

861

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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

861

Prayer Meeting Address by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer" Clapham.

12th. June, 1950.

Reading Psalm 77

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This is said to be a Psalm of Asaph. Asaph was undoubtedly a man of God. In this Psalm Asaph reveals his heart's feelings, his conflict, his victory, his sinkings and his risings. It is in a way somewhat similar to the 73rd. Psalm, though not quite like that. Here Asaph appears to be brought almost to a pass in his soul with respect to God having any further regard to him. He was in great trouble of soul, sleepless, unable to rest, unable to speak, his soul refused to be comforted, and he begins to question things. Doubtless there are still Asaphs in this particular, that is the people of God, and only they, that come as it were to a pass, almost to an extremity, ready to give all up and question if God will ever regard them, or if He has, as they may hope, fear He will never regard them again. So it appears to be here. Asaph brings forth these enquiries which are very solemn, and doubtless they were very real to him at the time, for this is what he says, "Will the Lord cast off for ever, and will He be favourable no more? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies?" The good man was evidently in deep conflict of soul, and as he looked at his present case, the darkness, desolation, temptation, and possibly many other things, as they crowded in upon him, he felt ready to faint, and he begins to fear that the Lord has entirely forsaken him.

But while he was looking at his own case, his difficulties, and temptations, he appears to be as it were pulled up and almost to censure himself for having such thoughts as this, attributing it to a weakness in himself, an infirmity. "And I said this is my infirmity", that is to make such enquiries, to put such questions, "I said this is my infirmity". He seems suddenly to realise that it was a weakness in himself, a tempting devil, unbelief, speaking against God and His faithfulness. Will He regard me again if He ever has? Has He forgotten to be gracious? Are there any here who find at times questions of that nature rising up in the heart? They tend

to great despondency of spirit and can bring one down to a very low place.

Then as he remembers the works of God, and the power of God and what He has done, he gathers strength, his faith begins to rise notwithstanding all he had said, "I will remember the works of the Lord, surely I will remember Thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all Thy work, and talk of Thy doings." What a change appears to have taken place! In the first part of the Psalm he says "I am so troubled that I cannot speak", now he says, I will talk about the Lord's doings. What does he say about the doings of God? "Thy way, O God is in the sanctuary, who is so great a God as our God?" His mind reflects upon the wonderful works of God to His people, and how He used the seas, the skies, and the elements of the heavens, as instruments to deliver His people and to confound their enemies. He says "Thy way is in the sea, and Thy path in the great waters, and Thy footsteps are not known". God's way is in the sea. A person walking down a muddy lane will leave their footprints, but water closes in and leaves no mark or trace behind. God's ways are deep and beyond our understanding. He has His way, so to speak, in the sea. He brings the blind by a way they knew not, yet notwithstanding all, leads them and guides them, though it may be by an unseen hand. The author reflects on the deliverance of Israel, saying "Thou leddest Thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

How this shows in this Psalm, as in the 73rd. Psalm, that relief comes when we are enabled to look away from things so conflicting, even the conflict that is taking place within us and the temptations we have laboured under, to the power and faithfulness of God, and to cast our anchor there. Oh what a mercy to feel that this anchor of faith will uphold us because it is fixed in God. "The eternal God is thy refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms." The Lord's children may, they do at times, sink very, very low, but if they are the Lord's children they cannot sink or fall through those everlasting arms that are underneath. These are the arms of His faithfulness, the arms of His power. So may it be with us as it was with Joseph "The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob."