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Prayer Meeting Address by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer", Clapham,
on 17th July, 1950

Reading: Psalm 27

This Psalm is very speaking and expressive of the author's inner feelings. There is in it a prayer which incorporates an acknowledgment of his own dependence and his need of the Lord's presence and help, to be with him in future days as He had been with him in the past.

"Hide not Thy face far from me", this is a prayer for a feeling sense, experimentally, of the Lord's smile or approbation "Hide not Thy face", look upon me, lift up the light of Thy countenance, grant me Thy sensible favour, be near to me, be my support in every trial and affliction, temptation and persecution. Put not Thy servant away in anger, though I have deserved this because of my transgression, my guilt, my sin, yet for thy mercy's sake hold Thou me up, put me not away, that is, cast me not away from Thy presence, do not leave me. "Thou has been my help." David, as many of the Lord's people, can testify of former helps and of support and grace given in times of extremity and distress. He cleaves therefore to the same God, knowing that only He can impart that grace that is daily needful in the daily trial. "Leave me not, neither forsake me." All seems to hinge upon this, if Thou wilt be with me all will be well; 'In Thy presence I can suffer; in Thy presence I can die.' I believe without presumption when His presence is sweetly felt the Lord's people can say that; they can enter into their chambers and hide themselves, repose themselves in a covenant God, with a single eye to His faithfulness and grace, and that amid the changes that necessarily come here, when generations pass away, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up". All earthly friends may fail, death may come, they are taken from us. Those upon whom as children we depended to provide for us, they in time are removed and we too are journeying on. Amidst the changes and generations going, the Lord remains. Therefore his prayer is "Leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation".

A sense of the goodness of God evidently preserved him from fainting, falling a prey to the tempter, to despair, and giving up. "I had fainted" unless there was a preventive against despair and that was the goodness of the Lord, and believing to see it: "Unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living". The Psalmist had not only seen the goodness of the Lord appear to him many times in his providential trials, but he had that view of faith in the goodness of God in the Gospel, in the things that accompany salvation and the concerns of the soul, and that was a support in his distress. "I had fainted unless I had believed to see" this. This view of faith supported his soul, enabled him to hold on, to persevere; the goodness of the Lord that protected him, held him up and granted him deliverance from his enemies. This is probably an exhortation to others in their need and dependence. "Wait on the Lord." You feel your weakness and dependence and with fear wait on the Lord; He has to give what you need and only He. "Be of good courage", be of good courage in faith, in prayer, in importunity, "He shall strengthen thy heart". He repeats it, "Wait, I say, on the Lord". This is good counsel, whatever burdens may lie upon the heart of the Lord's children, whatever changes may come to them, whatever afflictions may oppress them. The Lord, and only He, can bestow grace all sufficient. Let us therefore seek unto Him. Here also the Psalmist has a sweet sense of his relationship; it is not a point of doubt whether or no he has any interest in a covenant God. He confirms that the Lord is his light and his salvation, is the strength of his life; and this being so, what real cause has he to fear? But faith never leads to presumption, neither does it rise above prayer in looking to God. Prayer and faith mingle together and the stronger the faith wrought by the Spirit in us, the more importunate should prayer be. They mingle together. Thus the Spirit of the Lord instructs the living family and enables them to draw supplies from His fulness.