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Sermon preached by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer" Clapham on Wednesday  
evening 30th. May, 1973 73/K

Hymns 30, 905, 812

Reading: Joshua 1

Text: Psalm 27,14

"Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen  
thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord."

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This remarkable Psalm that I have considered a little concludes with a timely exhortation. Through the Psalm the Psalmist appears to refer principally to his own case and experience and his need of the the Lord's help and preserving mercy to bring him through, and that He would not leave him or forsake him. But the last verse appears to be an exhortation for the encouragement of others to wait on the Lord, as though, reflecting upon the confidence that he had felt "The Lord is my light and my salvation", when he had been strengthened in faith to defy all enemies, and had seen the hand of the Lord toward him, he would encourage others to wait upon the Lord Who had done so much for him. In fact he affirms that unless he had believed to see the goodness of the Lord he would have fainted, and this is therefore a very comforting word, "I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living". This appears to have held him up, preserved him, and kept him from fainting. "I had fainted unless". It is possible then that this has been the experience of many of the Lord's people when they have been passing through difficult and heavy things, a particular sense of the goodness of the Lord that they have experienced themselves appears to have held them up and kept them from fainting. So the Psalmist here says, "I had fainted unless I had believed to see" - not simply because I had seen the goodness of the Lord - although he had, but "I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living". He had a particular personal experience of the goodness of the Lord during his life time, and this moved him to encourage others to wait on the Lord and to be of good courage.

It is a wonderful thing for anyone to believe to see the goodness of the Lord; the Psalmist had just referred to false

witnesses that had risen against him, and that breathed out cruelty, therefore it is as though he would say, 'This trial has pressed upon me to such a degree that I would have fainted under it unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord'. This may be a help to some of you if heavy things press upon you, or enemies rise up against you, or hard things come into your lives, to look up to the Lord, and to believe to see His goodness. Possibly David reflected upon some occasion when there was a particular experience of the goodness of the Lord, for he says "I had fainted unless". I wonder whether this experience has ever come into your path. I assume it may have done at some time so that you have had to say under this or that trial that pressed upon you, "I should have fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord" and that supported you, lifted you up, sustained you, brought you through, and kept you from fainting. What a mercy it is, then, to know our God in times of trouble and distress, and to be enabled to wait upon Him. So here is an exhortation, "Wait on the Lord".

It is said in the Scriptures that the "Lord is good unto them that wait for him, and to the soul that seeketh Him", and truly is/ we may say that it/the Lord's goodness to them that they are waiting upon Him. Whatever matter it may be in our providences, or our soul's exercises, it is a great thing if we are helped to wait on the Lord. The hearts of all men are in His hand, our future life is in His hand, our times are in His hand, and where faith is in exercise there is this waiting upon a God of power, of almighty power, with Whom nothing is too hard, no circumstances too hard, no enemy too hard, no devil too hard. "Wait on the Lord", and it is said the Lord is good to him that waiteth for Him. But the Scriptures say something else about waiting upon the Lord that may be even more confirming, "They shall not be ashamed that wait for me". This appears to be a promise, not simply a statement that the Lord is good to such, but a promise that they will not wait upon Him in vain. "They shall not be ashamed". This then may be confirming, although faith may be tried sometimes, even in the exercise of waiting. We find David saying, "I waited patiently for the Lord", which would indicate that he had been waiting some

time, but he still continued waiting on the Lord until the time came when the Lord regarded him. "I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings." The Psalmist waited patiently, and eventually great things were done for him. "They shall not be ashamed that wait for me".

There is something else in the Scriptures about those that wait upon the Lord, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength". This would indicate that sometimes the Lord's people become very weary in their waiting, are inclined to faint and it may be to give it up. They become very weak and weary, and labour under much temptation in this exercise of waiting upon the Lord, as though their strength is giving way, and they will have to give everything up; but the promise here is that they shall renew their strength - not that they shall fall down and never rise again, but that "they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint".

There is then every encouragement for exercised people to wait on the Lord, and this appears to be David's point here. He had proved God to be a faithful God to him in many times of trial and distress. He had proved it many times, and so to others he would say, "Wait on the Lord". It will not be in vain then, and while we are thus waiting on the Lord we may at times feel helped to realise that we are waiting upon an Almighty God, and that His power is not limited. Though many things are beyond our powers nothing is beyond His. You have your providences, some of you in particular. Our dear young people have their concerns, their life is before them, and matters exercise them probably as relating to the Lord's providence and what His purposes may be. How good it is to wait on the Lord regarding the disposings of His providence, and to be instructed and directed when to be still, when to go forward, when to be silent, when to speak, "Wait on the Lord". We need to wait upon the Lord for guidance, not only young people in their future prospects, but older people - we all need to wait upon the Lord, for

matters come to us where we need the Lord to show us what to do, whether to go or stay, to stand still or go forward, whether to be silent or speak. "Wait on the Lord".

