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Sermon preached by Mr. J. Walder at "Ebenezer" Clapham on
Wednesday evening 27.7.77

Hymns 1079, 697, 945

Reading 2 Peter 1

Text 2 Peter 1.19

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts."

In attempting to consider the subject matter of our text I want to do so in the context of the matter spoken of just previous to this word regarding that wonderful revelation and manifestation of Christ the eternal Son of God, as He came into this world, the incarnate Son of God, Saviour and Redeemer of sinners as revealed and manifested to the Apostle Peter; and then to notice what he says here of having something even more sure than that, "a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed". After noticing a few doctrinal points I want to try to apply that a little to our own experience and the mercy and blessing of having some gracious hope and expectation resting upon the promise of God that the day will dawn, and the day star arise in our hearts, personally, in more than one aspect of the matter.

Let us then look very briefly at what the Apostle says here "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The Apostle here is doubtless referring to that very sacred and blessed experience that he and two other favoured Apostles had when they were taken up into the mount and Christ was transfigured before them. There was such a manifestation there of the glory of Christ as the eternal Son of God as well as Christ in our nature; Moses and Elias were seen, and such was the weight and greatness of the blessing and of the revelation that Peter was overwhelmed. Now we may conclude that surely no person could ever

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be given a greater evidence and a more sure and certain proof and demonstration that this indeed was the Christ they had looked for, that this was the promised Messiah, that this was the true Son of God in our nature Who had come into the world to redeem sinners. It seemed so clear and demonstrated without doubt that this was so and the Apostle says, We were eye-witnesses of this, we have seen with our own eyes, we have tasted and experienced it. "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ". But what does he say in our text in regard to that? He says this was great, it was a wonderful demonstration but "We have also a more sure word of prophecy", we have something that is even a greater proof, a greater evidence, that this is the Christ, this is the promised Saviour, this is the glorious Messiah. "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place".

If I may be helped I will look a little at this "sure word of prophecy", when this was first given and the subsequent trying, proving and fulfilling of it to show the certainty and assurance of it. We must go back right to the beginning of this world, to that dark place. My friends can we possibly imagine, conceive or understand a darker season of almost, if not altogether, utter despair, than that time just after we had fallen in Adam? The great transgression of original sin had been committed, the wrath of God incurred, the curse had fallen upon man, the condemnation entered, all benefits and blessings were totally forfeited, a covenant broken, man utterly fallen, depraved, ruined, undone and helpless through his own transgression, standing now in a state and condition of utter hopelessness, absolute despair. Sin had entered and death by sin. The sentence was passed, the curse incurred, no hope, not the slightest vestige of the least expectation of anything other than eternal death, punishment and hell. That

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was a dark place! But now a light shone; God gave the first word of prophecy from His own mouth. "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head"; the promise of Christ, the promise of the Saviour, light in a dark place. The only possible ground of hope for life, hope for favour with God, justification, peace, pardon is in Christ and Christ alone. This is the word of prophecy, the first word of prophecy, the first great promise, which embraces all the promises of God and is that greatest promise ever given, the promise of a Saviour. Now that precious promise of God was sure in its very character and every feature of it because founded upon the character of God. The whole of the supreme and essential perfections of God are involved in the giving and the fulfilling of every word of prophecy. It is sure because it rests in the power and the faithfulness, the wisdom, the goodness, the mercy and the grace of God. Nothing can be more certain, absolutely certain, without the least vestige of a shadow of failure than every word that God speaks.

The darkest season this world has ever known concerning the state and condition of fallen man, was the moment between the time he had fallen and the time God gave the promise of salvation in Christ. But how dreadfully dark too was the heart of man. "A light that shineth in a dark place". We do well to take heed to that first promise, that first prophecy, for in the giving of it and in the fulfilment of it we have the pledge and promise of the fulfilment of every other promise or prophecy that is yea and amen in Christ Jesus. There is a further thing which is a proving, a demonstration of the assurance, the certainty of this word of prophecy. Is it not true to say that the more opposition a thing has, the more difficulties it passes through, the many contingencies and vicissitudes that affect it, and yet the matter is brought to pass, is the demonstration of the power of the Person Who has spoken the word and is powerfully and faithfully fulfilling it. My friends, what transpired between the moment that God spoke this word of prophecy concerning Christ His Son as the promised

