

An address given by our Pastor Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer" Clapham on Sunday evening 18.7.76 after being away at Brighton for five months.

Dear Friends,

Before I attempt to read I would like just to say what a sorrow it has been to me to have been away from you for so long, but it is a joy that the Lord in His mercy has brought me home again and in some measure restored. I shall greatly need your patience and forbearance as that has been extended to me over 40 years now that I have ministered among you as your pastor.

The second matter I would like to mention is how much I enjoyed the service this morning. It was good to me - every part of it - and particularly that good sermon that dear old John Warburton of Trowbridge preached. I have been there, I have been in his chapel, I have been in his pulpit, I have seen his grave and where many of his congregation are laid to rest. It brought some very solemn thoughts. I cannot be with you very much longer now, but if the will of the Lord be so I do hope I may be spared for a little season. I felt it on my mind to speak a little from 2 Corinthians 13.14.

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen."

The first point is "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ". This grace, beloved friends, surpasses all our mental conception. It incorporates so many things relating to His glorious Mediation, His amazing condescension and the honoured and glorious position He now occupies. It is said by the Apostle Paul of Him "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." Dear friends, this is what the Gospel is. It all centres in this glorious blessed Person and the work He accomplished because the love of God is in it, the love of God the Father in sending His beloved Son to complete that work of redemption with

all the suffering that was involved in it; but by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we may understand the Lord's favour unto His people. That is the design of the word, it is a free unmerited favour; our eternal salvation is of grace from first to last and will ever be, although if we are numbered among the Lord's dear people the day will come when grace will be changed into glory. O to be numbered among them! No greater glory can be bestowed upon a poor, guilty, unworthy sinner. If we possessed all the world what good would it be to us when we come to our dying bed; and when we come to that day, which cannot be long with some of us, how great the comfort, how great the peace, how real the joy that can be felt in a poor sinner's heart in the hope of heaven. For some time these three words have been so much upon my mind, "All is settled". Perhaps you say that is not Scripture, neither is it precisely; in the substance of it<sup>it</sup> is, for in the Scripture it is "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven"; but in my own particular case it was just like this, that all is settled for my eternal redemption, all is settled in the glorious Person and finished work of our Great and blessed Redeemer. I have been so sorry to have been away so long but I have heard some good preaching at Brighton. My beloved brother Mr. Frank Gosden, I have enjoyed his ministry while I have been there, but I am so thankful to be with you all once again.

This grace of the Lord Jesus Christ comes into our spiritual life in divine support in times of trial, affliction, grief and sorrow. It comes into our daily life, our spiritual experiences, our hopes and our prospects. What a wonderful mercy to be a partaker of it. It incorporates the whole of the Redeemer's work, the sufferings upon Calvary's cross and His glorious resurrection on that memorable morning when the women went to the grave and He was not there. A blessed morning - He had done with death and suffering and was about to ascend into the glory of His dear Father in heaven. O dear friends, what a wonderful mercy if we

have a religion that will take us to heaven. There is plenty of religion about, plenty of religious people, plenty of profession; but alas, alas how much of it can be dead. What do we need, friends? It is just this, to have Christ formed in the heart the hope of glory. If He is formed in your heart the hope of glory He will be Alpha and Omega there, He will be first and last. He will be everything to you; He will be your support in trial, in dark and heavy things that His people have to pass through. I have thought a lot of the dear martyrs and how they endured their terrible sufferings. O what wonderful grace! With what fortitude were there twelve or thirteen burned at Lewes in the centre of the town; what wonderful grace they possessed. We have cause to be thankful for our liberties, friends, we have great cause, that we are in these days privileged to meet together and are protected by the laws of our land. We may have one or two annoyances but they are very small things compared to the liberties we are favoured to enjoy. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ comes into our experience, is our support, our strength, our hope. What is it that has helped you in times of trouble and distress? The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. O to partake of this - what a mercy of mercies.

