

**A SERMON PREACHED AT DEPTFORD,
OCTOBER 25, 1839: ON THE
OCCASION OF THE CELEBRATION OF
THE CENTENARY OF WESLEYAN
METHODISM IN THAT CIRCUIT**

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A Sermon Preached at Deptford, October 25, 1839: on the Occasion of the Celebration of the Centenary of Wesleyan Methodism in that Circuit by William Naylor

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WILLIAM NAYLOR

**A SERMON PREACHED AT DEPTFORD,
OCTOBER 25, 1839: ON THE
OCCASION OF THE CELEBRATION OF
THE CENTENARY OF WESLEYAN
METHODISM IN THAT CIRCUIT**

GOD ACKNOWLEDGED IN WHAT HE HAS WROUGHT,
AND HIS CONTINUED BLESSING SOLICITED:

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT DEPTFORD, OCTOBER 25, 1839,

ON OCCASION OF

THE CELEBRATION

OF THE

CENTENARY OF WESLEYAN METHODISM

IN THAT CIRCUIT.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

METRICAL MUSINGS ON CENTENARY SUBJECTS.

BY WILLIAM NAYLOR.

"The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous."—David.



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TO THE
MEMBERS OF THE METHODIST SOCIETIES
IN THE DEPTFORD CIRCUIT,
THIS CENTENARY SERMON
IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED,
BY THEIR PASTOR AND SUPERINTENDENT,
WITH HIS PRAYERS FOR THEIR SPIRITUAL PROSPERITY.

As the author of the following Sermon has no expectation that it will be extensively read beyond the limits of the Circuit in which it was preached, and by more than a few of his personal friends, it may be asked, why he has published statements which must be very familiar to most of his readers. His answer is,—when preached, many not united with the Methodists in church fellowship were present, and he deemed it his duty, on such a memorable occasion, briefly to bring before them what Methodism is, in its doctrines and discipline, that it might be known through what means it has attained its influence and elevation in the world; and having done so in the pulpit he did not feel himself at liberty to expunge those parts of the discourse when it was committed to the press. The Preacher, in publishing his Centenary Sermon, is actuated by the desire of recording his grateful sentiments for WESLEYAN METHODISM, to which, under God, he owes his station in life, and his hope of heavenly happiness. In his own family its blessed moral effects have been experienced by five generations, and he earnestly prays that the descendants of his sainted progenitors may continue an uninterrupted succession of faithful Methodists as long as they have a name on the earth. But should any of them ever become ashamed of, or estranged from, the spiritual family of their ancestors, he is anxious that his Sermon should remain to testify against their folly and ingratitude.

Deptford, November 6th, 1839.

A SERMON.

"Thy God hath commanded thy strength: strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us."—Psal. lxxviii. 28.

THERE are strong reasons to warrant the conclusion that this Psalm was composed by David, and composed by him for the express purpose of being sung by the children of Israel on the very joyful occasion of removing the ark from the house of Obed-edom, to a permanent residence in mount Sion. In the ark Jehovah deigned to make his presence known, and there he frequently displayed his majesty and glory; so that what was done by it is spoken of as being done by the Lord, who is described as ascending the heights of Sion, "leading captivity captive," and taking possession of his holy residence, attended by the thousands of his angels. This interesting and triumphant procession to Sion has been considered a typical representation of the glorious ascension of the conquering Redeemer of the world from his incarnate abode on earth to his exalted throne in heaven; and to him the words of David are distinctly applied by the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. (Eph. iv. 8.)

The Psalm is principally devoted to a grateful record of the wondrous works of God, his works in the ways of his providence, and that in special reference to the Jewish nation. They had been assailed and oppressed by numerous enemies, but now those enemies were defeated and subdued, and they had become a mighty and an honourable people; for which they were exhorted to praise and bless God. And lest they should be disposed to ascribe any part of their greatness and glory to the schemes of their own wisdom, or the exertions of their own power, (a conduct to which they had ever been prone,) they were impressively taught, that their past achievements and their present condition must be acknowledged to be of the Lord. This is the instructive truth declared in that portion of the Psalm we have now read. The meaning of our text in reference to Israel as a nation doubtless was, You are mighty and exalted, but know that the strength

by which you have become so powerful, God has commanded and given; and the stability of your present elevation and your lasting and increased prosperity depend on the continued presence of God with you, and the exercise of his power in your favour: therefore, while you acknowledge him in what has been done, still let your prayer be, "Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us."

The sentiment and spirit of this interpretation we adopt and apply to ourselves as a Christian connexion; we acknowledge that all we are is of the Lord, and by the Lord, and that our continued being as a spiritual people, and all our future prosperity in the world, must be from the Lord; therefore, it behoves us, while we gratefully confess "God has commanded our strength," most fervently to pray that his "strength" may abide with us.

In discoursing further from this scripture, it is my intense desire, on this memorable occasion, to lead you to trace all that is great and good in Methodism to God. In doing so, we observe,

First. It is our duty, as Methodists, to contemplate, with gratitude to God and acknowledged dependence on him, the strength he has commanded, and the work which he has wrought among us.

Secondly. It will be our safety and our interest, as a Christian people, to manifest the fervency of our gratitude, and sincerity of our acknowledgments, by persevering prayer to God for his continued blessing. Taking this view of our subject, we proceed gratefully to acknowledge that,

1. By the strength and work of God we have received our existence and name as a Christian people. The language of St. Peter, addressed to the saints of his day, may with rigid truth and strict propriety be applied to us: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people, called out of darkness into his marvellous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." (1 Pet. ii. 9, 10.) We were not, but now we are; we had no name among the tribes of Israel, but now we have a well-known name in the earth; and we have no hesitancy in asserting that the same mighty power that at first said, "Let there be light,

and there was light," made us to be a people. The venerable Wesley ever considered that revival of religion in this land, of which he and his coadjutors were the honoured instruments, as the special work of the "strength of God." His words are, "What is it that the Methodists have done, and are now doing? or rather, what is it that God hath done, and is still doing, in our land? For it is not the work of man which hath lately appeared. All who calmly observe it must say, 'This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.'"* On another occasion, again calling the spread of scriptural holiness in experience and practice the work of God, he observes, "It is no cant word, it means the conversion of sinners from sin to holiness."† Describing the commencement of this work, he states, "I was continually importuned to preach in one and another church, and that not only morning, afternoon, and night, on Sunday; but on week-days also. Vast multitudes flocked together; but in a short time, partly because of those unwieldy crowds, partly because of my unfashionable doctrine, I was excluded from one and another church, and, at length, shut out of all. Not daring to be silent, after a short struggle between honour and conscience, I made a virtue of necessity, and preached in the middle of Moorfields. Here were thousands upon thousands, abundantly more than any church could contain; and numbers among them who never went to any church or place of worship at all. More and more of them were cut to the heart, and came to me, all in tears, inquiring with the utmost eagerness, what they must do to be saved. I said, 'If all of you will meet on Thursday evening, I will advise you as well as I can.' The first evening twelve persons came; the next week, thirty or forty. Thus, without any previous plan or design, began the Methodist Society in England; a company of people associating together to help each other to work out their own salvation."‡ Speaking of the subjects of this work, he states, "Not a few whose sins were of the most flagrant kind, drunkards, swearers, thieves, whoremongers, and adulterers, have been brought 'from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God.' Many

* Works, vol. i., p. 150.

† Ibid, vol. xiii., p. 294.

‡ Ibid. . vii., pp. 422, 423.