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Sermon preached by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer" Clapham on Wednesday
evening 18.9.74

Hymns 563, 410, 346,

Reading Zechariah 3: 6

Text Zechariah 4:10

"For who hath despised the day of small things? For they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth".

I made a few observations upon this verse last evening at Redhill but as it still remains rather much alive in my spirit, I have ventured to read it again for there is a field of heavenly teaching in it, both in providence and in grace, that will never fully exhaust itself. It is full of the blessed Gospel and is a word of encouragement to the Lord's waiting people, especially some who may feel to be under much discouragement and who feel, experimentally speaking, that it is a day of small things. There is no injunction to them to give up or despair but rather for them to rejoice, not actually rejoice in the day of small things, but to rejoice in the fact that all our matters, our concerns, or our providences are in the hand of a covenant performing God and they "shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the Lord which run to and fro through the whole earth".

The whole prophecy has reproof and encouragement. It was a remarkable period in the history of the Jews when this prophecy was written for they, at least a large number of them, had returned from their long captivity, although probably it was a new generation and many who were carried away into captivity had died and a new generation had risen. Here they were back in their own country; but they found things to be in a state of ruin and confusion, and the temple, that noble building, had been destroyed. There was much to confuse and distress them, but this is a word of gracious encouragement and it is a word to Zerubbabel who is a type of Christ, to assure him that it was "Not by might, nor by power" but by the

Spirit of the Lord that things should be brought to pass that were altogether beyond the reach and compass of human might. So it is said here, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts", which is followed up by a challenge "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain". The mountain here particularly has reference to the building of the temple and I suppose the whole project was very formidable and a seeming impossibility, but they proved that "Nothing is too hard for the Lord" and He brought His own work to pass in His own time. "He shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it"; not 'Well done I', but ascribing all the honour and praise and glory to the Lord. So they were confirmed by the fact that "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you". This can be confirming, experimentally speaking in the sense that where the Lord begins a work of grace in the hearts of His dear people He will perform it. He will not begin a work of grace and then leave one to perish.

"For who hath despised the day of small things?" It was a day of small things for they found everything in a state of ruin and confusion. It was a day of small things with them, but what is a day of small things to the Lord? The exhortation here is that we are not to despise the day of small things. We may feel sad that it is a day of small things, but we are exhorted not to despise it. There is a difference between being sad about a matter and despising it. If we are rightly exercised we shall wait upon the Lord to revive His work in the midst of the years, "in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy". It was a day of small things with them; and it is a day of small things with us now, with some exceptions, individually speaking as relating to the work of God in the hearts of His people. Many of the Lord's people have to say that things are not with them now as they were afore time. You may be able to look back upon good days, years ago, you may remember the days of your first love, when you ran in the ways of the Lord's commandments and ordinances, and you say they were good days. Some of us can remember them and truly they were good days,

but say you, things are so very different now, I do not feel lively now like I did then. I used to long for the time of the services of the sanctuary, but it may be different now. There is not that liveliness in the heart that may have marked earlier days but there is this, that although we may change and do change very much, yet there is One Who changes not, "I am the Lord I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed". You may have to say I do not hear like I used to, I used to live under the ministry and it seemed to keep me going, but now I feel just desolate and lonely, I feel so different from the former days in my life. It is a day of small things in relation to the ministry for though the Gospel is preached there are not many signs following. The Lord's people may be fed but the preaching of the Gospel, generally speaking, does not appear to be attended with that particular power that marked our fore-fathers. It is a day of small things denominationally too, for although we hope we may hold the truth, congregations are dwindling, many of our chapels are very low. Generally speaking I feel I may say in the world, in other countries, as well as our own, it is a day of small things; but even so the Lord has a favour toward His people, He will fulfil His own purposes, He will perfect that which He begins and nothing will be left undone.

There is an encouraging word here in this verse, "For they shall rejoice", not, 'They might as well despair and give everything up for the prospect looks gloomy and almost hopeless; but "They shall rejoice". So there are better things in prospect. "They shall rejoice" - what is it they can rejoice in? "They shall rejoice and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven". That will be a matter of joy, to see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel was the leader and had matters in hand concerning the building of the temple and he was a type of Christ. Zerubbabel, in a gospel sense, is a type of Christ, and what is a plummet? A plummet is a piece of lead that was used in ancient times to which was attached wire or string as a measuring line to ensure that each stone was put in its proper place in the wall of the building. "They shall rejoice and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel". There is something

striking about this in the life and experience of the Lord's dear people, and in some providences too. This plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel indicates that all providences and everything that concerns His dear people is in His hand. The plummet is in His hand and this was true in relation to the choice made of His people. For none of them were born when the covenant was made whereby an appointed number were separated in the purposes of God unto everlasting life and glory.

