

Prayer meeting address by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer", Clapham
on Monday evening 8.2.71 -----

H y m n s : 232, 880

Reading: 1 Peter 4.

A particular feature of Peter's epistles consists in a relation to three things. They refer quite a lot to the sufferings of Christ for His people, and the sufferings of believers for their Lord's sake, and to these persecuted suffering believers he gives some very timely, quieting exhortations. He says, "let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."

It is extremely difficult for any poor minister to attempt to speak of the sufferings of Christ for they confound us. There is a depth in them that we cannot penetrate and yet we know that He suffered, and that He did willingly drink that bitter cup right up (as we have sung), for His people's deliverance, that He fulfilled the will of God, appeased justice, removed the guilt of His people, and made their heaven secure. Nothing reveals in this aspect the awfulness of sin as the sufferings of Christ.

The Apostle refers also to the sufferings of believers. It is clearly evident that those to whom he was writing were passing through sufferings and much bitter persecution. For they are referred to as being scattered abroad. From the very beginning the church of Christ has been a suffering church, especially as we look back over its history, and that noble army of martyrs, who counted not their life dear unto them for Christ's sake. But a particular cross or trial may be laid upon one and another peculiar to themselves, although in our day generally speaking we are surrounded with mercies, and we may gather together to seek the Lord, none lawfully daring to molest us. We do not fear imprisonment, but even so it is true as one has said,

"Shall Simon bear the cross alone
And all the rest go free?
No, there's a cross for everyone
And there's a cross for me."

I suppose all the Lord's people know something about a "thorn in the flesh", and have to realise that the "Canaanites still dwell in the land"

I would just like to mention a nice little time I had this morning. I was pondering over certain things, (not concerning anyone present) which tried me rather when this word came so softly,

"His way was much rougher and darker than mine;
Did Christ, my Lord, suffer, and shall I repine?"

I had a sweet little time, it brought such a quietness into my spirit, and enabled me to commit everything into the Lord's hands, it was a very, very small thing, but it is what that messenger of Satan I was speaking of on the Sabbath can do with a pricking thorn perhaps. Here then is a timely word of exhortation, "let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator." What mercies and comforts we have, but even so we have an enemy inside of us that is often buffeting us, but that help I had this morning stopped all this buffeting, and how soon it can, when the Lord comes, then it is as we have sung,

"Since all that I meet shall work for my good,
The bitter is sweet, the medicine is food"

What a mercy it is to have a God to go to, but shall I say there is something even better than this, we have a God Who can come to us when we feel so poor and wretched and dark and miserable that we have not grace enough to come to Him. May the Lord be with us and grant us His favour and blessing this evening. Amen.