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Saviour and the actual fulfilment of that promise, when Christ was born in Bethlehem? The word was not immediately fulfilled. The seed of the woman was not born immediately after the prophecy was made concerning it; many, many, many years passed, and the promise seemed at times indeed to be dead and buried. There seemed to be seasons when it was almost, if not altogether, impossible that it should be performed. There were times when such was the darkness and the opposition that it seemed that it was unlikely that this should be brought about; but we want to follow this wonderful demonstration of the assurance of the word of prophecy. It was a sure word and in the fulfilment of it, when Christ the Saviour was born in Bethlehem, as being the fulfilment of all the prophecies, we have the great proof that this is the Christ promised of God, prophesied by the prophets; for Jesus when He spoke to those two going to Emmaus, "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself".

Let us look at the testing, the proving of this word of prophecy. The first instance of the trial of it is in the case of Abraham. I am persuaded that those who were in the line by which Christ came according to the flesh were aware of that fact. It is very plain that it was so where Abraham was concerned for we read, "Abraham rejoiced to see My day; and he saw it, and was glad". What of the trial in regard to the fulfilment of the prophecy? Abraham waits year in, year out, childless, until he is past age and Sarah too is past age; over 100 years old and no child. Now I believe that the strength of the trial of Abraham's faith was not merely in regard to his childlessness, but in regard to God's promise of a Saviour. What if Abraham had died childless? It would have meant that his soul was lost, as well as the promise having failed, for if Isaac had not been born, where would have been the fulfilment of God's promise of Christ? He was in the line; the line would have been broken and the promise would have failed, but Oh, how

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we see that this promise passed on from one miracle to another, from one seeming absolute impossibility to the next seeming absolute impossibility. In due time Isaac is born, God's faithfulness and power are demonstrated, the promise is to be fulfilled in the way that is to men impossible, beyond all the power of man and his wisdom and strength, a demonstration of God's almighty power, His faithfulness and His wisdom.

The second difficulty that I will notice is in the case of Naomi - she was in the line. You will know the narrative in regard to her going to Moab and the losses she sustained there; Elimelech died, and then Mahlon and Chilion, and she was left a widow with two widowed daughters-in-law, no child. Now what of the promise? Where now is the manifestation of God's faithfulness and goodness in fulfilling His prophecy that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head? O the wonder-working hand of God, His way, His wisdom, His power in fulfilling His own Word; presently we find that Ruth is brought into Bethlehem, a poor Moabitish damsel, a stranger, an exile, one who was not of Israel by birth, a Gentile; and she being married to Boaz, Obed is born. I believe that when Naomi picked up that child and nursed him and blessed the Lord she saw the fulfilment of God's prophecy concerning a Saviour; it was more than Obed she saw; I believe by faith she saw Christ, the continuation of that line through which He should come. We have the prophecy, it was a word of promise that was deeply tried, proving the power and faithfulness and goodness and wisdom of God.

Another instance is that season when Haman schemed the extinction of the Jews, and the matter was signed and sealed by the king, the posts were sent out and the day was fixed, What a trial of the prophecy! Shall it fail? Will secondary causes prevail, will the Lord suffer His prophecy, His promise to fail? No. At the last moment, Oh the wonders of God, the demonstration of His Omnipotence, His Omniscience, His wisdom, His glory! Why that day that was anticipated as being a day of sorrow and anguish and grief and death was turned into a day of rejoicing and peace and gladness; the Lord delivered His people; and so

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the line is maintained and God's Word is proved to be a faithful and sure word.

