Sermon preached by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer" Clapham on Wednesday evening 15.8.73

Hymns: 954, 1006, 119

Reading: Ephesians 1

Text: Ephesians 1.6

"To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved".

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I have felt a particular solemnity upon my spirit today following the reading of a book written many years ago by a godly man, which it is requested should be republished. The book deals solemnly, very solemnly, very faithfully and yet tenderly, with the important matter of everlasting punishment, proving it by many passages of Holy Scripture. We have no grounds to question this solemn doctrine; but the effect of the reading upon my spirit is that, by His great mercy to a fallen wretch like myself, I may not die and fall under the hand of abstract justice; let us remember that God will be as just in His law in the everlasting condemnation of the wicked, as He is merciful in the everlasting salvation of His dear people. O what then can be compared to being right with God, and to having an interest in the glorious Gospel, and unworthy as we are, to be among those who are "accepted in the beloved"?

I know there are a lot of religious people who talk about accepting Christ, their sentiments I must leave; but what concerns me is whether Christ will condescend to accept such a poor wretched sinner as myself. God the Father does accept people according to what we read here, and in many other places, and for our encouragement we may feel that He will accept all those who come to Him, wait upon Him, who feel their need of Him, and who have some sight of themselves, their wretchedness, some view of the awfulness of sin, the terrible issues of eternity as respecting those that are lost, and the glorious issues of eternity as relating to those that are saved. So my beloved friends what ever we may possess of this poor, dying world, if we possessed all the property in this vast wicked metropolis, what would that avail us when we come to change worlds and appear before the judgement seat

of Christ? Oh what a solemn contemplation sometimes it is to me in the night time, when I ask the Lord to give me a further token. Once He seemed to say 'I have given you tokens, why do you want any more?', but I feel to want yet another token. Nothing compares with the sweet peace that a sin-forgiven sinner feels when his sins are pardoned, when there is no barrier between his soul and the Majesty of heaven, no dispute, no charge against him, but here he is "accepted in the beloved".

To come to the text the first point to notice here is that everything in regard to the redemption and glorification of His people stands upon the foundation of free grace from first to last. "To the praise of the glory of His grace" - that is to indicate that the glory of God's divine character shines forth in the manifestation of His grace, as the light of the sun shining through a window upon a person's countenance. So when a soul is blessed in some way it is like the glory of God shining upon him in the face of Jesus Christ, and this fills his poor heart with wonder, love and praise. O my friends, surely there cannot be any greater miracle that you and I can know than to get to heaven at last, and to be there for ever and ever. I do not know if this kind of speech may be depressing to our younger friends; I would not wish it to be so; but I would desire it to be a means of bringing home what is the first consideration and what will eventuate in the greatest joy of all joys to the praise of the glory of His grace, - or we may say His glorious grace, for glory shines in His gracious dealings with His people. When we look upon grace we look upon it as the Lord's free favour toward His dear people whom He loves, and in that favour there is a glory that shines, and this is the glory of heaven in some sweet revelation of it; so that every poor sinner who gets to heaven will get there to the praise of the glory of His grace that was toward him from an eternity before ever this poor world was. He loved them with an everlasting love, and the glory of His grace shines in that love toward them. There is a glory in the Gospel, there is a glory in the Law, there is a glory in the divine perfections of Jehovah, there is a glory in His Being, His eternal Being, He is a glorious Being; there is a glory

in every divine attribute that pertains to Him. There is a glory in the Law, the glory of His justice; but there is another glory, and that is in the Gospel.

This is the glory of His grace which shines forth in the salvation of all His dear people that were eternally appointed thereunto. As we look back in this sense it carries us so to speak into the eternal counsels of this glorious God, and that it was to the praise of the glory of His grace that He is disposed to make choice of a people whom He predestinated unto eternal life, and gave them to His beloved Son who redeemed them at the price of His most precious blood. Everything pertaining to the divine decree, what is involved, and what will ultimately issue from it, must all be ascribed to the praise of the glory of His grace. I have often felt inward trembling when I consider an eternal state that will never, never, never terminate, and especially when I think of those that die lost. It is a profoundly solemn thought; and what if it should be with me, as the Apostle Paul said of himself, "lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway".

Oh what a wonderful thing it is to have an interest in Christ! It was to the praise of the glory of His grace that He sent His beloved Son in the fulness of time by divine appointment to redeem His people. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." All is to the praise of the glory of His grace. And so with these Ephesians, the Apostle does not appear to have any doubt about them, he speaks very confidently of their state, and so in chapter 2 after referring to what they were, as all of us were, (but I hope none are now, but as all of us were) dead in trespasses and sins, he says, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved); and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus", - and all to the praise of the glory of His grace. His glory appears to shine in the exercise of His grace toward His poor

dear people, who were helpless in their lost condition in themselves; and yet he says such blessed things of these Ephesians. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ" - chosen us, predestinated us, adopted us - all to the praise of the glory of His grace.