Here is the building then; and it is said earlier that the Lord "shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it". The building of it was "not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts". Here too is this plummet ensuring that every stone in the building is properly placed and that the walls shall be perpendicular. "For they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel". This can come into the providences of the Lord's people. There are exhortations unto the Lord's people to "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee". This is an act of faith in the wisdom, grace and power of God to support His people and to bring them through their pilgrimage honourably and to prepare them for their latter end. The Apostle James says that some say "Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow". The plummet is in the hand of Zerubbabel and some of you may have seen this in relation to the hand of the Lord in your providences. The plummet has not been in your hand to place this stone just where you might consider it to be the best position. The plummet is in His hand, this measuring line is in the hand of our heavenly Zerubbabel. This indicates that our trials and afflictions are all in the hand of Zerubbabel, they do not come by chance. "Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground. Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward".

Sometimes this has been to overturn things that we may have set our minds upon, and perhaps rather firmly; but you have had to see

the plummet to be in the hand of Zerubbabel. He is in control of all our providences and though we may have set our minds to do this or that, or to go this way or that way, the plummet is in His hand. Sometimes this has been to overturn things and to bring us into quite a different course from that which we had previously intended to take. If you look back upon your life I do not doubt that you have been exercised in your providential matters and that you have seen the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel. It can be very confirming for it is in the best hands it can be in. He has made appointments in our lives and He will bring them to pass. You may have seen the plummet in His hand to overturn something or to bring something to pass and it can be very sweet to feel that this measuring line is in the hand of our heavenly Zerubbabel. Each stone may be looked upon as a vessel of mercy, they are in the hand of Zerubbabel. The time comes when such a one is called by grace, convinced of sin and brought to a knowledge of the Lord, and how different their lives have been from what they previously anticipated. Some of you may be in some need to see the Lord appear in your matters. What can you do in regard to this? Watch and pray, wait upon Him, cast your care upon Him, and one of these days you will see the plummet to be in the hand of your heavenly Zerubbabel. That is, in His own time He will appear for you and open a door here or close one there. He may turn your thoughts into quite a different way, sometimes it has been so, it has been for the best. Some of us look back upon our little lives sometimes and think of different things that we passed through in our earlier days, some providences, afflictions, trials, deliverances, good times, sad times, changing conditions and a variety of things; and what now? As we look back upon them in a right way we see the plummet, divine appointments, placing the stone in its proper place in the building and ordering providences for good. There is something very confirming about the plummet being in the hand of Zerubbabel for it may be sometimes that we were prevented from taking a certain course that we may have intended to take; the Lord has overturned it and it may be at the time we have been very disappointed; but later you have seen the

plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel and what you may have resented and fought against in your spirit you have seen to be the best in the issue.

Can some of you not respond to this in regard to your providences and as you look back you see how the Lord has ordered them? He has made His goodness to pass before us in the way. In some of our experiences in earlier days when we were preserved in times of danger, in the war days, we have seen the plummet in the hand of our heavenly Zerubbabel. Oh what dangers we were brought through! Nothing is too small, no circumstance is too small for Him, the very hairs of our head are all numbered. Does not this indicate that our life's minutest circumstance is subject to His eye? The plummet is in His hand. Oh but, say you, it is very heavy travelling and sometimes I feel almost overwhelmed. Yes, but the plummet is in His hand and He knows just how long to make the trial last and just when to deliver His people from it according to His divine will. What effect does this have upon the Lord's people in relation to their lives and circumstances and prospects? Does it tend to make them careless and indifferent? Far from it; as we are enabled to see the plummet to be in the hand of our heavenly Zerubbabel the more shall we feel moved and enabled to cast our care upon Him, put our trust in Him, to leave our matters in His hands. I have read of many of the Lord's people, and known some of them, who have said, I saw the hand of the Lord in that matter in my life and His mercy to me in closing such a door, or opening another door, or in going before me, or in some trial that I had to walk in.

