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Sermon preached by Mr. J. Delves at Ebenezer, Clapham, on Sunday evening
20.1.74.

Hymns: 952, 1127, 511.

Reading: Nehemiah 8.

Text: Psalm 29: 10 and 11.

"The Lord sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever.
The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless
his people with peace."

This Psalm which I have referred to this Sabbath day has relation to worship. This worship is acceptable only as it is in the beauty of holiness, that is the glorious sanctuary, or more particularly, the Lord Jesus Christ who is the beauty of holiness. Is it not an amazing wonder for poor guilty people to have contact with the Majesty of heaven? but this is what religion really is, contact with God. There is no age limitation; although it may more often be found in those deeply and graciously taught of riper years, it can be in any whose heart is opened to receive the truth of the Gospel. So here in speaking a word to our young friends I would say that it is our prayer that the Lord may use means acceptable in His sight for your everlasting good, whether it applies to the children or our younger friends. We all need the same Gospel, the same Christ, the same atonement, the same righteousness; and if we are of the redeemed of the Lord it will be the same heaven. What a mercy it is to know something of the power of the precious Gospel in our souls. That, as you are aware, was my thought this morning; and I would pray that it may be the Lord's will that we may be favoured in our gathering together this evening with true worship.

In this Psalm the voice of the Lord is mentioned, I think, about four or five times with different references as to the particular way in which that voice may be heard. I would desire to say, friends, in all solemnity that we shall all hear the voice of the Lord one day, even at that great day of assize and general judgment of which we read in Holy Scripture. Now the voice of the Lord is mentioned in three particular aspects. The voice of the Lord is heard in the law, not only the moral law (although that is what I refer to in particular). The voice of the Lord was heard in Old Testament days on many different occasions. The voice of the Lord was audibly heard on some occasions; but to us all the voice of the Lord is heard in the

law, that is the moral law which claims our obedience, and this is profoundly solemn because as we stand guilty before Him it is a voice of condemnation. "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them". If there was nothing other than this we should all be lost to an endless eternity under divine punishment. This is very solemn; but the voice of the Lord is in the claims of the law upon us as His creatures.

The voice of the Lord is in the Gospel and this is your mercy and mine. The Gospel is good news, the good news of salvation, mercy, pardon, peace and heaven, through the wounds and blood of our incarnate God. Oh how profoundly sweet it is to hear ~~that~~ voice! The Lord refers to it Himself as we have it in the Gospels. He says, "My sheep hear my voice"; that is not the voice of the law in their condemnation, but the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospel to their eternal salvation. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."

There is another aspect of the voice of the Lord, not only in the law, and not only in the Gospel, but the voice of the Lord is heard in His providences that we may be called upon to pass through, and sometimes in a particular way in times of affliction, distress, some temporal trouble, some burden upon the spirit, or some enemy that may be attacking us, or even the devil himself. I have heard godly people say of this or that particular providence, "It was a voice to me"; and this can be a solemn voice, it can be a warning voice or a reproving voice, but not a condemning voice in the case of the Lord's people, it is a voice in discipline. "He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity". It is very, very sacred, dear friends, but I believe there is such a thing as hearing the Lord's voice. If I am not greatly deceived I believe I have heard it two or three times in my life in particular. The effect of it has remained more or less upon my spirit to this day.

Here the voice of the Lord is said to be "full of Majesty". If you hear that voice it will not bring a lightness into your spirit, it will have a majesty in it that will humble you before Him in confession of your unworthiness, with a sense of His divine compassion toward you.

"The Lord sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever".

This expression "sitteth upon", as a figure of speech, can have a particular import. It is not, of course, to be understood in a literal sense only but more particularly all distressing conditions that come into the lives of the Lord's people - as a flood of trouble, a flood of temptation, a flood of affliction - all are in the hand of a covenant God. They are divinely appointed, for no true believer in the precious Gospel believes in chance work, but in the Lord's appointments even to the minutest circumstance of our life. That path of tribulation that may come upon us, that we are called to walk in, or affliction to our bodies that may be laid upon us, - they do not come by chance. Job felt this when he said, "He performeth the thing that is appointed for me; and many such things are with Him"; and I do not doubt but that some of you here can look back and see the hand of the Lord in the appointments of some providences in your life in a particular way.

"He sitteth upon the flood". By the flood then we may not necessarily take it too literally although it can have that bearing. The great flood when the ungodly world was drowned, was a solemn judgment upon the people because of their wickedness; but the Lord sat upon it, controlled it, had power over it, and fulfilled His purposes by it. Floods so considered can come into our lives more or less. There can be a flood of temptation. The Scripture says so, it says "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him". If you and I are the Lord's people we shall know something about this enemy coming in like a flood, as though he would overwhelm us and be our destruction. He can be an angel of light, it is true; but he comes in sometimes like a flood of temptation. This can be in the silence of the night. It can be in our lives, in circumstances through which we may have to pass, it can be by some strong temptation brought upon us that may bring us to a state of utter confusion. He comes in like a flood of temptation. There can also be floods of trouble - affliction - many of the Lord's people are afflicted as we read in the Holy Scripture. There have been floods of persecution; many, many have laid down their life for Christ's sake, and suffered painful deaths as the martyrs did, but we are allowed to gather together protected by the laws of our land. What a wonderful mercy this is, and here can be a timely word to our younger friends; you will find if the fear of the Lord is in your heart, which indeed is the greatest blessing you can know, that the enemy will

assail it, he will try to flood you with temptations, and all kinds of things that I could hardly give expression to. He will come in then like a flood, he will try to kill the tender blade if he can, but where the Lord has once "begun a good work in you, He will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ".

