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sermon preached by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer" Clapham on Wednesday evening 21st. July, 1971

Hymns: 6, 471, 462.

Reading: Psalms 27 and 28.

Text: Psalm 27.1

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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

I have had this choice word on my mind during the day, and have felt some comfort in it, but since hearing the sad news of our loss in the sudden death of our friend Mr. Andrews my mind has been disturbed and distracted. However, I still feel that I must hold to this word and, as the Lord may help me, make some observations upon it.

There are three choice points in this Psalm. One of these is the confidence which David felt - and he was not presuming. He was able to say: "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?" as much as to say: "This lifts me above all my enemies, however great, or many, or strong they may be." It seems an answer to everything - "The Lord is my light and my salvation".

Another feature consists in his love for the service and worship of God, so much so that he would live in the exercise of it. It was the one thing he desired above all other things, that he might dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life. What was this desire to dwell in His house for? What was the reason? It was not just to be engaged in the formal act of worship; his desire was a blessed one indeed. It was to behold the beauty of the Lord and to enquire in His temple. We cannot know any better exercise than this, and it is a favoured place to be in when we come to the means of grace and the service of the sanctuary. For a poor sensible sinner to come with that desire to behold the beauty of the Lord is profoundly sweet and sacred. I believe that some of us know something of this now and again and that there have been those occasions when the sweet light of His grace has shone into our hearts. Then we have beheld a little of the beauty of the Lord so that we could say of the Lord Jesus: "Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips; therefore God hath blessed thee for ever." It

is great to get a sight of Him, just a glimpse, and especially when we can feel some sense of our interest.

A third point consists in his prayer. He could say; "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?. Yet this gracious confidence never lifted him above prayer. So we find him saying, "Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger; thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation". I have been looking at this. He does not just say: "O God of their salvation". He says "of my salvation". It makes all the difference, does it not, when we can feel, at least hopefully, that God is "the God of my salvation". Even so, David prays that the Lord will be his teacher and will lead him in a plain path. In this way the opening and closing verses of the Psalm are connected. Although he could say, "The Lord is my light and my salvation" yet he also says, "I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living". But he had believed to see it. That makes all the difference. He could bear personal witness to the goodness and mercy of the Lord to him in the circumstances of his life and the experience of his soul.

The Lord is my light and my salvation....the Lord is the strength of my life". Here are three important points. The Lord is my light. The Lord is my salvation. The Lord is my strength. This seems to enter into the marrow of vital doctrine and of gracious experience. This is not a cold theology. It is a statement of what the Lord was to him personally. That is the important point, is it not, what is the Lord to me in my own case personally? It may be that some of us would have to feel that the 9th. verse is as far as we can go, "Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger; thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation". If there is any life in our souls at all this will be one point with us, that the Lord may not hide His face from us but that He will be our light. "The Lord is my light".

In the Scriptures we read quite a lot about light and darkness. We often find that light indicates knowledge and darkness indicates ignorance. The light which the Lord's people have is that light

which they feel when He shines into their hearts, when He bursts through the clouds that seem to come between, and shines into the soul. Then they can say "The Lord is my light". In this sense there are three particular points that may be noticed. "The Lord is my light"; that indicates the Lord's favour and approbation. In an earlier Psalm the Psalmist says: "Who will show us any good? Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us." By His countenance we understand His favour and approbation; in this sense the Lord is our light, for we cannot feel His favour unless the light of His grace shines in some measure into our poor dark hearts. It is very sweet to feel this. If you get a little of the light of His precious Gospel shining into your heart, that is the evidence of the Lord's favour and approbation towards you, a poor guilty sinner. He looks upon you as one of whom He made choice in His eternal decrees of grace and love in the everlasting covenant. Surely it is an amazing thought that the Lord should ever show any favour and approbation to poor sinful rebels; yet He does, and of this we have many instances.

The Lord is my light. Light in the Scriptures often indicates knowledge and understanding, that is experimentally speaking. The Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, speaks of "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" shining into our hearts. It will never shine into your heart savingly out of Christ. The Church is "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places" in Him. As we read in Ephesians 1 in Him the Church is blessed, in Him we are chosen, in Him we are redeemed, in Him we are accepted. It must always be in Him.

"Every grace and every favour

Comes to us through Jesus' blood."

When the Lord is pleased to shine a little into your heart all these things appear with such a beauty and majesty - the glorious Person of our exalted Emmanuel, the dispensations of grace and salvation through Him, all tend to exalt His blessed Majesty.

There is another point in regard to this. "The Lord is my light". He is my light to lead and guide me in this dark wilderness journey. What does the prophet say as the word of the

Lord concerning this? "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight, these things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." Is there not something about this that is beautifully true in our soul's experience? The Lord by His blessed Spirit is our guide into the mysteries of the glorious Gospel. "He shall guide you into all truth", said the Lord Jesus, "he shall receive of mine and show it unto you". This is where the Lord is our light to guide us in the dark and uncertain path of this life, in the wilderness down here below, as He led the children of Israel through the wilderness. They did not know the way at all, but the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, and by night in a pillar of fire. But we may come closer than this. We find the Lord saying through the Psalmist: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go, I will guide thee with mine eye". In this sense the Lord is our light, and there is no better light than this. Many people, it may be feared, in a profession of religion, may be walking in a false light: but a poor sensible sinner, who feels his need of gracious teaching, will seek that he may be favoured to feel that the Lord is his light.

"The Lord is my light". Some render this "The word of the Lord is my light." Is there any point in this with regard to the Holy Scriptures? In a later Psalm we find it recorded: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." His word is this blessed Book, the Holy Scriptures. Many of the Lord's exercised people have proved this in their difficult matters. The word of the Lord has been their light. What a blessed revelation it is! It is that revelation of the glorious Person of Christ in the salvation of our souls, and it has many preceptive directions to guide the Lord's people in their lives, to support them in their trials, and to bring them through to the desired haven. As it is said: "He led them forth by the right way that they might go to a city of habitation."

