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Prayer Meeting address by Mr.J.Delves at "Ebenezer", Clapham

on Monday evening 24.3.52

Reading: Numbers 9

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The chapter is evidently full of instruction for us if we have grace to perceive its spiritual meaning. The children of Israel were at this time journeying in the wilderness and evidently the Passover that was commemorated with such solemnity when they came out of Egypt had not since been observed. There were some among them who according to the rites and ceremonies then prevailing were disqualified by contact with a dead body and came to Moses for his direction. It is good to see their exercise concerning this important point regarding the Lord's commandment. They were desirous in their hearts to observe it but were ceremonially disqualified and Moses enquired of the Lord what he should command them to do. The Lord very graciously directed Moses to tell them to keep the Passover. Those who were unclean by reason of a dead body or in a journey afar off could keep the Passover a month later by the Lord's express permission and this was done. Notice was made concerning them and notice was also made of those who appeared to have been careless concerning this, who having opportunity did not take advantage thereof. There is a great difference between a gracious exercise concerning the matter and a rushing thoughtlessly into it, without waiting and seeking to know the mind and will of the Lord in it, or a carelessness concerning the whole matter. Here the Lord gives clear direction so that those who were thus disqualified have no fear whatever to venture to this observance with the Lord's approbation and blessing.

The second part of the chapter has relation to the cloud resting upon the tabernacle and the cloud moving. Here again the commandment of the Lord was the one thing. "At the commandment of the Lord they rested in their tents, and at the commandment of the LORD they journeyed". When the cloud lifted they moved onward whatever the conditions were or however inconvenient it may have been. Whatever time of day it was or even if in the night season that the cloud lifted from the tabernacle, that was the Lord's commandment to them to journey onward. Sometimes the cloud rested for a long time but it is said here that "Whether it were two days, or a month or a year", they were to be still in that place until the Lord gave them direction. It would be presumption to go before the cloud moved and it would be equally sinful, it would be unbelieving of God's direction to stay when the cloud moved. The direction was clear. Evidently sometimes it stayed long and at other times it stayed but a very short time. It brings before us just this, there was a need always for watchfulness, their eye was to be upon the cloud, they were in the right place while the cloud rested,

that was where the Lord intended them to be at that time; but they were to be continually on the watch because evidently at any moment the cloud might lift as a signal that they were to go forward. Not only does it show the need of watchfulness but it shows also the need of preparedness. You see a person might be watching and even then not be prepared to move forward. They were to be prepared, they were to be ready at any time the cloud lifted. They could truly say that they had no continuing city; they knew they would not remain very long in one place; they were to move forward continually until they came into the promised land which the Lord said He would give them. It shows the need not only of watchfulness and preparedness but it shows the need of willingness. They to raise no objection when the time came; not one Israelite was to say, 'I do not want to go, I do not want to move, I am content in this place'; no, they were all to be willing to move onward when the cloud guided them but not without a moving of the cloud. May the Lord go before us, teaching by His Word even in these matters, and where it may apply give that spiritual watchfulness and preparedness and willingness to follow His leading who has said, "I will instruct thee and teach thee, I will guide thee with Mine eye". Amen

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