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preached by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer" Clapham on Sunday evening 13th. February, 1972

Hymns: 546, 109, 348
Reading Isaiah 61 and 62
Text 62.12

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"And they shall call them, The holy people, the redeemed of the Lord; and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken."

This verse has a beautiful connection with what I considered this morning (Isaiah 60.1) in relation to the light of the glorious Gospel shining in Gospel days, particularly among the Gentiles, although it refers to Jew and Gentile. The history of the Jews, their period of captivity, their state of bondage, their deliverance from Babylon, their return to their land and the blessing of the Lord upon them - all this has a spiritual bearing, for more or less all the Lord's dear people know something of the two sides. They do not live in the light of the Lord's countenance, it may be as we had it in the last hymn this morning (280) some feel to be in much doubt and fear, uncertainty, temptation and darkness; and yet in the Lord's own good time the light shines, that is into the heart, so that when in a Gospel sense, in some degree a precious Christ is revealed and seen in the sweet view of faith, the darkness, doubt, fear, questioning and temptations all subside, the light shines, "Thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee". What a blessed place it must be for a poor sinner to be brought to, and to have some experience of, to be able to say under the shining of the light of the blessed Gospel, "My beloved is mine and I am His". Some of you know something of this, there have been days when your best Beloved has filled your heart, have there not? He has been the chiefest among ten thousand. This is when the light shines. This is when the windows of heaven are opened and the blessing is poured out. This removed all the bondage, darkness, fear, doubt, and temptation, brings the soul out of prison to praise His name and to say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name".

Although this refers to the blessed days of the glorious Gospel which have been, and may yet again be in the latter days (I do not know), yet it is a sweet earnest of that blessed shining of the

light of His countenance in glory of which we have read, when their sun will no more go down and the days of their mourning shall be ended. What a mercy it is to know something of the great and glorious Gospel, all the wealth of the world cannot be compared to this, because soon we must leave it all, for time is short. What a blessing this would be to some of our dear young people; to some it has been we believe, and we would desire that it might be with many more yet, even to be brought to a knowledge of the truth, the precious Gospel, the Lord Jesus Christ, and to feel an interest in Him.

What I have read here refers to a particular people who shall be partakers of these heavenly blessings, although it can have a primary reference no doubt to the Lord's ancient people, for to them He is the God of Jacob of whom it is said that "He found him in a waste howling wilderness; He led him about, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye". (Deuteronomy 32.10). This is not limited to Jacob personally but to the Lord's Israel, all His spiritual Israel, and is true of everyone of them. And does not this refer to the sons and daughters of Zion of whom it is said, "Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh, behold, his reward is with him and his work before him. And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken". These people appear to have three distinct titles, they are said to be "The holy people", they are "The redeemed of the Lord" and they are "Sought out, A city not forsaken". To these points as I am helped I desire to apply myself this evening.

It is perfectly true of the Lord's people that they are a holy people, although some of us may have to look inside and see little more than a mass of pollution, sinful, guilty condition as in the sight of God. That is what we are in ourselves and we have to feel and can say:

"No help in self I find,
And yet have sought it well;
The native treasure of my mind
Is sin, and death, and hell" (Gadsby's 739)

Yet even so they are a holy people, and these are the very people that are referred to here for they, and only they, really in a saving sense feel their condition, mourn over it, lay it before the Lord and seek His free mercy. It is a mercy to see something of the corruption of fallen nature, not to be left to indulge in sin, but to be brought down to feel that we have nothing of our own to merit our eternal salvation, and it is a mercy to feel as the prophet himself felt when he said: "Woe is me! for I am undone: because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6.5), and yet, even so, they are a holy people. This is referred to the children of Israel, as recorded in Exodus 33 when Moses said: "So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth". In that sense they were a holy people, a separate people; as it is said of the Lord's people in this same prophecy: "This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise". They are a holy people in a comparative sense, in that they are separated from the world that lieth in wickedness, neither are they a part of it; they are a separated people, a sanctified people. Those who are called by grace are really new creatures in Christ. Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new. Old ways, old acquaintances, old practices, old amusements are passed away; all things are become new. There is a new life, new desires, a new path. They are a separate people; and in this sense they are a holy people. But they are a holy people in a higher sense than this. They are a holy people in that they stand in union with Christ, washed in His precious blood, clothed in His perfect righteousness. Here they stand a holy people, as the body of Christ, part of Himself, His fulness, they stand in Him, chosen in Him and blessed with all spiritual blessings. Although experimentally we know more of the opposite side, more of an inward discovery of our corrupt condition, unholiness, sin and ruin, yet we are complete in Him, complete in His love, for we are loved with an everlasting love. These favoured people are complete in a union subsisting, they are in union with the Lamb, from condemnation free. Truly they are a blessed people, they are a holy people! The

Lord Jesus said in His prayer, "They are not of the world"; they are a sanctified people - "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth."

