you He will bring you through, He can bring you through as He brought good Nehemiah through. There is something very beautiful about Nehemiah; I feel a sweet union to Nehemiah. The good hand of his God was upon him, and he prayed about what he did before the God of heaven; there is no power or enemy above the God of heaven, therefore the Lord honoured him and prospered his way. Amen.

Psalm 141

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