"They shall rejoice and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel". They shall not be rebellious about it and wish it was in their own hands. They shall rejoice to see the plummet in His hands. Have you not known something about this in your life? Have you not rejoiced inwardly to see the Lord manage a matter for you, to see Him bring you through it, to see Him do something for you which you could not do yourself, to see Him come into some peculiar, difficult thing and just carry you through it? You have seen the plummet in His hand. Many of the Lord's people have seen this in

their lives, in their businesses, and in their vocations in life. They have had a God to go to, and what a wonderful mercy it has been. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee". "I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread". "They shall rejoice". Has it sometimes been like this? It has been a joy in your heart that your matters have been in better hands than your own and you have seen the plummet in His hand, opening a door here, closing a door there, managing another matter for you that has been difficult; lifting you up when you have been brought down; holding your hand when the way has been dark. What effect has that had? It has enabled you to fall into His hands and to resign your matters there.

The plummet being in the hand of Zerubbabel does not mean that it will be all joy. Heavy things have come to some, sad things in themselves, what mysterious things, what painful things and how hard they have been to bear! What has been the effect of this? They have made you more lively at a Throne of grace. You have had matters to take to the Lord and you have had to appeal to Him to manage them for you and you have seen Him do it. "They shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel". Not, They shall rejoice because the plummet is in the hand of Zerubbabel, although that is perfectly true, but that is not the reading. "They shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel". So that it is not a matter simply of the Lord doing something or fulfilling His purpose but you have seen it done for you. You have seen that plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel. It is profoundly confirming to see the plummet in His hand. It can bring a quietness and rest to your spirit, it can bring a resigning of yourself into His hand and there is a point in it to give you to feel that He is your God.

"They shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven". What are these seven? These seven "are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth". The number seven, as you know indicates a complete number, a perfect number. In the Revelation we read of seven churches, seven vials and a number of other things. The Lord will perfect His

own work, He will not leave something half done. "They are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth", not just through England or Great Britain or the Continent but through the whole earth. His eyes run to and fro - this really indicates that He has a perfect knowledge of everything in relation to this world, control over it too. It can be a great comfort to those who are taught by His good Spirit and who believe in His wisdom and grace, to commit their way unto Him. Nothing escapes His view, His eyes run to and fro through the whole earth incorporating every nation.

Here is our heavenly Zerubbabel. What about your own case and my case? Have you seen the plummet to be in His hand? Has that been a matter of joy to you? "They shall rejoice and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel". Have you seen the Lord go before you? Perhaps you say, He went before me in quite a different way from what I would have had it to be if it had been in my hands; but I lived to see that it was all for the best and I rejoiced in His kind providence toward me that has held me back in some things and gone before me in other things. You have seen the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel, you have seen Him appear for you in some particular providence.

Above all this the plummet is in the hand of Zerubbabel as relating to our everlasting destiny. A day will come, as we read in the New Testament, when all the nations of the earth will be gathered together before the King, some on His right hand, some on His left hand. Some will hear Him say "Come ye blessed", some will hear Him say "Depart ye cursed". What a wonderful thing it will be to see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel then and to hear His voice saying, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world". Who can estimate the value of a never-dying soul? When we think of an eternity that lies ahead, not one thousand years, but an eternity, who can estimate the value of a soul? It was Rutherford who said "If I have one soul from Anworth at my right hand in that day my heaven will be two heavens". Oh think of an eternity to come! Oh to be favoured to see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel, not leaving us to live and die in our sins, but to take us in hand and to quicken us into life and to bring us to a knowledge of the blessed Gospel. Our eternal destiny is the all-important question. We shall leave all providences behind one day, but we shall never leave eternity behind, never, never! O that word, for ever and ever. What a trembling thought it has been sometimes. We cannot fathom the mystery of eternity, but O, dear friends, if you and I are favoured to see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel and that this Jesus is our Jesus and if our matters are in His hand and our eternal destiny, the day will come when we shall rejoice and shall never cease to rejoice, but shall be there among the redeemed of the Lord in the heavenly city to go no more out. Then we shall see the plummet to have been in the hand of Zerubbabel in a sense that we cannot possibly see it to be here, for here we walk by faith and not by sight. When we come to the end, when heart and flesh fail, to leave earth for heaven, to depart and to be with Him, to go no more out, that will be to see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel.

AMEN.