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Sermon preached by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer" Clapham on Wednesday evening 4.10.72

Hymns: 976, 1036, 129

Reading Psalms 8 and 9

Text Psalm 9. 9 and 10

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"The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee".

In the Psalm are two important points that come more or less into the experience of all the Lord's people, and one of these is praise. Frequently we find the Psalmist opening a Psalm by giving praise unto the Lord, especially in the later Psalms. Notwithstanding this, we often find that he comes down to having to pray, with all the confidence he may feel, as 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?" yet before we come to the end the poor dear man is praying, "Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not neither forsake me, O God of my salvation". We would hardly anticipate that two such extremes could be in the same person, and it may be that some here would have to say they know much more about the praying part of the matter than the confidence the Psalmist was able to give expression to; but I believe that at times in our lives we shall be brought to know something of both. We are in a world of change, trouble, affliction and death, many things tend to cause despondency, but the Lord's living people have a ground for comfort and consolation amidst all these changing conditions and this point is in the subject.

It is said in the first place, "The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee". Here then, dear friends, is a sweet consolation, a source of comfort and strength in times of weakness, and can give quietness in times of disturbance and distress. In the text you see we have recorded a peculiar privilege that the world as such knows nothing of. It is true they may have plenty of

trouble, they do, for this is more or less common to all mankind; but what the world of the ungodly do not know is what is in the text; this is to have a God to be their refuge in these times of trouble. Here is the great difference. It is said in the context, "He shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness", and so He will, but there is something more than this. "The Lord also", that is a beautiful word, indicating something more than what has preceded. "He has prepared his throne for judgment, He will endure for ever", He will destroy the ungodly, and will bring sinners to reap the fruit of their evil doings, but He will also be "a refuge for the oppressed", a refuge in times of trouble".

In the first place then we have an oppressed and troubled people otherwise there would be no need for a refuge, it would be of no value to them; the refuge you see is for an oppressed people in their times of trouble. Is it not strikingly true of the Lord's people, that they are an oppressed people? The Scriptures say so here and there, as in Psalm 12, "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, said the Lord"; therefore we do not find reference to these people being left to despair under their oppressions. What a favour this is. Whatever these oppressions may be, their God is above them all, their oppressions, and moreover is able to deliver them from their oppressions, and moreover is able to deliver them from, and is able to support them in and under these oppressions. Many godly people have known some experience of this. I suppose all the Lord's people at times know something of these oppressions. "Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop; but a good word maketh it glad". The term 'oppression' seems to indicate things pressing upon us, weighing us down, things hard to bear with - and sometimes they can be almost overwhelming. I suppose the Psalmist was there when he said, "Attend unto my prayer...when my heart is overwhelmed", and we find Hezekiah saying, or reflecting, "O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me", and He did undertake for him. There are many things - sometimes sin, as we feel it, is an oppression, pressing us down, a sense of guilt as before God, evil thoughts within

rising up that we cannot seem to control. Did not even Paul know something of this which brought him to say, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He knew what these oppressions were. Some of you may know something about these inward oppressions, you feel them even when outwardly things are amenable, there is a burden inside pressing you down. Sometimes sore temptations can cause this oppression. The enemy is very powerful, too powerful for you and me; he can be like a roaring lion going about seeking whom he may devour, and he devours millions, but he has never devoured a vessel of mercy, and he never will; and yet it is these vessels of mercy that he oppresses. Sometimes you feel in your poor heart painful temptations, painful thoughts, all kinds of things, they seem to get on "top of you", overwhelm you, press you down. Is not this somewhat true of the Lord's people? I believe sometimes peculiar trials have this effect, there can be a very peculiar trial, and you have to walk in it, you will have to walk in it, and when you attempt to struggle out of it in your own strength, you often sink further into the mire. You have to walk in it, because it is the Lord's appointed path, but for no longer than He shall dispose. It has been rather sweet lately to read the 34th. Psalm, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles". When the Lord delivers you out of troubles He delivers you out of them all as though you had no trouble left; but there is an appointed path; and "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations".