There follows another very timely exhortation, "Be of good courage". This appears to be attached to waiting upon the Lord. Courage enables people, naturally speaking, to encounter dangers and difficulties with firmness and confidence. This courage has been seen in many people in natural ways, and we read of many in the Holy Scriptures that were given courage. They were given a firmness of mind, a great confidence in their God. There can be a natural courage in people, they have that strength of mind naturally in things; but there is a gracious courage, and it is this that the Psalmist refers to. There is a gracious courage that the Lord gives His people enabling them to go forward in things, to go forth in the strength of the Lord their God, putting their confidence and trust in Him. That is why I read the first chapter in the book of Joshua. As you may have noticed, the Lord spake unto Joshua saying, "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.". The Lord gave Joshua courage, so that he was a brave and courageous leader, as was Moses, for he was raised up to bring the people through Jordan into the promised land, and we read that the people passed clean over Jordan. There is a gracious courage that the Lord can and does give His people. Sometimes this has been in providential matters in our lives. I always remember that when I wanted to start in business, I heard of a particular property to let and I went to see it. I obtained the key, and went into the shop and as I stood there in the empty shop I felt such a sense of the Lord's approbation, that I had no feeling of uncertainty as to whether I ought to take it to start in business. I felt quite settled and I am sure that it was a courage that was given me, especially when I consider the situation I was in then.

Some of you may understand this; you have seen the goodness of the Lord pass before you; you have felt a confidence and courage given you that did not belong to you naturally. "Wait on the Lord; be of

good courage". When the Lord exhorted Joshua to be of good courage He did not leave him to himself, He gave him that courage so that nothing daunted him; those mighty giants in the land never daunted Joshua; those high walls around the cities never daunted Joshua; the Lord gave him courage, and enabled him to press on; and I wonder if you have known this in your own circumstances. Have you known the time when you felt a strength and courage given you to undertake something, to go forward in a matter, or take a certain course in your life? It is noticeable that when the Lord exhorts people to be of good courage He gives them that good courage to follow His exhortation. What a wonderful thing it is to be given something from the Lord to help us along. Poor fearful creatures that we are, what a mercy it is to have a God to go to when we feel filled with fear and apprehension. "Be of good courage". It is remarkable how the Lord gave courage to some men as in the case of Daniel, Nehemiah and Ezra and other good men that we read of in the Scriptures. "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage", as though the Psalmist would say, do not be disheartened, or give up if there is no response to your waiting. Be of good courage. Are you striving to wait upon the Lord, and does the Lord seem to be silent? "Be of good courage", you will hear His voice one of these days. Do you feel to need the Lord to guide you in any particular matter, feeling something like Asaph who said, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory", and yet the more you pray the more difficult things become? What then? "Be of good courage", press your case, hold the Lord to His promise so to speak, wait upon Him still, for He has said, "They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me".

"He shall strengthen thine heart" to wait on Him, for this is one way the Lord gives courage to His people, He strengthens the heart. When you feel weak and weary He will strengthen your heart. When you feel like fainting He strengthens your heart. How does the Lord strengthen the hearts of His people? I believe sometimes He does this by giving them a feeling sense of His favour and, as I

have mentioned in my own case, of His approbation in a matter. He strengthens your heart. When you can feel that the Lord approves of a matter and gives you to feel that you have His approval, if the Lord shines upon it and goes before you in it, it will strengthen your heart. Sometimes this has been by appearing to His people. He appeared to Daniel and said, "O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me." It may be that the Lord has appeared to you in some trial when you have come to a pass and has strengthened you. How does He do it? Sometimes He does it by bringing a promise into the heart and giving you to feel the power of it. He strengthens your heart. Can you say that you were in a fiery trial once, when you feared it would be the end of you, and the Lord brought a word into your heart that strengthened you, supported you, enabled you to press on in the strength of the Lord, which not only allayed your fears, but inspired confidence; and you were favoured to see Him bring you through better than all your fears. Sometimes the Lord has strengthened the heart by His presence in a time of trial and need. It is noticeable what the Lord said to Moses when Moses entreated of the Lord that He would go with the people. The Lord said to him, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." There is a hymn that we need to sing very softly, it is hymn 1101 especially verses 3 and 4.

It is blessedly true, and has been true with many of the Lord's people, when His presence has been sweetly felt in the heart, it can carry us through a trial. It can bear us up in the deep waters, it can raise us up when we feel to be sinking. "My presence shall go with thee and I will give thee rest".

"Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart." The Lord has other means of strengthening the hearts of His people; He has often strengthened our hearts by the reading of His blessed Word, and when in a time of need some portion has come home with sweetness. We find in the 119th. Psalm the Psalmist frequently refers to the Lord's word strengthening and supporting him. Has not the Lord at times strengthened you by

His Holy Word? "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart". Have you had some experience of this when passing through hard and heavy trials, when you have sought the Lord's guidance or some light upon your path? You have opened the sacred page have you not, and lighted upon some word that has been a comfort and strength to you. "He shall strengthen thine heart: wait on the Lord". The Psalmist repeats it, emphasising the importance of it, "Wait, I say on the Lord". In the first place it is, "Wait on the Lord", but in the closing part of the verse it is, "Wait, I say on the Lord", he brings it home as a matter of importance. So I trust we may sometimes find it to our comfort, help, strength and guidance in all matters of providence and grace, to betake ourselves to the mercy seat, and wait upon the Lord for He has said, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble. I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me". "Wait, I say, on the Lord". Amen.

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