So there are the two opposites. There is what we have to feel and see in ourselves, which occasions mourning, grief and sorrow, and, if we are rightly exercised in it, repentance before God, and confession of our sins before Him. But there is the other view as we are favoured to see and feel it, "in union with the Lamb, from condemnation free". Here these people stand complete in Christ. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." This man is a new creature, a holy person in this sense. There is a covenant of grace which incorporates every elect vessel of mercy in the eternal decrees and purposes of God. There they are secure, absolutely secure; for they are in Christ. What a blessed standing this is, here is a union that is indissoluble. As I have said, they are loved with an everlasting love from which nothing can separate them. But when we come to search ourselves, how far can we feel that this applies to us? Has there been a day or period with you when there was a stripping, wounding, killing, when there was a taking root downward and bearing fruit upward? The Lord's dear people take root downward by divine teaching in the discovery of themselves, and they bear fruit upward in Christ. They are a holy people. They are separated in God's divine decrees. They are one with Christ in an eternal union, and there they are secure.

"They shall call them, the holy people". This is the first point then. The second is, "They shall call them the redeemed of the Lord". What are we to understand by this in a Gospel sense? The Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, says, "Ye are bought with a price". That is what it really means; and this blessed truth applies to every one, without exception of these holy people, that stand in union with the Lamb. Not only then are they in union with Him, but they are purchased by Him; they are the purchase of His precious blood, the redeemed of the Lord. This only applies to the holy people, not to those who live and die in

their sin, and sink into the bottomless pit; for that will be the sad end of the ungodly who go the broad way to their everlasting destruction; but it will never be true of a ransomed vessel of mercy that he has sunk into everlasting perdition, for the price of his ransom has been paid. It was a price which involved those terrible sufferings endured by the Burden-bearer when their sins were laid upon Him, when He was smitten by the sword of Justice, when He was nailed to the cross, laid down His life, shed His most precious blood to pay the ransom price. Happy indeed are they who have an interest in Calvary, in the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, and on whose behalf He shed His most precious blood.

Oh what a redemption this is! It is a redemption that delivers from the power and dominion of all opposing powers and entities them to all spiritual, heavenly blessings. What a wonderful redemption it is! These are the redeemed of the Lord. I should be glad if I could feel to my comfort tonight a sweet earnest of this. I do not mean that I have never felt it; but I believe those who have had some experience of this desire to feel its renewings. They need the Saviour to come again, because clouds and darkness intervene and hide Him from our eyes. Yet still they are the redeemed of the Lord. What a blessed people they are! They are despised by the world and they are despised by a certain type of religious professor, but the fact that they are despised by them, makes no difference; they are the redeemed of the Lord. Oh to really feel this!

- What are they redeemed from? They are redeemed from the curse of the law. They are redeemed from the law as to its hold upon them because their Redeemer satisfied the claims of that law on their behalf, the Apostle says, "Ye are dead to the law by the body of Christ." These holy people are redeemed from the curse of the law through the Redeemer being made a curse for them. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." If we die under the curse of the law we shall sink into hell, for that is the curse of the law, that is of the broken law. Never to be delivered from this curse has the most awful issues,

more than words can express. But His dear people are delivered from it, so that as they stand in union with Christ it can truly be said:

"The terrors of law and of God
With me can have nothing to do;
My Saviour's obedience and blood
Hide all my transgressions from view."

This is to be redeemed, friends, to be delivered from the law by the body of Christ, which incorporates all His substitutionary work, and the curse that He Himself endured to deliver His redeemed people from it. What an amazing blessing and mercy it is to feel sweetly for a few minutes that we are in a Gospel sense the redeemed of the Lord.

