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Sermon preached by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer", Clapham, on Wednesday, 13.3.74.

Hymns 74, 67, 722.

Reading: Psalms 38 and 39

Text: Psalm 39:7.

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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

"And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in Thee".

This is a striking Psalm. It appears to refer to some unusual and extraordinary circumstances that the Psalmist was in at this particular time. What they may have been is difficult precisely to determine, but he was evidently in trouble of some kind, and probably heavy trouble. He appears to have been under a solemn sense of the brevity of life, he compares our life here to an handbreadth, and as nothing before the Lord, so that in such a condition, generally speaking, man is altogether vanity and walks in a vain show; but after all this he appears to come to a point, as though after commenting upon certain conditions, he turns away from them and looks up unto the Lord, he gathers things up and pieces them together, so to speak. He would just bring them before the Lord, whatever they may have been, and say, "My hope is in Thee". This is not altogether an uncommon experience, and is more particular when the Lord's people are brought to a pass in their providences, and may have struggled on, trying this or that, putting their hand to this matter or that matter, and having had to see this or that fail. There is a gathering up of these matters before the Lord, as though he would leave them in His hands and say "Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in Thee".

Some of you may know something about this. It comes right into the experience, both spiritual and providential, of the living family of God; and I wonder if anyone here has come, or may have come, to such a point as this, as to say "And now Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in Thee" - "AND NOW", as though leaving matters to which he had referred. He had been silent when the wicked were before him, and his heart was hot within him so that he kept his mouth with a bridle for a space, but could not be silent for long. "My sorrow was stirred. My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned; then spake I with my tongue". Strange to say, as soon as he opened his mouth he seems to come at once to the brevity of man's life, of his own life, that his days are as an hand breadth, as being exceedingly short. "Mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity"; he is born, he dies, he is not abiding, there is no eternity for him in this life. Time is short, as an handbreadth, and so it is, comparatively speaking, "as nothing before thee".

I desire for a short time to apply myself to this enquiry: "And now, Lord, what wait I for?" We are not to take it as though the Psalmist did not know what he was waiting for, or that he was ignorant of the matter concerned, so that everything was in the air; but more particularly that he was enabled to commit all his matters into the hand of his God, Who had them under His care. He cast all his affairs, his providences, into the hand of his God and so could say, "What wait I for?" I wonder if you know what this is, when you have come to a point like this, you have tried this way or that way, this matter or that matter, and all seems to have failed; the issue has brought you to the throne of His heavenly grace to say, "And now, Lord, what wait I for?" This enquiry is found in the heart of a living soul. It is not the enquiry of a worldly person, for worldly people do not take their matters to the Lord for Him to guide and direct them. This waiting upon the Lord is for a fulfilment of something that may not as yet be clear. In a spiritual sense there can be quite a number of things that a living soul may be waiting for, and I wonder if this finds any of you here in your own particular path in which you may be walking. "And now, Lord, what wait I for?", I come to Thee, I need Thee, Thy guiding eye, Thy saving power, these spiritual blessings that flow through a dear risen and exalted Redeemer. "What wait I for?" In the experience of many of the Lord's people this can truly be said: "What wait I for?" - I wait for a token for good in my soul. How far may this be with some of you? Is it that things are dark, and uncertain, that you feel as though your God is silent, and there is no communication to re-assure you of your standing? "Show me a token for good". You wait for this token for good, as though one would say, I have had some ups and downs, as we speak, many prayers, and yet still I feel uncertain about my state; I do not know where I stand really; I have no comforting assurance of blessings in the gospel, or in the Lord Jesus Christ. Show me a token for good; grant me a good hope through grace, and to feel it in my soul, I long to feel that my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

A token for good - some of you have had this more than once, and yet there may be something particular in your life, or your soul, and you feel to need the Lord to re-assure you and confirm you again of your state before Him. "What wait I for?" Is this enquiry in your heart? There may be some of you here, I do not know exactly, who are waiting for something particular, and are bringing the matter before the Lord, perhaps repeatedly, in your humble supplications, under a sense of your sinful condition; the one thing you are waiting for, I suggest,

is for a sense of the pardon of your sins, and you have every reason to be waiting for the Lord for this, for it is His own promise that He will grant it. "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness". You may say, I may say, Lord I am waiting for this in a particular sense. You may be waiting for the Lord to appear for you in some particular way or matter to guide you in some providence in your life. This is quite consistent with Holy Scripture. The Psalmist said, "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory". There may be some providence in particular, which I need not attempt to enumerate, but you know your own case and your need, the Lord knows it and understands it too, better than you or I can do; but there is something very confirming about this. You take your matters to the Lord and say "My hope is in Thee". This is not as an incentive to be careless or indifferent about any matter in providence or in grace, but there can be a sweet feeling of quietness in your spirit that the Lord will appear and for you, according to His divine will in what you need. So it is in the prophecy by Isaiah, "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength" - "Now, Lord, what wait I for?"

