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Sermon preached by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer" Clapham on Sunday morning 19th. August, 1973.

Hymns: 176, 129, 369

Reading: 2 Samuel 7

Text: Psalm 84.4,5

"Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah. Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them.

This very expressive Psalm appears to have been written by one who was longing for the communion of the sanctuary, which evidently he did not at that particular time enjoy. He has an attractive view of the blessedness of those so engaged, who dwell in the house of the Lord and praise Him there. He concludes the Psalm with a beautiful word concerning the services of the sanctuary of God: "For a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand". How good it would be if some feeling sense of the Lord's blessing were with us here this day, so that even this Sabbath day could be felt to be, as spent in His courts, better than a thousand.

While resting for a little while the other morning I took up a bound "Gospel Standard" and I came across a poem composed by one who in the war days was evidently for the time being deprived of the services of the sanctuary. (It was written in Tredegar, S. Wales, in 1944). The reason I have mentioned this is because the reading of the poem was very refreshing to my spirit, and I felt to have much enjoyment in reading it. It is undoubtedly one of the great blessings with which the Lord has favoured His people, to assemble themselves together in the sanctuary of God. We know that the Lord is not confined to any outward means, but He has appointed them and He does own them. The object is to give glory to God and to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. I realise that the ceremonial and ordinances under the Old Testament order were very different from those of the Gospel dispensation. In the Tabernacle there was a good deal of ceremonial order in the services, with different sacrifices. The offering up of the lamb was a daily occurrence. The priests and Levites dwelt in the vicinity of the sanctuary. Evidently the Psalmist, whoever he was, perceived

something of the blessedness of those who were engaged every day in the service of the sanctuary, offering the divinely appointed sacrifices.

The writer of the Psalm (whether it was David or not does not appear quite certain, or what the express circumstances may have been) was for the time being deprived of the sacred privilege, for he says, "My soul longeth, yea even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord". Blessed are they that dwell there, but as for me, I am banished from them for the time being, yet I see the beauty of them. "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts. My soul longeth, yea even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord".

There are not many people like this in the days in which we are living. Many run the ways of this world and have no care for anything else. Even so, there is a remnant according to the election of grace who can say, "How amiable are Thy tabernacles". This evidently refers to the Tabernacle that was set up in the wilderness, in which the worship of God continued right up to the time of David, and the building of the Temple by Solomon. "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts". What made the tabernacle so amiable was the presence of the Lord in it in a particular sense; and so it has been more or less ever since. The Lord has honoured the services of the sanctuary; and blessed are they who delight in them, who find the Lord in them and whose living souls are nourished by them.

In the Psalm the author appears to refer to those who had to make journeys to the tabernacle which may have presented many difficulties, and perhaps at times brought them to tears because of the hardness of the way. "Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools." This is the blessing of the Lord upon them in their weary journey through the valley of Baca (or of tears). Although the way was hard and rough, such was the blessing of the Lord upon them that it overcame all the difficulties, and their weariness was turned into refreshing seasons of blessing from the presence of the Lord with them. "Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well". It may be rendered 'him a well' - that is the Lord God in the blessing of the glorious gospel of His grace.

In the subject here then we have a people who are pronounced as a blessed people, "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house". The Lord's people are blessed in a number of different ways, not blessed because they are immune from trouble, trial or affliction, or mortality and many things beside that may often weigh heavily upon them. They are a tempest-tossed, tried and afflicted people, who pass through much tribulation; but that makes no difference to the fact that they are a blessed people. The people of this world it is true, have their pleasures in this world, but they do not have the blessing of the Lord as His dear people do who have taken up the cross to follow after Him, and to whom the world has been made an empty void. They are like the dove that returned to the ark; they cannot find a resting-place for the sole of their foot in this world, but they can find a resting-place in a precious Christ.

They are a blessed people because they are the people whom the Lord made choice of before the world was. What an amazing thought that is! When darkness was upon the face of the deep, God in His divine decrees predestinated a people unto everlasting life. It was an amazing act of divine love toward them, for none of them are deserving of His favour, and they feel it; and when they are blessed a little it seems to them a wonder that ever the Lord should look upon them and manifest His favour towards them. They are a blessed people because they are the Lord's people. They are blessed not only in the choice the Lord made of them but in what He has done for them; for He gave His beloved Son to redeem them. The curse that must fall upon the ungodly will not fall upon them, because it fell upon their blessed and glorious Redeemer who suffered in their place. The Apostle Paul writes, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us". Truly they are a blessed people. Though sometimes their cup seems filled with gall, yet still "There's something secret sweetens all". There is a something that makes even the bitter sweet.