There are three points here, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God". This second point is profound. It is said of God that He is love - not simply that He loves poor sinners who are not worthy of it, but that He is love, it is in His nature, if that term is applicable, to love. O think of it - the love of God! This is in sending Him - "In the fulness of time" He appeared in human flesh. This was an open evidence of the divine love towards the Lord's dear people. It is a wonderful thing to have a religion that finds its centre at Calvary. There is no other way to heaven but through the wounds and blood of our incarnate God. The love of God! This love is seen in the calling of His dear people. Why have you not been left to run the way your old nature would have led you

to go if left to yourself. Where would you have been now? O the mercy of restraining grace, He knew us when we knew not Him, there was never a time when He did not know us. If we are loved with an everlasting love there is everlasting knowledge of us. What a blessed thought this is, what comfort to the Lord's dear people in their trials. Some of us cannot be here much longer, but if we have a part and lot in this verse whether time is long or short it matters but little. This love is sometimes felt in supporting the Lord's dear people in their trials, burdens and difficulties, in helping them. If you read the obituaries you find the cases the people got into in those by-gone days and how the Lord supported them. I was reading the other day of a good man who lost practically all his family from the fever - six I think - and it was wonderful how the dear man was supported. A wonderful account to read - but here is the love of God. His love felt in the heart supports in times of trial and affliction. Have you felt this? Have you noticed in good John Warburton's sermon this morning every now and again he would say - "Have you felt this, poor sinner? Have you been here poor sinner?" It was very sweet to me to hear for I hope I knew a little about it. O this wonderful love, how profound it is that the Majesty of heaven should love poor law-breakers, who, if left to themselves, would have gone headlong to everlasting perdition. O well we may say : - "Amazing grace! (how sweet the sound!)  
That saved a wretch like me."

Once I had a dear friend in Brighton and he was brought into great straits in providence; they did not know what to do, they feared they would have to go into the workhouse. He was sitting in a room over a shop and he heard a man singing in the street and he listened, and he was singing :-

"His love in time past forbids me to think  
He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink;  
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review  
Confirms his good pleasure to help me quite through".

It broke the dear man's heart. He was eventually a very godly deacon at Galeed and I loved him very much. Here is the love of God.

The third point is "the communion of the Holy Ghost". This is as vital as the other two points because it comes right into experience. Experience does need to be considered in its right place. Dry doctrine may satisfy some religious people but the Lord's family want to know some experience of it, they want to feel the love of God shed abroad in their heart, they want to feel their interest, they want to feel their sins forgiven. He never disappoints you, never! What you long for in your poor soul will be granted you one day if you have to wait some time for it; and after all a life-long struggling will be worth it for a few minutes in heaven. What a wonder it is that the Lord should regard poor, guilty people and some, and I hope all of you here, if it be His blessed will. I am your dear pastor, I feel for everyone of you although I may not make a lot of outside fuss; I bear you in my heart before the Lord every day; and if my poor, feeble prayers are answered there will not be one in this chapel go to hell - no not one. What a wonderful thing it is that God is a prayer-hearing and answering God - and I do not believe there will be either. It is a sweet mercy to know something of the Gospel, to see something of the beauties of Emmanuel and to fall at His dear feet and to be enabled in our humble measure to crown Him Lord of all. Have you ever done that in your heart, poor sinner? Have you ever crowned Him Lord of all? I believe I have more than once bless His holy Majesty.

I am very glad, beloved friends, to be brought home among you and I do hope the Lord may spare us together in peace and union and love for a time if it be His blessed will. O to feel a hope of heaven. I question some peoples' confidence, I would rather hear a poor troubled one say, "I hope so", than "I know" - it is a hope. This hope is a good hope through grace, that will bear us through, it will not forsake us. We live hoping, we must die hoping, and that hope will never meet with disappointment, never.

Now this is a benediction, but to me it is a desire for all of you. May the Lord help you. It is nearly six months I have

been away from you. I wondered sometimes whether I would ever see some of you again, but here I am. The Lord's great mercy has spared me and brought me home and this is my desire for you.

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen."

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