The Apostle Paul in the Galatians speaks of being called by grace and there is no mistake about this either, for we have it recorded by him, and the same grace is exercised toward everyone where the fear of the Lord is very tender, and the blade of His grace so to speak may seem to be very frail, yet we read of those who feared the Lord from their youth. The circumstances that pertained to the Apostle Paul were all to the glory of His grace in such a character as he was, but all who are quickened into life, brought to feel their state and their need, who cry unto Him, wait upon Him, and seek His mercy, even if they do not feel to have got very far, they are the subjects of His grace. The glory of His grace seems to have a future about it for in the Psalms we read, "He will give grace and glory" the two can never be separated, never. If once the Lord begins a work of grace in a poor sinner's heart he is sealed for heaven. I do not mean everyone who may become religious or make a profession of religion merely, but everyone in whom the seed of His grace is implanted is an heir of heaven, for He Who hath begun a good work will perform it; He will give grace and glory. So to look forward a little to that time when the Lord shall come again to gather His elect from the four winds, the glory of His grace will be seen by all His dear people to a degree that it cannot be seen while we are here. This is the first point then - "To the praise of the glory of His grace".

"Wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved". There is something very beautiful about this, and very encouraging too. What I like about it is, it does not say, 'wherein He hath invited us to be accepted in the beloved' as though it was left to us, to some decision on the part of a poor fallen creature. It is not

left to their choice, but everyone is made accepted in the beloved; they are made accepted, as though the Apostle would say this is the work of God upon them and in them, and nothing can overthrow it, or overcome it either, or bring to nothing the work He has begun; for they are made accepted, and this is the point I would like to emphasise; He does not say he would like to see them accepted, but "he hath made us accepted in the beloved".

All His dear people are made accepted in the Beloved. Who is this Beloved? Why, we have not far to go, this Beloved in the text is the Father's Beloved Son in Whom He is well pleased; and this is the Beloved of His dear people too, of Whom we read in the Song of Solomon, who when they are sweetly favoured say, "My Beloved is mine and I am His". So it is a beautiful thought. This particular Person here then is the Beloved of His Father, and He is the beloved of all His dear people, and if you and I get to heaven He will be our Beloved. I have no question about this in my own case. I have had a few minutes in my poor little life when He has been more than I can express, the chiefest among ten thousand, - for a few minutes. It is a particular feature of the life of grace in the soul that there is a little flowing of love to Christ, although I know some may not feel able to say my Beloved. When I was in the vestry at Canterbury last night just before the service the dear old deacon showed me the hymn and said, We will start with this. I looked at it and said, "If we can say it". The hymn was,

"Amazing grace! (how sweet the sound!)
That saved a wretch like me;
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see."

I said, "If we can sing it". He said, "I hope we can" and we did sing it. It is a wonderful hymn. I know some things may seem strange, but several years ago I went into a shoe maker's shop and there was a wireless going. I did not take any notice of it at first, but I found it was a voice talking about John Newton and his hymns; and then strange to say he said, I will take an example, and the man repeated the whole of this hymn in a very expressive way, and I must say that it touched my feelings - amazing grace.

"He hath made us accepted in the beloved". How are His poor dear people made accepted? First of all by a divine decree, and that is an immutable decree too, that is the decree of His predestinating love and grace. The Apostle writing to the Romans refers to a "remnant according to the election of grace", and also to a divine predestination, "having predestinated us unto the adoption of children". Here is the great foundation upon which this matter stands as relating to His dear people being made accepted. There was a divine decree that was fixed upon them, "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father", and there in that foreknowledge and that divine decree of predestinating mercy, grace and love, they were made accepted before the world was, it was settled upon them, "For ever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in heaven", upon these people. It is all settled upon them in the Beloved, they are made accepted in Him.

But there is another point about this, and that is they are made accepted through the obedience and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. From this point of view we must go to Calvary to see them made accepted. May we solemnly and quietly meditate upon that wounded side, and as I mentioned on Sabbath evening, that blood and water that flowed from it. Oh what was illustrated so to speak by that blood and water? All His dear people were made accepted through the wounds and blood of our incarnate God. Oh do you long to feel that you are made accepted? Then I would say, as enabled, go to Calvary and plead that precious blood that does for sin atone. "Made accepted"

What did the dear Saviour say before He gave up the ghost? Three words that might well make heaven and earth ring - three words - IT IS FINISHED. There they were all made accepted. They are made accepted in the righteousness that He wrought for them. He is the Lord our righteousness, that is a perfect obedience, the Lord Jesus Christ was and is a representative Person and this obedience that He rendered applies to all for whom He suffered. There is another point about this and that is, they are accepted through the power of His all-prevailing intercession in heaven.

His presence there ensures our presence there one day, for all His people are united to Him in a union that can never be dissolved. At the end of this chapter, the last verse is a profound statement. The Apostle after referring to the church says God "hath put all things under His feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all". Here is a glorious, blessed union. Is it not a striking thought that every vessel of mercy is a part of Christ, he is a part of this body which is His fulness. This is all amazingly profound.

Then there is just this in concluding, His dear people are made accepted by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in their souls. I am sure it is so, because the Apostle says, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins"; and when they were quickened by the mighty work of the Holy Spirit from a state of death in sin to a life in Christ they were made accepted in the Beloved. Oh what glorious, blessed truths they are; and yet after all that is said one may have to say, Yes, it all sounds very well; but I cannot get any higher than this, "Tis a point I long to know"- Do you feel you can get as high as that? If you can get as high as that one of these days you will know, you will know that you are made accepted in the Beloved. Amen.

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