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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

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Prayer Meeting address by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer", Clapham on
Saturday evening 7th. September, 1957

Hymns: 401, 310

Reading: Psalm 80 and Isaiah 63.15 - 64.4

This Psalm has in it, in the first place, a grievous complaint by reason of the desolation, the withholding of divine power and manifested mercy, and the evidences of His anger in His solemn corrections and the condition so graphically described of the vine that He brought out of Egypt. It was a goodly vine, which took deep root and filled the land so that the hills were covered with the shadow of it and its boughs were like the goodly cedars. Then follows the evidence of God's judgements on account of the sins of the people. "Why hast thou broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her?" Thus were His judgements brought upon her and these miseries. The wild boar out of the wood and the wild beasts had devoured the vine that was so promising and gave such evidence of fruitfulness. So there is this complaint.

Do any of us feel like that, or as we have been singing in our hymn? Do we mourn His absence? Have we grace enough to mourn His absence? What is our present state? For there is not only this complaint but there is also an earnest prayer. The church was grieved because of these desolations; so in this respect she might be said to be in a lively, and not an indifferent, state about them. These were plaintive enquiries, but there is too this one urgent appeal for the Lord to return, to behold and look upon the vine and restore it. So this prayer is repeated, "Turn us again, O God of Hosts." Turn us again. We have had better days; we have known prosperity; we have rejoiced in the light of Thy countenance. But now there is this darkness, trouble, distress and misery.

"Turn us again". Here is repentance. This is a prayer for

restoration. Restore us, bring us back again. As in Psalm 51, "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation and uphold me with Thy free Spirit". This is addressed to God, to the Shepherd of Israel. Mention is made of the place where He dwells, where His people may seek Him in all their desolation and misery. "Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth." That was the meeting- place - between the cherubims. "There" said God to Moses, "will I meet with thee". The cherubims were winged figures above the mercy-seat, looking one toward the other. The mercy-seat was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ in His expiatory offering and atonement. There it is that God is approachable - between the cherubims.

The prayer here is for God to "shine forth". That is it; that is what we need. I need it, and some of you may likewise feel to need it. We need Him to shine forth in our souls, in the pulpit and in the pew. Turn us again; restore us, Lord; restore to us those former favours, those privileges that we have enjoyed. There is also here a humble confidence. If Thou wilt do this, Lord, "We shall be saved." We will call upon Thy name; we will not go back from Thee. This is the confidence of faith, that if it should please God thus to return and restore them, to lift upon the light of His countenance, to shine forth, then, in the power of that "we will not go back from Thee." That will hold us up and keep us calling upon Thy name, and we shall be saved. May the Lord help us to approach Him, even as it is said here, "between the cherubims." Amen

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