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Prayer Meeting Address by Mr.J.Delves at "Ebenezer" Clapham
on Monday evening 9.7.79

Hymns:308; 1156

Reading 1 John 2

The Lord's people, when under the blessed influence of the Spirit, will desire to lay all their matters straight with the teaching of God's Word. If in your trials and difficulties you are enabled to commit them unto the Lord and feel before a holy, heart-searching God that they can stand before the teaching which is in this chapter, then you are blessed indeed. We need to beware, when in trouble, of seeking to find a word in Scripture which, in isolation, suits our case, and, having got it, going away with that word and cleaving to it presumptuously whereas our walk, our lives, our conversation, our conduct must tally with the Scriptures in three particulars, experience, doctrine and practice. These things are beautifully and sacredly balanced in this chapter we have read and it will be the desire of the humble, seeking soul that in all these matters these three things are completely and sweetly in unison in the way in which we walk. I believe that it would be for our spiritual health if we were enabled to dwell much in these blessed epistles. I would tenderly say that there is nothing legal in them at all, they are wholly spiritual. This chapter is replete with the wisdom of God. It begins on a very low and tender note and rises to the very zenith of Christian experience. The Apostle John, inspired by the Spirit, takes us gently into the mystery of godliness and concludes with this assertion, "If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that everyone that doeth righteousness is born of Him." We cannot rightly discern the Scriptures until we know Christ and know that He is righteous and we can only know that Christ is righteous as He is revealed to us as the Advocate of the Father, as the righteous Servant of God. He shall testify to men, He who is the first begotten and beginning of creation; He who is Alpha and Omega.

There are just three things which I would try clearly to touch upon. The first is experience. The apostle is very tender in the way he encourages these little children to whom

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he writes. "Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments". This is a word of encouragement to those who evidently were in some perplexity and doubt as to whether they did know Christ, whether they really were taught of the Spirit, and he points to the fruit. I believe we may interpret this word this way, that if the blessed Spirit, though not felt in our hearts in a conspicuous and clear way, nevertheless restrains us from doing certain things that the world considers all right, that professors esteem as lawful; if further He constrains us to do things which cause reproach and shame and accusations of being foolish, then we know that we know Him. There is the experience. We have the witness in our hearts if the love of Christ constraineth and restraineth us in the simple things of life, walk and conversation. "Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." The commandments do not refer to the ordinances of God's house; that clearly is not intended here. This word is to babes who are burdened as to whether they do know Him, this is the commandment of love, the love of God shed abroad in the heart, the love of Christ, the love of holiness. The Lord Jesus Christ said all the law is contained in this, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"; and where right, that love springs from a love to Christ.

The apostle is given grace, under the direct teaching of the Spirit, to hedge up the way and he introduces the matter of doctrine, that is teaching, the teaching of the Spirit, and I would refer you to the 24th. verse "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning.", that is the knowledge and teaching and truth that Christ is God. Now if that abides in you you have an evidence and witness and token that you are born of the Spirit. How can this teaching abide in you? As you are taught repeatedly your need of Jesus, as you feel day in and day out the need of a Saviour as a faithful and merciful High Priest in things pertaining to God, so that doctrine abides in you. "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father". So, briefly, this doctrine is simply this, that we rely upon the finished work of Christ for salvation. We rely upon Him for everything;

we rely upon Him to grant us that unction from the Holy One to teach us, that we may know all things. We rely upon Him for breath, for life, for perseverance all through this pathway and we rely upon Him to keep our souls alive.

If this is our professed doctrine, then there will be something else, there will be practice. I believe that it is the truth of practice which pervades these epistles which is really an offence to so many. It is the practical part which offends many in these sacred epistles. What practice have we set before us? Briefly it is contained in verse 6 and here we have experience, doctrine and practice together, "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." May we have grace to measure our professed experience, our professed belief in the doctrines by this. If we profess that we abide in Christ, that we need Him always for our salvation and helper then we ought so to walk in the same way as Christ walked. There are two aspects which are mentioned before us concerning practice, one is negative, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." Whatever these worldly things may be, in our homes, in laxness in conversation, in a carelessness, in a lack of zeal and a luke-warmness, these things are not of the Father but of the world and the world passeth away. Through this sad falling away we do not abide in the doctrine we profess and our experience is weak. Where there is a blessed unison between experience, doctrine and practice there will be an abiding in Christ and a dependence upon Him for all things. There is that positive mark of practice mentioned here, "loving one another"; that flows from the doctrine of Christ, that He loved us and therefore we ought to love one another. It can only flow as we experience the love of Christ toward us; it cannot be manufactured; it cannot be produced; but it is the love of Christ constraining us, under a felt sense of our unworthiness of His love, to love one another, to esteem each other better than ourselves. If in everything we can bring

our hard cases to the touchstone of Scripture in experience, doctrine and practice and find that the way which we feel constrained to go is crucifying to the flesh, glorifying to God and contrary to the world, we may have a hope that we are in the narrow way. Amen

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