There is also another point; I must bring your minds to consider the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. None of His poor people have known oppression to the degree that the Saviour did. As we have it recorded in Isaiah 53 of Him, "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth". He was oppressed and afflicted by various things, and yet a holy silence pervaded His spirit. There was never any revolting against what was laid upon Him, none whatever. He opened not His mouth against the Lord's dealings with Him, or against what was oppressing Him, or even His

enemies. No, He committed Himself into the hands of His Father, "He was oppressed". Are you oppressed? Is there something secret weighing upon your spirit, something perhaps you see coming or something that may give rise to apprehension, that presses upon you?

The second point in the text is what the Lord will be to these people. He does not say they must shift along for themselves the best they can - no - that is not divine language, No, "He will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble". "The eternal God is thy refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms". "Underneath". Things press you down, do they? They will not press you through those everlasting arms, they are always underneath. This is a sweet mercy for the Lord's people, He is a refuge to flee to, and His people are invited to flee to Him. "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee". Here is an invitation to oppressed people. They are welcome to venture with their oppressions and sins and troubles and burdens and difficulties, everything that concerns them; they have an invitation to take them all to the Majesty of heaven, enter thou into thy chambers. These are chambers of refuge and protection. He is a sovereign protector, and His divine providence is over His people. He is a refuge, a hiding place, a shelter, a high tower. How beautiful this is as relating to the Lord Jesus Christ! He is a refuge for poor, guilty, sin-burdened, oppressed people. He is a refuge, the best I have ever heard of. He is a refuge for poor guilty people, His atonement is a refuge. Sinners flee by faith to Calvary and find a refuge in the wounds and blood of their incarnate God. He is a blessed refuge. We can say, "Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee".

That is what these oppressed people do as they are helped by that good Spirit, He directs them; they betake themselves to their sin-bearer, their burden-bearer, lay themselves at His feet, and shelter in His wounded side. He is a refuge; His power to save is a refuge for those who feel themselves to be lost, ruined and undone. He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him. He has power to save them, He is willing to save them, and He will save

them when they come to Him as a refuge. He is a refuge from the law that demands obedience in a perfect sense, which cannot be rendered by a poor guilty creature; but the Lord Jesus Christ is a refuge to flee to from a pursuing law that brings terrors into the conscience, for He is the law-fulfiller. He became the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth, that believes in His power to save them, in His blood to redeem them, His righteousness to justify them, His Word to support them, His wisdom to guide them. He is a refuge. O how sweet it can sometimes be, although I know we cannot produce it, but sometimes the Spirit of the Lord does work it in the heart, then you can take your case to Him and cast it upon Him. He relieves the oppressed, "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you".

"They that know thy name will put their trust in thee"; and only those people that know His name will put their trust in Him, and sometimes they feel they can put their trust in Him. This word can be confirming, "they that know thy name will put their trust in thee"; knowledge inspires confidence. It is like this - we must know His name to put our trust in Him. What is it to know His name? To know His name is to know God, to know Him. His name is Himself. When Moses was to be the means of delivering the children of Israel out of Egypt he said to the Lord, "When they shall say to me, What is His name? what shall I say unto them?". The Lord said, "I AM THAT I AM". How solemn it is, and yet for those who know that name it can be an amazing consolation. "I AM THAT I AM", as though He would say of those Egyptians, those persecuting Egyptians, 'they are all under my power, all enemies, all seeming impossibilities' as indeed it was for the children of Israel to deliver themselves from their oppressors, but it was not too hard for their God to deliver them. He can open a way where no creature can see or make one. He can divide the waters when there seems to be no way forward or backward, but we must know His name - "I AM THAT I AM", indicating here, I would say, "I am the Almighty God". This is what the Lord said when He appeared to Abraham, "I am the Almighty God, walk before Me", as

though He would say, "I AM THAT I AM". Perhaps I might say that the Lord reveals that Name in the heart of His children, and when He makes known that Name in you, you will know it and it will enable you to put your trust in Him.

