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Sermon preached by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer" Clapham, 15.8.51

Text: "Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust; cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee." Ps. 143.8

We cannot read the Psalms without perceiving that the author came under circumstances at times wherein he had special need of God's sustaining and guiding grace, and so shall we if we are rightly conscious of our dependence upon God daily and hourly to hold us up, to guide us and to bring us honourably through this wilderness world. And it may not be the worst thing for us to have to learn continually how we do depend upon God, even if it be through painful circumstances, and sometimes this may have to be the case with us to show us that we have no real help in self in these matters and to bring us to a gracious confession of the same before God, as the hymn writer who said:-

"No help in self I find,
And yet have sought it well;
The native treasure of my mind
Is sin, and death, and hell."

And if we are really and graciously brought into such a case we shall know daily that we cannot do without God. Therefore it is a wonderful mercy really to feel the help of God in our difficulties, support in trial, guidance in things wherein we come to the end of our own wisdom and to hear the voice of the Lord, saying, "This is the way walk ye in it".

It is confirming to notice that although the Psalmist went into great depths he did not lose sight of God in them. If he had done, there would have been nothing before him but black despair; neither will there be for you and me if we lose sight of God and of our dependence upon Him. Even when he was in the valley of great depression of mind he could claim affinity and say, "O my God", not just "O God", but "O my God, my soul is cast down within me". Actually that is a wonderful place to be in, to feel, even in the depths of depression, of mental depression, that the Lord is your God, and that however low you sink the Saviour sunk lower still.

We may fear lest we shall fall into the pit eventually, though we never shall if we are His. It is a wonderful thing to realise that "underneath are the everlasting arms". And another very attractive feature about the Psalms is the urgency and fervency of David's prayer. As you read you can see that he could not live without it. It seems like a cord that bound him and held him from sinking never to rise again. Oh with what fervency he prays in his distresses and sorrows and afflictions. "I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land. Hear me speedily, O Lord". Do we ever feel like that? Are there times when it is as though you say, Lord Thou must come. "Hear me speedily", not, any time will do, there is no hurry, it does not matter when. No, "Hear me speedily", and if you get a real, heavy pressing burden in your soul, on your conscience or in your circumstances it will be like this, "Hear me speedily, O Lord: my spirit faileth", I am coming to the end, my tongue faileth for thirst, I am coming to the end, I cannot long continue, "Hear me speedily.... hide not thy face from me". That was what he seemed to dread more than anything else; you keep reading about it in the Psalms. David dreaded the hiding of the Lord's face I would say more than all his enemies; and I believe if we are rightly exercised we can feel the same. "For if God be for us who can be against us?" The whole world may be against us but God is above the world. We may have many enemies, persecutors, but God is above persecutors, He can handle them. "Hear me speedily, O Lord".

"Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning". You see the Psalmist had need of something to be done for him. There can be a great deal of self-satisfaction in a person's religious profession. They can be very pleased with what they do, and yet God may not be in it. But here was a man who had need of God to do something for him, deliver him out of his trouble, bring him up out of his depths, strengthen him in his weakness so that he could testify, as he did, to the goodness and faithfulness of a covenant-keeping God. "Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning". What may we understand by the lovingkindness of God? I understand it to refer to His love manifested in practical tokens. If you do something for a friend to

whom you feel a union of spirit to help him in his difficulties, that is lovingkindness. It is the evidence of the love you feel towards him in some practical favour that may be in your power to do. Lovingkindness. It is different from talking a lot about love and yet bearing no practical evidence of it. But God does manifest His love in many practical ways in His dealings with His children, and that is lovingkindness. In what way does He manifest His lovingkindness? One way is in rescuing His people from the ruins of the fall, in plucking them as brands from the burning.

"He saw me ruined in the fall,
Yet loved me notwithstanding all;
He saved me from my lost estate;
His lovingkindness, O how great."

There is something done, some practical token of His mercy manifested; "He saved me from my lost estate", this is real lovingkindness beyond all human power; only God can manifest this. He saved me, plucked me as a brand from the burning when I was lost and ruined and sunk in sin, and preserved me, brought me hitherto, or I should never have continued.

