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Prayer Meeting Address by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer" Clapham
on Monday evening, 31.10.60

Hymns: 570, 640 Reading: 2 Corinthians 1 and 4 from v.10

The Apostle was brought through a great many trials, afflictions and sufferings for the Lord's sake. Indeed that was the word concerning him that he would "Suffer great things for My name's sake", but as far as the apostle was concerned he appeared to be willing to suffer these things, not so much for his own sake, but for the sake of others. He was willing to pass through these things so that what he learned by experience in them should be for the comfort and salvation of others. This appears to be the point here, where he refers to some proportion of comfort and consolation in his soul to the afflictions and sufferings he was called to pass through; for he says "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." We cannot measure this or look upon it as an established rule in this proportion, but, more or less, I believe, it is felt to be the experience of the Lord's children; that is to say, that in their afflictions and trials as they are exercised in them, in the trial of faith, under heavy things that may press upon them, they do have in them some proportion of divine consolation. The apostle in referring to this says that "Whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation." The comfort that he received himself he would use as a means to be of comfort to others. "Who comforteth us in our tribulation that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are so comforted of God".

He goes on to refer to some particular circumstance, evidently extreme in its nature in which he despaired even of life, and, as it would appear, was in great danger of a violent death, but the Lord appeared for him and for others who were with him so that here he witnessed a signal deliverance by the hand of God, although he says, "We had the sentence of death in ourselves." A mercy it is indeed to be a witness of the delivering hand of God especially in our souls. Here he refers to a past deliverance from a violent death and to present deliverances, "Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver, in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us."

The Lord has indeed delivered His people from eternal death, through the merit and blood of His beloved Son, and that deliverance having been wrought, present deliverances are necessary, are needful. We come into things where we need the Lord to appear for us again and to manifest in a particular way that same power that we hope He has manifested on former occasions; and

as we think of the future we need that same grace to put our trust in Him and hold fast to His word and promise - "In Whom we trust that He will yet deliver us." It is faith that looks forward in this sense, faith being the substance of things hoped for". Faith relies on the promises of God and views His omnipotent power as being beyond all opposition and beyond all enemies. "In Whom we trust". We cannot tell what may befall us, what trials, what afflictions, what changes; but having received help of the Lord and having, as we hope, some evidence or testimony that He has been a delivering God to us, we would seek grace to put our trust in Him for whatever may lie in an unseen future. "In Whom we trust that He will yet deliver us."

We cannot tell what trials of faith, or what tests, or what sins, may beset us. Mr.Philpot, in a letter that I was reading just now, said "The only thing we really need to fear is SIN." If we are delivered from sin with respect to its full consequences in our eternal ruin and separation from God, that will be a deliverance indeed - the greatest deliverance we can know, greater than any circumstantial deliverance; but still this is the deliverance the gospel holds forth, deliverance from hell, from death, from sin, from Satan, - final and everlasting deliverance.

What a wonderful mercy to feel a hope in the gospel and now and again to get a glimpse of its beauties, to be able by faith to lay hold upon it, to have something to support us in the trial of faith, to keep us from sinking, to preserve us from error, to hold us up in the storms and floods of temptation, to bring us through and to fit and prepare us, continually, for that great change that awaits us all.

O may the Lord often give us those inward tokens, give us to hear, as it were, the still small voice. May we be helped to keep close to Him, to lean our whole weight upon Him, whatever the circumstances may be, or however dark the outlook, or however apprehensive we may be, it is to our comfort to lean hard upon Him. Nature can never do this, yet it is the triumph and victory of faith to believe that nothing is impossible with God. May He help us, guide us, and bring us through. Amen

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