Just one more example, as I want to come to something personal in this. Hezekiah, poor dear man, was exceedingly tried; the city was threatened, his sin heavy on his conscience, the sentence of death in his body and God's own word, "Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live" - and no child. Now what of God's promise, what of the prophecy? You will notice in reading the Scripture that Manasseh was born during the fifteen years by which Hezekiah's life was lengthened according to the word of God. In all these things is the demonstration of God's faithfulness, the demonstration of the power of God and His wisdom in the way that he chose to fulfil His own Word. That prophecy passed through those seasons of seeming impossibilities and darkness and trial but was demonstrated so clearly and plainly as a sure word that could not fail; a sure word that rested upon the power and faithfulness of God to perform. Notwithstanding all that transpired between the time that God gave the word of prophecy and the actual fulfilment of it, notwithstanding all the trials and difficulties and impossibilities nevertheless Christ Jesus was born at the moment predicted, in the place predicted, of the person appointed. All the powers of hell and of darkness, all the schemes of the agents of Satan, all the hatred and malice of men, all the powers of hell and the world could not hinder or further God's word; it was fulfilled exactly according to every jot and tittle that was given by word of prophecy. God fulfilled the word; Christ was born in Bethlehem. What a sure word of prophecy it was "a light that shineth in a dark place" - the Gospel day dawned. This was the season when the shadows fled away, all the types and shadows were done away, the true Messiah came. Christ was born, the day dawned and the day star arose. The day star is the sun; Christ is the sun of righteousness.

The apostle by the Holy Spirit says "Until the day dawn, and

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the day star arise in your hearts". It is very well to contemplate the doctrine, to look on in admiration, to have a good judgmental understanding and knowledge of the things which have been accomplished according to the Word of God, and the history of all that transpired in regard to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the proving that this is He, because in Him the prophecies are fulfilled. But it is a very different thing for the day to dawn and the day star to arise in our hearts, for this sure word of prophecy to be spoken and to be as a light that shineth into our dark hearts that are full of all the fruits and effects of the fall and of sin. In the fulfilling of this, the greatest of all prophecies, we have the proof, pledge and pattern of the Lord's good will and purpose to fulfil every other promise, particularly as applied or spoken to any individual. My friends, God's word of prophecy, any promise, any prophecy, that is spoken to you and me, is a sure word. We may rest assured that God will perform it, He is faithful to His Word, He will never suffer it to fail.

I want to look at the case and condition of the seeker first. Look at the beginning and feelings and exercises of that one who is first awakened to see his state and condition by the fall as a sinner before God. This is what the hymnwriter speaks of as "a legal night"; he is in darkness; he has received a measure of light so that he understands a little the darkness that he is in, the darkness of his poor heart; and being rightly affected under the teaching of the Holy Spirit and saving conviction through the lawful use of the law, he is found in that path of a true seeker after salvation. He longs that the Lord will visit him with His mercy, that Christ shall be revealed to him. He is in that state and condition now that he is waiting, longing, looking that the day will dawn in his heart experimentally and personally. He wants this day star to arise in his heart. It may be that through many a long season his hopes and fears alternate rise; he

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comes at times well nigh to despair; he has many temptations and fears lest he be a wrong character, lest his feelings are only natural, not of the Spirit, he may know many days of darkness. I might ask this question of such as know what it is to receive a promise from the Lord, spoken with divine power into the heart so that it sticks, (if I may use that word reverently), it remains, it is impressed upon the heart. Where and when did you receive it with regard to your experience at that time? Was it when you were low, dark and distressed, in some dark place in your experience, whether in your soul or in providence? It was as a light that shone in a dark place and it raised you to hope that He would fulfil His Word to you. If that was your case in your seeking days there was a season between the time that the promise was given and when it was fulfilled. You went through many a trial in regard to it, many seasons when it seemed well-nigh, if not altogether, impossible. There were times when all seemed dead and buried; but it was revived and so your poor heart hoped upon God's word; and perhaps you pleaded a number of times what we find in the Scripture, "Remember the word unto Thy servant, upon which Thou hast caused me to hope". This was what kept your head above water.

Now let us look at one or two words which are so blessedly applicable to this character, and are at times sweetly spoken to a poor sinner. There is such a word as this, "They shall not be ashamed that wait for me". That is a precious promise if we know what it is to wait for His salvation. I well remember in my very early days, when I believe I was in real earnest after God's salvation, coming to a place of well-nigh despair, when that verse of the hymn came, "Blest is the man, O God,
Whose mind is stayed on thee;
Who waits for thy salvation, Lord,
Shall thy salvation see."

There is a blessed certainty, it is a promise, a word of prophecy.