"Preserved in Jesus when
My feet made haste to hell;
And there should I have gone,
But thou dost all things well;
Thy love was great, thy mercy free,
Which from the pit delivered me.

That is lovingkindness, real lovingkindness. It is shown also in supporting and guiding His people through this wilderness. Every touch of His mercy is an evidence of His lovingkindness. What kindness to unworthy sinners, so unworthy! All we deserve is the curse, yet oh what mercy, so great so rich, so free! His lovingkindness! It is in the forgiveness of sins. This is great lovingkindness for the Lord to purge a poor sinner's conscience by His good Spirit in the application of the atonement and to bring pardon and peace and joy in believing, to remove your black sins, your burden of guilt and to speak pardon and peace. Wonderful lovingkindness! So it is to come to one in a time of trouble and drop a word in the heart to succour and to sustain and to enable him to press on a little longer notwithstanding the difficulties and the fears and the

mountains and the sins. Wonderful lovingkindness! It is to bring His Gospel to us, to give us to know it, to feel a little of its power and to walk in the light of it, and to raise us up to a hope in our hearts that the Lord is our God and to give us grace to endure and to hold fast unto the end and then, as the hymn-writer says, to sing in death His lovingkindness and mount and soar away to the bright realms of endless day.

But the lovingkindness here particularly appears to be an earnest plea for relief in a time of distress. You can see he was in trouble, you can see it in the verse. "Quicken me, O Lord, for thy name's sake: for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble. And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul." "Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies: I flee unto thee to hide me." But this is rather striking feature, he prays "Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning", as though he had had a restless, troubled, weary night and wondered whatever he would do the next day, as though he could not face it, hour after hour perhaps, weariness, trouble, restlessness; yet he prays "Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning". Not, tomorrow night will do, "in the morning"! Can you understand anything about this? Do you sometimes have troubled nights because of something that you will have to do the next day? Something that you must attend to, answer a letter perhaps, or meet someone or deal with some matter or face something that you feel altogether unequal to. O the need of help! "Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning". O in the morning, early, early, Lord don't keep me waiting too long, help me in this matter, show me what to do. And this "in the morning" may refer of course to receiving a speedy reply, whatever time of day it is. Hear me quickly, come now, come to me now! Ah yes, you see, when you come into deep things, real things, troubles, your prayers are not lazy then, are they? No they are groans. They are not formal then, no, they were not here, "I lift up my soul unto thee", that is very different from saying a prayer, although I know we do have to give expression to words, but there is something about this,

"I lift up my soul unto Thee", as though it were a life and death matter with him, cause me to hear it.

What does it mean to hear the Lord's lovingkindness? I take it to mean to have some gracious experience of it. Can we have any gracious experience of the Lord's lovingkindness? And how can we have any gracious experience of the Lord's lovingkindness? Sometimes by hearing the voice of the good Shepherd. You hear it. "I will allure her", it is said in the prophecy, "I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness and speak comfortably unto her". This is the lovingkindness - speaking comfortably unto her in the wilderness. Do you feel to be in a wilderness state? If so how seasonable will this word of the Lord be in your heart. Whatever He says will be fitting. Every word will be fitting to your case and it is so wonderfully refreshing when the Lord speaks, and sometimes He speaks as it were right into your heart in the trouble. Now this is hearing His lovingkindness. I know I cannot adequately describe it but I believe some of you know what the experience is. It is a still small voice whispering, as it were, and yet with wonderful effect in your very soul in some trouble that you may be walking in, passing through; and what a change it makes. This is hearing His lovingkindness. Have you ever heard it? Has the Lord ever spoken a word? I know some people speak a lot about having words but there are times when the Lord, by His Spirit, does speak a word in the heart. "I will speak comfortably unto her", that is speak to her heart. That is the place isn't it, that is the place. Why? Because when the Lord speaks to your heart you feel it. It is not a case of thinking about it but you feel the power of it, the unction of it, it softens you, softens your spirit, helps you to commit your matters to Him, brings a quietness and an assurance too, that He will bring you through.