Many of the Lord's people have seen in their providences a divine appointment, not perhaps so much particularly at the time, but looking back upon them they can see the hand of the Lord in them. He led you here or there, He appeared in some particular way, He overturned something, He closed a door, He opened another. He can bring down, and He can build up. It is a good word that we have in Psalm 73 where Asaph says, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory". In another Psalm the Lord says, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. Be ye not as the horse or as the mule", that may struggle and become wild. "I will instruct thee"; and sometimes this divine instruction can be very precious in our soul's experience. The Lord sitteth upon the flood. This sitting upon it indicates not only His appointment of this or that providence, but His power over it - He controls it. I know you may say that you are deciding to do this or that, and you may take this or that step; but if you are one of the Lord's children your God is sitting upon it, that is He has control over it. Many of the Lord's people in their tender years of spiritual experience have seen the Lord overturn things in their lives and turn their course in quite a different way from what they expected or set their own minds upon. I have proved this, and so have many of the Lord's people. He sits upon the flood; that is, without being too fanciful, every flood of temptation, every flood of affliction, every flood, trial, and tribulation is all beneath our God. He sits upon it; and sometimes this has been a sweet word with the Lord's people. Our dear young friends, as you are concerned about your movements in providence, you may be given to see the Lord sitting upon them, that is having power over them to order them for you and sometimes by overturning your own designs - He sits upon the flood. This sitting upon the flood indicates that the Lord has a purpose in it to bring something to pass according to His own will. He has a purpose in it, and this can apply to some providence in your life. He may bring something

to pass, or hedge up your way, He can open a door or close one, but He has a purpose in it, and this can at times be very confirming to the Lord's dear people. David had a sweet sense of it when he said: "All my times are in Thy hand"; and this can be a sweet spot in the life of a believer, when you feel it and can enable you to cast all your care upon Him, feeling that He careth for you. I know a good friend at Richmond who used sometimes to talk to me about the Lord's dealings; one day he said to me with regard to the position he held, and had for some years, "I believe the Lord prepared that for me from eternity, I believe He prepared that bench for me in His eternal purpose". Well, there may be something in your life like this. The Lord may overturn or appoint something to bring His own purpose to pass. There is no flood that the Lord does not sit upon. He controls every one of them, whether they are literal floods, and some of them have been very solemn; or providential floods of trouble and affliction that come into our lives, He holds them in His own hand. He sits upon the flood; and is not this a sweet thought? We have passed through things and when they have been sanctified to us they have brought a sweet spirit of humility before the Lord. Sometimes there has been that sweet spirit of adoption or conformity to the Lord's providence, and this has been very sweet. You have, it may be, seen a Father's hand prepare that cup, though you had some bitter ingredients in it, but not all bitter.

"A Father's hand prepares the cup
And what He wills is best".

"The Lord sitteth...ever. The Lord will give...people". He will give strength to His people. This indicates that His people are weak people; so they are; and this is a very timely promise. In Isaiah we find the Lord saying, "I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness". "I will strengthen thee". I felt that once in my life - once - in a particular sense when I had something before me that overwhelmed me, but it was like a timely whisper, "I will strengthen thee", and I began to feel strength come into my body, and the Lord brought me through what before appeared to be impossible. He gives strength unto His people. He gives them strength sometimes to endure the path He has appointed them, He gives them strength to walk in it realising that He is sitting upon it. He gives strength to

walk in it; and more than this, He will give strength to submit to it; and this is often when deliverance comes, when one can say, "The will of the Lord be done"; then the furnace has done its work. He gives strength often in their providences, He has done in their bodies, in their trials, in the burdens that press upon them, and afflictions that attend them.

"The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless His people with peace". This does not mean that we shall sail through life without any trouble, there is nothing to indicate this, but the peace that He gives is a peace often given to His people in a particular way when they are in trouble. This is inward peace and brings a quietness into the spirit that is sweet to feel when perhaps you have been disturbed about things more than you know how to bear; and yet the voice of your Lord is heard speaking peace, whispering peace, bringing a quietness. Here and there I believe I have known this, at least two or three times. How sweet this is, it brings a wonderful submission which can lighten the burden, ease the trouble and greatly help one to walk in it. Moreover He can come in a sweet way and walk with you in it as often He has done, though you may have been hardly dealt with, misunderstood, and perhaps had many hard things said of you. I do not know whether this is so with any of you, but it has sometimes been so; yet the Lord has come into it, He sits upon it, He controls it, and He makes no mistake. The flood never gets beyond Him, if it gets beyond you; He sits upon it. It is beneath Him and never rises above Him. In some of your trials, or losses, or bereavements, or hard things, the Lord has sweetly manifested His love and mercy to your souls, has He not? The Lord add His own blessing. May the Lord, so to speak, sit upon the things I have said today and use them as He shall see fit. Amen.

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