Another may have to say, I am waiting for guidance in some providence. If you need this, then your wisdom is to take it to the Lord as the Psalmist did when he said, "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel and afterward receive me to glory". Thou shalt guide me - this appears to be a gracious confidence in the Lord that He would bring him through and be a delivering God in times of need, trouble and distress. "Thou shalt guide me"; and as you know he had been delivered from a temptation that had pressed heavily upon him. It can be very sweet when you feel a quietness in your spirit concerning matters in your life, in some providence or in soul matters both for time and for eternity. There can be a gracious quietness. This is what the Lord appears to have said to His disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me". There is a certain spot that the Lord's people may be brought to which is very sweet when they can cast their care upon Him and leave their matters in His hands to guide and direct them, not to be careless about them, but putting their trust in Him to bring them through.

"What wait I for?" - another matter of concern is to be found ready to die, prepared for my end. This appears to be emphasised in the verse preceding in relating to the vanity of human life, of our days being as an handbreadth and that man at his best state is altogether vanity. By vanity here we may understand passing away, not abiding, something that comes and goes, not necessarily what

we may term the worldly pursuits of this life, though that may be involved, but a sense of the passing nature of all material things. "Man at his best state is altogether vanity"; he is not here for ever, his days are in the hand of his God, and the day will come when they will terminate, for life is short comparatively speaking. "Now Lord what wait I for?" Some of you may have come to this point more particularly in your latter days. "What wait I for?" may be wrapped up in this:

"Prepare me, gracious God,
To stand before Thy face..."

Whatever man may possess, he must leave behind him one day, for this life is but a brief space.

"My hope is in Thee". There can be a false hope. Hope is anticipating something in the future, of which we have some indication or hope we shall soon possess, but which we have not as yet in possession. It can incorporate many things in our lives, but more particularly the hope of a believer is to be prepared for his latter end.

"When Thou, my righteous Judge, shalt come,
To call Thy ransomed people home,
Shall I among them stand?"

I have no doubt that many people in a profession of religion are building their house upon the sand. They know not what it is to be brought down, stripped, wounded and to feel their best is of nothing worth, but this is what is felt when the Lord brings one down to put his hope in nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. "My hope is in Thee". If you can confidently feel it, and have some indication of it, that your hope centres there in the precious sin-atonement blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, it will bear you through the swellings of Jordan and land you safe in Canaan's happy land. This is a sweet thought, "My hope is in Thee". You may have known a moment when you were helped to take all your anxieties about the future and cast them upon the Lord. What is this but casting all your care upon Him, your future, your providences, your anticipations, your difficulties, the path of trial you are walking in, and the difficulties that may confront you? It is a sweet moment when you can say, "my hope is in Thee!" This can cover everything, whatever it may be, whether it be some situation in life, some future prospect, or some hope of realizing something you are very much looking forward to, it can all be gathered up at the Throne of grace and you can say, "My hope is in Thee".

My hope is in Thy mercy, not in a claim you make upon it, as though you had a right to His mercy. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed".

Your hope centres in His mercy, mercy through blood, it finds its foundation in the atonement. I have nought to plead but Jesus' blood and righteousness. My hope is in Thy power to bring me through. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" You take your matters to God, for to Him nothing is too hard. The Lord said to Abraham, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?". I wonder if you have taken a matter that has been too hard for you, and have been favoured to prove it is not too hard for the Lord. "My hope is in Thee". It may be that you have, as it were, gathered up your prayers and walked silently in something to see how the Lord may deal with it; and in substance you are saying "My hope is in Thee" to deal with this matter, but give me grace to walk in it, help me to bear the thorn in the flesh, to overcome the enemy, or to walk in the trial. "My hope is in Thee" - in Thy wisdom, grace, Word and promise. "Thou shalt guide me". My hope is in Thee; and after all the conditions of this life, and what they may involve (they have their importance, and I would not belittle them), yet our days are as an handbreadth, our age as nothing before God, and our best state is altogether vanity, but "My hope is in Thee", to be ready when Thou my righteous Judge shall come, to be ready, to feel that foundation firm beneath my feet, to have nothing to do but to die; to feel some sweet reviving in my soul that He will never fail or forsake me, and that as He was with Moses so He will be with me, to fulfil His gracious Word: "And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in Thee". Amen.