Oh it is a wonderful thing to be favoured to do with God in our things and wonderful condescension on the part of God to deal with us in our things. Is He dealing with you? Tell me, are there not moments with you when you hear His lovingkindness? O

that heavenly whisper, it may be after hours of restlessness upon the bed, that wonderful whisper in the ear of faith, brings a silence, turns you round, levels your mountains, fills your valleys and enables you to go on your way leaning upon Jesus.

"Cause me to hear it". It does not say, I have heard it so now I am quite satisfied; no, "Cause me to hear it". Perhaps some of you are in just such a case as that now, "Cause me to hear it", you may have got something that the Lord alone can manage for you and He can. What then? Why, your heart and your soul will be up unto Him as in an earlier Psalm, "But mine eyes are unto thee, O God the Lord: in thee is my trust; leave not my soul destitute."

"Cause me to hear it". And this is right isn't it, it is mentioned twice in this verse, "Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning: for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk", give me to know what I am to do. And can you come in here with regard to the first part of this verse? Have you something tomorrow that you have to attend to and do not know how to attend to it? We can get there sometimes. If so, is not this fitting? "Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk". That is much better than saying 'I think I shall do this, I think I shall do that', it is wonderful to be shown the way by the Lord. "In Thee do I trust". "Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto Thee".

This is very beautiful language then, a poor, needy man leaning upon God, leaning alone upon Him and that is the best thing to do, "In Thee do I trust". O how frequently this comes in in the Psalms "In Thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk", I trust in Thee to show me, and did He disappoint ~~him~~? Did He fail him? I feel persuaded not. "In Thee do I trust". There is something wonderfully sweet about this trusting in the Lord in our things. It is an experience of the soul, very real when it is felt. Many people may talk about trusting God and yet do not ^{knpw} what it is at all. There is something very blessed in it. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee". Why? "Because he trusteth in Thee". "In quietness and in confidence shall be your

strength" but only when we are helped to trust in Him. It brings such a relief, doesn't it? Have there ever been times with you when you have felt the Lord take the burden from you and carry it for you? Perhaps you will say 'that is a strange way of talking', no it is not, it is very real at times with the Lord's people. He just takes it from you, that is not stretching a point is it? "Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee". When the Lord takes it it is easy to cast it on Him, it is easy, this is faith. But are there not times when faith being made lively in your soul you can take your burden to Him, and as it were, place it in His hands? Is it not a wonderful thing when God comes right between you and an enemy? Or between you and a difficulty? Between you and a mountain of fears? O the quietness, the quietness! "He leadeth me beside the still waters", not a rushing torrent, "He leads me", this is a wonderful word isn't it? He takes His children by the hand and leads them, directs them, by the still waters. This is where the soul finds the sweetest rest. "In Thee do I trust". O this leaning, this leaning upon the Lord is so wonderfully sweet. You cannot lean too ~~hard~~ can you? "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not to thine own understanding". It does not say, don't make any use of your own faculties or sense, no, but do not lean upon them apart from God. Ask Him to help you through. O it is sweet to lean upon Him, "In Thee do I trust".

Sometimes this is a trust that is the exercise of faith in a believer in His power. And this is in Christ; it is not bare omnipotence, but omnipotent power in the hand of the Mediator which is amazingly sweet to view at times. "All power is given unto Me", said the risen Saviour, "in Heaven and in earth". "All power". O then what about this need, this difficulty, this heavy thing, this hard thing? What about it? "In Thee do I trust". "All power". There is in this a leaning upon His power in the wilderness, a weak creature leaning upon Omnipotence in Christ. He will not fail, He shall not fail nor be discouraged. He will not fail. Has He ever dishonoured your faith? Oh, say you, I pray and pray and all seems to no purpose. That does not mean that the Lord has dishonoured

your faith, but that He may be trying it. Pray all the harder if you can. Was it not good Thomas Hardy who said that when someone spoke to him about having a hard heart he said, "Try what hard-hearted prayers will do". Well can you always go with a soft one? Say you, no, I cannot produce a soft one; then go with a hard one; the Lord can soften it. Yes, and many times, many times He has softened it even when you have been engaged in secret prayer. O that wonderful view faith gets at times of Emmanuel, that will soften you; that view of the richness and fulness and freeness of atoning blood, that will break you. That view of the perfect obedience of ~~then~~ Lord Jesus to the law as your justifier, that will melt you. Oh those sweet views at times that His children get when they pray!