Not only could the Psalmist say "The Lord is my light" but he could say "and my salvation". We cannot separate these two choice

points in this sense that if the Lord is our light then He is our salvation. He is our light to guide us; He is our salvation to redeem us. It is recorded in Isaiah "Fear not for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine." We cannot have an interest in this great salvation unless the Lord has appointed us to it in the counsels of His will before ever time was. It is a wonderful spot for a poor sinner to be brought to, feelingly and humbly to say "The Lord is my salvation". When the children of Israel were delivered from the Egyptians, brought through the Red Sea, and saw their enemies all dead bodies, then they could sing, (although they were rebellious before,) "The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation". On certain occasions, often in a providential way, there can be a sweet moment when one can say, "The Lord is my salvation". One thing is certain, there is no salvation apart from Him, no salvation outside of this glorious Trinity. "The Lord is my salvation" in His trinity of persons, God the Father, that is if we are really His - and this is a cardinal point - God the Father is the salvation of His own dear people; but I would rather keep to the personal aspect "is my salvation". God the Father is my salvation. How so? Because He made choice of me in Christ before the foundation of the world, blessed me in Him, and gave me a place in that blessed covenant that is in all things ordered well, in the Lamb's book of life. As we read in the Holy Scriptures, if our names are recorded there then our everlasting destiny and salvation is secure. It is a wonderfully profound thought, and it surpasses all words to express. I have been thinking today what an amazing thing it is to feel a hope that the Lord recorded my name there before creation was, in His immutable purpose of grace and love in His covenant of grace in Christ. So God the Father is my salvation in the sense that He sent His beloved Son in the fulness of time to accomplish it meritoriously viewed. For this great salvation was not just a matter of signing a contract. No! An inconceivable load of guilt and sin must be borne away for ever on behalf of those whose names are recorded in that blessed book of life.

As you all know, in the fulness of time the Saviour came. "Being

in the form of God He thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation (for some poor sinners in Ebenezer Chapel!) and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." All this was necessary for the Lord to be my salvation, because sin had made a barrier that no human might or power could ever remove. Oh what a wonderful mercy we have in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ! One hymn-writer says:

"On wings of love the Saviour flies
And freely left His native skies,
To take a human birth."

I was reading quite a good letter the other day in a periodical where the writer signed himself "Yours affectionately in the sweet Babe of Bethlehem." I thought it was a strange way of expressing it, but there is a point in it. There is no redemption, no salvation, no hope of deliverance from the wrath to come, and the curse of a broken law, apart from the sweet Babe of Bethlehem. Although He was born of Mary, He came to accomplish a work that was not possible to mere man. The union of the two natures in the Person of the dear Redeemer was necessary unto this end. The work that He came to do He accomplished to perfection. It involved terrible suffering, that intolerable load of guilt that was laid on Him, the price He paid, the blood He shed as a ransom-price to deliver His poor helpless people from the wrath to come. Bless His holy Majesty! I would love to get a sight of Him again. I believe I did have a sight of Him once and that once made Him the chiefest among ten thousand to me. "He is my salvation". I have none apart from Him neither have you or any other poor sinner. If we are saved we must be saved through the merit of the Lamb's redeeming blood as the price paid to deliver us from the curse of a broken law. He wrought the righteousness, died to redeem us, rose again and ascended up into heaven. It is a sweet spot in the experience of a poor sinner when he can say: "The Lord is my light and my salvation."

There is a third point. "He is the strength of my life". The Lord is the strength of our natural life, for it is in Him we live

and move and have our being. We are His creation and He sustains us in our natural life. Our bodies live by His sustaining power and upon the bounty of His hand, that supplies the needs of nature. He is our strength. But He is our strength in a higher sense than all that is natural. He is the strength of our spiritual life, which is more important because of its ultimate issues. What life is this? It is the life of grace implanted in the heart by the Holy Spirit in a regenerate sinner. There is a life implanted there that is immortal. Although that is blessedly true, the Lord's dear people pass through seas of conflict, are often tempest-tossed, and feel their weakness, fearing that they will never endure to the end. But amidst all this they are favoured to feel that the Lord is the strength of their life. It is beautifully set forth in the case of the Apostle Paul, who prayed that the thorn in the flesh might be removed from him. Now though that was not the Lord's purpose, yet He did say "My grace is sufficient for thee", so the Apostle proved the Lord to be his strength under his own personal sense of weakness. However weak we may feel we cannot be too weak for Christ, He is the strength of my life, the strength of my everlasting life. We have this in Isaiah 26: "Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength". He is the strength of my life, the life of my body, the life of my soul, and of that everlasting life which, if the Lord is our light and our salvation, we shall one day prove. The prospect before a believer is inconceivably blessed. It is to be feared that many people live in a confidence that is questionable. I was reading in John Rusk's Diary how he visited a man who seemed to be able to say rather lightly that he had not doubted his interest in Christ for years. John Rusk did not feel quite like that and I do not think the Lord's people do, but it is not for us to judge others. What I feel I can say is, if not deceived, I have had two or three spots in my life when I could say: "The Lord is my light and my salvation". There is a great difference between a general deduction and a sweet blessed witness in one's soul and that is what we need. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." If you

get that you will be able to say "He is my salvation". As you feel it, it will lift you above all your fears. Many things give rise to fear, but when you can feel your interest in Christ, when that precious blood is applied to your conscience, it lifts you above all your fear. You can commit your way unto Him and feel that all will be well. You can leave your matters in His hand to manage them, believe that He will never leave you nor forsake you, and that as He has begun a good work in you He will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Amen.