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That which we have tried to consider a little in the coming of Christ has its counterpart in the experience of God's people in the promise God gives. If the Lord has given the promise He will as surely fulfil it as the promise of Christ. It is a sure word. If we have this in our hearts we do well to take heed to it. Has the Lord ever spoken to us? Has He ever given us a promise? I speak now particularly in regard to those early days, that the time would come when He would satisfy our hearts with regard to a revelation of Christ as ours personally; He would not let us die before we had seen Him. It may be there is one waiting for that. You have not had it, yet you have a hope, and sometimes you really fear lest death should come first. It will not if God has spoken, He will fulfil His Word, the day will dawn, the day star will arise in your heart sooner or later. They that desire Christ shall have Him for sure. There is great encouragement for one who is a seeking soul, many precious Scriptures are applicable to this one, words of prophecy.

Now what of that one who has come further on the way, known better days, but, alas, through the working of sin and backsliding, temptations and fear, they have got into seasons of much darkness, fear and many temptations and distresses, so much is called into question and they do really long that they might have some gracious visitation or assurance that the Lord is theirs and they are His, and that it is and shall be well with them while time shall last and well when called to die. At this present season they are in that path that we read much of in God's Word - the days of darkness shall be many. The shadows have come over, dark clouds and temptations and fears. It may be that one has got into such a state and condition in spirit as to call things into question; they really wrestle with the Lord that He would come again. What of that precious and encouraging word that the Lord spoke to His disciples, the word of prophecy, doubtless one that has been a comfort to God's people, "Ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart

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shall rejoice". The world shall rejoice and ye shall be sorrowful, "but your sorrow shall be turned into joy". "Your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you". What a precious promise, what a prophecy, "I will see you again". It is a sure word and though our poor souls may pass through so many trials and difficulties, as during the season that we have considered in our text with regard to the coming of Christ into this world, so it is with regard to His coming again into our poor hearts.

Just one more thought, and that is in regard to what we may consider as the final and most blessed fruition of this - the day dawn, the day of salvation, the eternal day and the day star arising never to go down any more, where there shall be no night, no darkness, the dawning of eternal day. What of this sure word of prophecy? How many times have some of God's people had some severe shakings. They may look back to a season when they were sure of heaven; the Lord blessed them and they received a sweet earnest and they could join with the hymn writer,

"Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given,
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heaven".

You have had some shakings since, you have wondered whether you will ever get there, you have needed the Lord to re-assure you and to give you another gracious evidence of your title to that inheritance. But my friends, what of this sure word of prophecy? If the Lord has forgiven you your trespasses that is a precious promise of heaven. If the Lord has communicated to you His righteousness by imputation and you have known something of peace with God, a fore-taste, a sweet and precious fore-taste of heaven in your poor heart, that is a promise, is it not? It is a sure word, and we do well to take heed to it "as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts" - until the eternal day dawn. I am sure of this, the Lord never changes His mind. He does not say one thing one day to His

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people and another thing another day. If He has promised you heaven, heaven shall be yours, He does not change His mind. "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end". NOTHING shall cause God's promise to fail.

I said that the promises of God are yea and amen in Christ Jesus; they are sure words; we have the pledge and proof of this in the fulfilment of the promise of Christ. There may be something more temporal, a promise that God has spoken, maybe years ago; you have never really disbelieved it; you have been very, very tried but you have never been able completely to relinquish it; even in your darkest moments you still hang on to it, plead it, hope in it; there may be many with a promise locked up in their hearts not fulfilled yet, maybe with regard to a relative or something in your pathway, or it may be in the church of God; it is a prophecy that God has spoken, and you are waiting and waiting for the Lord to fulfil it. At the present moment you may be passing through one of those seasons of seeming impossibility; it is buried, it does not look as if there is a vestige of hope of it being fulfilled. At the moment circumstances are such, temptations are such that all things seem to be uniting to bring about your disappointment. It is a trial of faith, it is the trial of the promise. When God made the promise to Abraham he swore by Himself. What do we read in regard to Abraham's experience? After he had suffered the will of God he received the promise, that is the thing promised. What encouragement there is for us to take from the pattern in the Scripture in regard to God giving a promise; the trial of it, the vicissitudes that pass over it and the eventual fulfilment of it demonstrating the power, faithfulness, wisdom, goodness and mercy of God.

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts". Amen