Some of you here may be passing through a Baca, a valley of trouble and weeping, you are weak and weary are you and almost ready to give everything up in despair. But you never will give

everything up, for you are one of these blessed people, whose trials are sanctified to them in a gracious and particular way. So they are helped along in this weary journey, as it is said in the Psalm, "Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee, in whose heart are the ways of them... They go from strength to strength". It is not strength all the time, but they go from one help to another, though sometimes feeling very, very weak between. "They go from strength to strength, everyone of them in Zion appeareth before God".

"Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house". This refers to those who were engaged in the daily offerings and sacrifices of the Tabernacle worship. The author appears to envy them. He sees something of their happy state. "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts". But he himself was not there to enjoy them. "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord." There is a delight, a spiritual delight, in the services of the sanctuary, but there is a house where all of the Lord's people eventually dwell, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, not a tabernacle to be taken down one day, but the heavenly Jerusalem. There are many dwelling there now in those heavenly mansions, and they are blessed indeed, for they have left all trouble, weariness and death behind for ever. "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee". That is, they are giving thanks unto Him, singing the praises of the Lord, as we read often in the Psalms, and as the Apostle mentions singing praises with the heart and with the understanding.

"They will be still praising Thee". That is, they are waiting upon the Lord in His house. Actually this is communion; this is what the appointments of the Lord's house are designed for, although this communion is not confined to His house, but in a particular aspect it is the place where the Lord condescends to come and meet with His people. When the Lord Jesus was here in the days of His flesh He said, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them. This is the honour and glory the Lord confers upon true gospel worshippers, those who

worship God in spirit and in truth. Some of us have known something of this in our younger days, when we were a little lively in the things of God, and could say;

"With joy we hasten to the place
Where we our Saviour oft have met."

How sacred it is when these two parties shall I say meet together in the sanctuary! "There will I meet with thee, and there will I bless thee", is the Lord's gracious word. "Blessed are they that wait for Him" there, although they may not feel to have any particular blessing, yet it is said in the Scriptures "Blessed are they that wait for Him". And where is it that His people wait for Him more than in the sanctuary? We remember how we longed to get a crumb by some means or other, in the hymns, the reading, the prayer, or the preaching. So, evidently it was here, there was a longing, it was not just a matter of custom - "My soul longeth". This is a living soul, and something more than a living soul; this is a lively soul, and what does such a soul long for? To meet with the Lord, to hear His voice, to feel His presence, to get some Word from Him. "Blessed are they that wait for Him".

Sometimes this coming to the house of God may be under a load of trouble, and under wearisome things that may weigh the spirit down. Yet there they find the Lord, and so they go from strength to strength. "Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee". This is not bodily strength, but the power of faith upon the Lord. David felt this as we find in Psalm 27. "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" From strength to strength they go. These helps then often come in the sanctuary worship. "There will I meet with thee." "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house: they will be still praising Thee." They will have some reason to praise Him, more reason often than can be felt, possibly, especially when the burden weighs heavily, yet "they will be still praising Thee". They lift up their heart in a humble song of praise for the precious, blessed Gospel. They praise Him that He should ever look upon them in a way of mercy.

"Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee". This is not their own strength, it is the strength of the Lord. "In whose heart are the ways of them". It can be rendered "in whose heart are Zion's ways" or "in whose heart are Thy ways". These are the ways of the Lord, the ordinances of the Lord, the services of the Lord, the appointments of the Lord, and these people have it in their hearts to observe His ways, and to follow Him. These are the ways of the Lord in salvation, in what has already been done for His people and in whose heart are the ways of Zion. The author of this Psalm had a great delight in the worship of God, as recorded in another Psalm, "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness". These are some of the ways of the Lord, gospel ways, Zion's ways, and it is a mercy to have it in our heart to follow after Him in the ways of His commandments.

So these are a blessed people - blessed in the choice the Lord has made of them, blessed in what has been done for them, they are redeemed by the blood of Christ, their sins are washed away, they are justified and are delivered from the curse. They are a blessed people for ever, for the salvation of the Lord is an everlasting salvation. "I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness". These people find no comfort in the tents of wickedness; they will long to get away from them. "My soul longeth, yea even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord". Even a day there is better than a thousand with the ungodly. Truly these people are blessed. They are in a covenant bond, and though their cup may indeed often seem to be a bitter one yet ~~the~~ Lord is their God. So David felt it in Psalm 27: "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life: of whom shall I be afraid?" May the Lord make this Psalm a precious one and give us often to hide and shelter under the Rock of ages where the curse will never come. Amen.