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Prayer Meeting address by Mr. J. Delves at Ebenezer, Clapham on
Saturday evening 8.6.73

Hymn 76

Reading Acts 9. 1-16 and 17-20

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These verses give some account of the remarkable call by God of Saul of Tarsus, afterwards Paul the Apostle, and in what we have read we can see him in three particular aspects.

First of all, we see him as a persecutor, and a bitter one at that, for it is said he was, "Breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord". It would appear that as a man he must be a leader in things. He was foremost in this persecution against the disciples of the Lord, and would have put them to death, and would have delighted in doing so, for he was a bitter persecutor, but his case was not too hard for the Lord, a wonderful case indeed it was.

In the second instance we see him as a praying man, he had been brought into Damascus in a very different way from that which he had anticipated. Ananias was directed to go to him, for it was said of him, "Behold he prayeth". This appears to be one of the first things with him after he was so deeply convinced of his condition.

The third feature relates to the apostle as a minister, he was chosen of the Lord to bear the name of the Lord before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel, "For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. The Lord made great use of him too, he has been a blessing to an untold number of the Lord's exercised people. His call was very striking, very sudden, and he was an instance of the sovereignty of God. "As he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven, and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" which made a sudden and amazing change in him.

I have been thinking about John Bunyan. We do not read of him being a bitter persecutor of the Lord's people, but as being a man

~~as being a bitter persecutor of the Lord's people, but as being a~~
~~man~~ of very foul language and delighting in the ways of sin. While playing a game of Cat on the village Green at Elstow, suddenly it was as though a voice darted from heaven into his soul, which said, "Wilt thou leave thy sins and go to heaven, or have thy sins and go to hell?". He became a convinced sinner. We read that Bunyan looked up to heaven, and it was to him as though the Lord Jesus was looking down upon him in great displeasure and stern threatenings. This made a change in his soul, a change in his life, and had a point in his ministry, for it can be said of Bunyan that he was a chosen vessel unto the Lord to bear His name before many people, and to write a book that has become more popular, in a way, than any other book, next to the Bible!

After all, dear friends, it is an amazing wonder and mercy not to be left to die in our sins. Whether the work of grace be gradual with us by the teaching of the Holy Spirit in bringing us to feel our condition, or whether one is struck down by a sudden word, it is the same Spirit, the same grace and the same mercy, and it will have the same issue!

There is one feature of the Apostle Paul which will apply to all the Lord's people who are called out of darkness, "BEHOLD HE PRAYETH". He was brought into Damascus in a very different way from that which he had anticipated. He was led by the hand into Damascus and visited by Ananias by the Lord's direction "BEHOLD HE PRAYETH", so after a call by grace, whether gradual or of a more striking nature, there is one certain effect, I would say, in every case, and that is, we shall be brought to feel what we are in the sight of a Holy God, and the realisation of our sinful condition will move us to pray and continue to pray. What an amazing blessing this is, "Behold he prayeth". This was said of the apostle Paul, and may it be the Lord's mercy unto us to be a praying people. They were extraordinary circumstances, in the case of John Bunyan, but there will be the same blessed issue in the case of every poor sinner who is brought to the same Saviour, when convinced of his condition, and feels his need of the same healing, and the same Gospel. Amen.