"In Thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk". This is very striking language. Not the way I would walk. You may know the way you would walk, nature will soon tell you the way you would walk, no trouble to find that out, is it? No, but it is the way I should walk that is the difficulty. And who can show us that? The Lord Himself. And what is there said about this in the prophecy of Micah? "He hath shew^{ed} thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?". It is a wonderful way of walking under some reproach. Oh it needs His grace to walk humbly under reproach and suffering, and yet this is the way. Cause me to know it, show me how I should walk in this difficulty or under this reproach or in that matter I have to do with, in this path. Is it a dark path? Is it a deep valley? Is it a path wherein you feel to be like a blind person and do not know how to take the next step? The Lord knows how to show you where to put your foot and how to take the next step. He has a wonderful way at times of showing His people the way wherein they should walk in their difficulties. Perhaps you may have something even now of which you say, 'I do not know how to handle this, I do not know how to walk in it, I do not know what to do with it'. What can you do? Just this, "Mine eyes are up unto Thee". And it is not often that He

does things in a hurry in these matters. If you have a difficult problem lay it before the Lord and then be like Habakkuk who said, "I will watch to see what the Lord will say unto me and what I shall answer when I am reproved".

There is something very real in the experience here, watching to hear the Lord's voice as to what you are to do, how you are to answer this letter, or how you are to speak to this or that person, or how you are to take this or that step in your business or office or wherever it may be. How many, many times in our lives we come to this, do we not, show me, cause me to know the way wherein I should walk. And this can apply to the Lord's ordinances. Show me the way, cause me to know what I am to do, whether I am to stand still or whether I am to go forward. The Lord may tell you both, as He did the children of Israel when they were before the Red Sea, "Stand ye still and see the Salvation of the Lord"; but they did not have to stand still long, in that sense, though they had to stand still and see the Lord work for them and that is wonderful. Then they were commanded to go forward. But the great thing is to be caused to know the way, is it not? One says,

"Confirmed by one soft, secret word,
I seek no farther light;
But walk, depending on my Lord,
By faith, and not by sight."

When the Lord does show you the way wherein you should walk it is not showing your reason the way, no, it is showing faith the way. "For we walk by faith and not by sight". These two are incompatible really, sight and faith do not go together. No, but this walking in humble faith even though it be in the dark is wonderful. Job did; he said, "He knoweth the way that I take", that is, the way that I am walking in with all that is involved in it. "He knoweth the way that I take; when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." What wonderful faith that was! And has it ever been with you when walking in something in its nature overwhelming, yet notwithstanding all you have felt able to say and to feel it that He would bring you through. There are no

difficulties with God. "With God nothing is impossible", and when you can see God in the exercise of faith nothing is impossible to faith.

Now though I speak about these things I need them for myself. "For I lift up my soul unto Thee". I am on the listen Lord, I am on the listen to hear Thy voice, Thy lovingkindness, "I lift up my soul unto Thee", not my finger, my soul, that is the most important part, isn't it, and expresses real need and real urgency too. "I lift up my soul unto Thee", I have a soul to be saved and I have a burden to be relieved of. O God, I need Thee. "Cause me to hear Thy voice in the morning", early, do not keep me waiting, "For in Thee do I trust". I can only look to Thee in this thing. No one else can really deliver me, help, bring me through, "In Thee do I trust". This is the confidence of faith in a child of God cleaving to Him. "Look unto Me", He says, "and be ye saved all the ends of the earth for I am God and there is none else". "Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto Thee". Amen.

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