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Prayer Meeting Address by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer" Clapham
on 26th. April, 1952

Hymns 769, 964

Reading 1 Timothy 1

In this chapter the Apostle makes some personal reference, which indeed he did on a number of occasions in his preaching and his writings. It is to be observed that he always made these references with a single eye to magnify the grace of God in quickening and calling such a sinner as he felt to be, "who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious". In reflecting upon his former life and realising the sovereignty of God therein in plucking him as He did as a brand from the burning, he used that instance of God's sovereignty to the encouragement of others and to confirm the power of God's grace in every instance. Moreover in making these references he did so with great humility of heart, ever considering himself the chief of sinners and the least of saints and, though indeed he was of the greatest of saints yet the possession of that grace in such abundance in his own soul and experience did bring him down before God into the dust of nothingness, so that he considered himself to be even less than the least of all saints.

Another point is the confirming statement of truth that is made here in this chapter, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." Although indeed this is a familiar declaration, yet notwithstanding that, everything hinges upon it in the ground work of our salvation, for if Jesus Christ did not come into the world to save sinners there would be no hope for such as we. But there are times when such a word can be greatly confirming and faith, realising the power of God's grace, can plead such a word as this and seek to be embraced in it.

Another point is a solemn warning concerning some who made shipwreck of faith. Thus he exhorts Timothy to hold faith,

a good conscience: which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck. There is no question but that where God begins a work He will perform it; but all who possess that work in their souls will find and experience great difficulty in holding faith and a good conscience because so many things rise up against it and even in the dispensations of God with His people, in the circumstances of their lives, may be such things as greatly to try their faith. In fact faith must be tried; but it is tried at times in such a way as to make it exceedingly difficult to hold fast to that which we profess. Still, it will be a wonderful mercy to be kept. A great many people have made shipwreck of faith, that is of that which they profess; but to endure unto the end will bear its own testimony to the reality of that grace and the power of God in it. These warnings of others falling away are intended to be as light-houses to warn living souls of the dangers that attend them and to keep them from any confidence in themselves, but to watch and pray that they may be held up in the ways of truth and grace and be brought well through to the end. What a wonderful mercy it will be if it is proved in the issue that we did really know and experience the power of the Gospel in our souls and so experience its power as to live in the strength of it, and more or less in the joy of it, amidst all the weakening and changing conditions of this life.

May the Lord help us and may He grant that we may not just have a mere form of godliness but may know much more and more of this blessed power in our souls. Amen