By His Name we may understand those perfections that constitute Him to be what He is, not only His omnipotence, but His immutability. He says so, "I am the Lord I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed". Immutability has sometimes shone before my eyes as an amazing thought - an attribute in the Majesty of the heavens. "I change not". If that were possible what would come to us; it would take the foundation from beneath our feet, but He is an immutable God. If you are favoured to feel a hope in His mercy, when you feel it, divine immutability will be amazingly attractive. Things will open up, why, you will say, His promise is immutable, His Word is immutable, His grace is immutable. Everything then that bears you along and ultimately takes you up to heaven is immutable a faithful and unchanging God carries you along. Have you ever felt that you have received a promise? If you have, if it was a promise from heaven, immutability was stamped on the promise, for the promises of God in Him are yea and amen to the glory of God. We must know His Name. Perhaps you say 'I fear I do not know His name'. How can I know His Name, for I feel such a poor, dark, confused, ignorant thing. These are just the people, they are just the people that do know His Name. They are stripped of their own merit and they feel it, they are brought to trust alone in the merit of a precious Redeemer. It is very sweet to know something of His Name. May not this be considered not merely in relation to the attributes of Jehovah, as His love, mercy, grace, holiness and justice, but in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the Lord **Jesus Christ in a Gospel sense? O what a wonderful mercy it is to** know His Name! Why, say you, everybody does, that is very simple. It may be in a notional sense, superficially; a person may know that His name is called Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins, but it may be only a common-place knowledge, a theory, that brings no comfort to them because they do not feel their sins. But it is these poor sin burdened ones that know His Name, and sometimes how

sweet it is.

His Name is said to be Wonderful, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace"; and truly He is wonderful. He is the mighty God, He is the everlasting Father, in this aspect - not to confuse Him with the Father, but in the care He has for His poor people, even to number the hairs of their head, He is indeed a Father to them. Jesus is His Name, for He shall save His people from their sins, and if you get a taste of forgiveness that will be a real name to you. O what a sweet name it will be. He will be to you the true Messiah, Jesus the Saviour, your Saviour Who has forgiven your sins. I like what is said in the Gospel, when the Lord said to the disciples "Whom say ye that I am? Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ". I like the emphasis on the! This is the Messiah that was promised all through the Old Testament. "Thou art the Christ" that we read of in the prophecies, the Son of the living God. And the Lord accepted it and said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven". O when the Name of Jesus becomes a sweet revelation in your heart it means that He is your Jesus and has pardoned your sins. O, say you, 'It is all too much'. Nothing is too much for Him! Has He not said, "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it". Has not the Lord Jesus said "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"?

"They that know thy name". Here is knowledge then, not a natural knowledge, but a spiritual knowledge, a revealed knowledge, a saving knowledge. It is a saving knowledge. If you really know His Name you have in that knowledge an earnest of your interest, and that means that He has a knowledge of you in a saving gracious way. You cannot have a knowledge of Him apart from the fact that He first had a knowledge of you.

O it is sweet to know His Name and these are the people that put their trust in Him. This is what they do, and then that good Spirit, enables them to cast their care upon Him, to put their confidence in Him. This knowledge inspires confidence, and it is a sweet confidence. At such a times you can feel that in quietness

and confidence is your strength. May the Lord help us then. It is said, "For thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee". Sometimes they feel He has. The church thought He had; she said, "The Lord hath forgotten me", but it was not so at all, neither is it in your case. "But I try to pray", you say "and it seems to be to no purpose." That does not mean the Lord has forsaken you. May we not say that He is holding those prayers for a purpose known only to Him; and when the time comes, when He appears for your deliverance, you will say something like the Queen of Sheba said, "The half hath never been told". May it be given us then to know something about these good things, to prove the Lord to be our refuge, to know something of His name, to put our trust in Him in times of trouble. Here is a source of consolation and it is very sweet when it is felt. Amen.