These people are redeemed not only from the curse of the law but from the dominion of sin. The Apostle Paul says: "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." While we are here below we are not delivered from the being and the working of sin, nor from its power; but we are delivered from its dominion. This is to be redeemed, to be "not under the law but under grace", to have an interest in a precious Christ, to be perfect in Him. "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee."

They are redeemed, they are the purchase of His sin atoning blood. They are made nigh by the efficacy and healing virtue of the atonement as applied to their conscience. They are the redeemed of the Lord also as being delivered from eternal death—not the death of the body actually, but they are delivered from death's sting, for "the sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Christ having gained the victory over sin on behalf of His people death has no sting beside. As the hymn-writer says:

"If sin be pardoned I'm secure;
Death has no sting beside;
The law gives sin its damning power,
But Christ, my ransom, died."

These are the redeemed of the Lord. You would have a sweet moment in the silent watches of the night if the Lord should be pleased to arise and shine into your soul and give you joy and peace in believing. Then you could feel, as some of you have done, that you are the redeemed of the Lord. The blessed result of this is the pardon of sin, the justification of our persons, our adoption in the Beloved as sons and daughters of Zion, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding. These redeemed of the Lord are on a blessed foundation, they have a glorious and blessed prospect, and sometimes they feel it, when a little of the glory of the Lord shines into their heart. What a blessed Gospel it is!

Then there is a third point. These people are said to be "A city not forsaken". The city here in a Gospel sense is Zion. This is the Lord's city, the inheritance of the sons and daughters of Zion - "Blessed inhabitants of Zion, washed in the Redeemer's blood". They are "sought out". This is referred to prophetically by Ezekiel where the Lord says: "I will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day," (Ezekiel 34.11,12). These sheep sought out in the divine purposes of God are the elect of God in the blessed covenant of grace; but experimentally they have to be sought out. If the Lord did not seek us out first we should never try to seek Him. We must be sought out as it is said of Jacob representatively - "He found him in a waste howling wilderness". That is where the Lord finds His dear people. It does not matter where they are, they will be found. They will be sought out, although they may run the ways of this world and love it, yet still the eye of divine love is on them all the time, and in due time they are sought out. This is what dear Newton said:

"Determined to save He watched o'er my path

When Satan's blind slave I sported with death."

The Lord sought him out, although he was an African blasphemer. Has the Lord sought you out? Mercifully there may not have been an outward running in the ways of sin and evil. I was reading the other day of the late Mr. Stanley Wakeley, at one time pastor at Rainham, he delighted in hunting and shooting and such sports, and so he went on until the Lord sought him out. I believe there has been a day with some of you when the Lord sought you out. What a wonderful mercy this has been for you. He could have left you to live, die and perish in your sins; all of us left to ourselves would have gone on in our sins, but He sought us out.

"The appointed time rolls on apace,
Not to propose, but call by grace;
To change the heart, renew the will,
And turn the feet to Zion's hill."

The Psalmist said, "When Thou saidst, seek ye my face, my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." The Lord must begin this blessed work of grace. It is the Lord's work. Experimentally speaking, in a particular sense it is the Holy Spirit's work, but here these "Sought out" ones are called "the redeemed of the Lord". They are separated by God the Father, preserved in Jesus Christ and called by the Holy Spirit. They are called out of a state of death in sin, called by that God who is rich in mercy. This then is Zion, but more particularly its people, its inheritance, those whom the Lord has formed for His praise. The time comes when the Lord seeks them out. Was it not so with the Apostle Paul when he was on the way to Damascus, breathing out threatenings and slaughter, but the Lord sought him out. What a change it makes when the Lord begins a work in the heart, convinces of sin, and brings the convinced sinner to the footstool of mercy, to seek the Lord! "Our seeking His face, is all of His grace".

They are a city not forsaken. The Lord's dear people never will be forsaken, although sometimes they feel they are; but they never will be really. Why not? Because the Lord has said they never will be, so they never can be. He has said, "I will never

leave thee nor forsake thee."

Here then are three things as referred to the Lord's dear people. They are said to be - a holy people in the divine decrees and purposes of God, as they stand in union with Christ. They are redeemed of the Lord as the purchase of His most precious blood. And in due time they are sought out and brought to a knowledge of Him, to love Him, to serve Him, to follow Him, to walk in His ways and one day to be with Him for ever. Amen.

