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Prayer Meeting Address by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer" Clapham on
Saturday evening 6th. October, 1962

Hymns: 943, 978

Reading: Psalm 42 Isaiah 49 (9-16)

The Psalmist, like many of the Lord's people, on certain occasions was ready to come to the conclusion that the Lord had forsaken or forgotten him. "Why hast Thou forgotten me?"

Probably painful or difficult circumstances, oppressions by persecution and his enemies, and different things brought him to feel as though the Lord had forsaken him although indeed he had many intimations that it was not really so.

We find the Church in the prophecy in the same frame where she says, "The Lord hath forsaken me and my Lord hath forgotten me." It was exactly opposite to that really. It is a mercy for us that our real state and standing is not regulated by immediate feelings or circumstances.

David was evidently passing through very heavy things which were enough to occasion a deep despondency, but even so he did not lose sight of his God, nor of his relationship, although he spoke as though the Lord had left him; but even in his despondency he could say, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me". David's love for the house and worship of God was such that to have been deprived of it would seem to be one of his greatest trials, hence here we find him using expressive language, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" This was his one desire; and if we are really healthy and lively will not this be our one desire to appear before God, that is to come into His presence, to hold communion with Him and to feel a sacred persuasion amidst many things that may appear to cast a cloud over it, that He is, notwithstanding all, our God?

David did not lose sight of past things either, he could say,

"Therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar." There can be a right way of looking back upon things and being confirmed by them which can be some help to us in present difficulties or in the face of opposition, and especially if we can feel that our changing conditions do not constitute a changing God. How helpful it is if we can look to Divine immutability and feel persuaded that He will bring us through. We are moved by circumstances but we are not creatures of circumstances as some say. We are creatures of God and all our times are in His hands, whatever they may be. It is confirming when we can realise that God sits upon the flood, whatever floods there may be; He sits upon them. It is good when faith can look through the cloud and see an immutable and almighty God. This should bring us to a measure of confidence such as the Psalmist felt. He questioned the relevance of his despondency, he expostulated with himself saying, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?" He does not doubt the fact, but he questions the propriety, as though the despondency and disquietude were hardly relevant to the exercise of faith in a wise and promise-performing God. His confidence rises and he says, "Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him". This appears to be faith rising in confidence that God will deliver him, which He did. "I shall yet praise Him". You may not often feel able to say that but if you do get a touch, even in the midst of some hard and heavy thing, you will say it, you will feel it. This is where faith rises above unbelief and produces a confidence in the face of opposite things and things that may seem to go against you at times.

"I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance". That is the countenance of his soul; and it can be the outward countenance too for that is sometimes affected; but the Lord's presence or approbation is the health of the soul. David was brought to a very confirming resolve in his mind and could believe that however dark things may have been, "I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance". May we be helped to say the same. Amen.