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sermon preached by Mr. J. Delves at "Rehoboth" Chapel, Swindon
on Sunday evening 22nd April, 1956

Text: Hebrews 12 v 4.3

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"For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

It is clear according to the Scriptures and the preceding chapter that the way to heaven must be through much tribulation. It is a way that is opposed by everything of a natural character, and is thereby a fight of faith to lay hold on eternal life; and according to the Lord's own words to His disciples, when He said, "These things have I spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." This has ever been; but here particularly it is evident that these Hebrews were passing through some very bitter and painful persecutions, sufferings for the Lord's sake; for putting on a profession of His name then would sometimes mean the sacrifice of their life, or imprisonment, and much privation, loss and suffering.

But the apostle would draw their attention to the fact that they to whom he wrote had not as yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin, but had forgotten the exhortation which "speaketh unto you as unto children," - which is a very sweet point here, - as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him: for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." Now the apostle would instruct them in this way: under these chastenings, these afflictions, in the path of trial that they were called upon to walk in; he would have them consider Christ. As an antidote against fainting, and when they became weary, he would have them to "consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself." "Consider Him," he says, "lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

What a wonderful mercy it will be to possess, and to have it proved at last, that we have a real religion! How unspeakably solemn are the issues of eternity! We have a destiny either of eternal death or eternal life; and it is declared of those who live and die in their sins that they shall be "where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched;" but of those who, by divine grace, are quickened into life and taught of God, that they have a prospect before them above their anticipations, that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him".

O, beloved friends, where shall we be, in that great day? Where shall I be? Where will you be? The Scriptures speak of a day of assize when the nations of the earth shall be gathered before the King to hear their final sentence, either, "depart, ye cursed," or, "come, ye blessed," and it is described in the Saviour's own words, the sheep shall be on the right hand, and the goats on the left hand. This figure is used to show that one day there will be a final separation of the lost and the saved. O, what a terrible word is eternity to a sinner! A terrible word! It is more that we can understand. It has been like a sword piercing through my soul in days gone by, the holiness of God and the terrors of His law and the sentence of death, all seeming at the time to show that I should be lost. O that word, eternity! Has it ever made you tremble? There is no limit to that word, is there? Hundreds of thousands of years, and still eternity, eternity! O, friends, where shall we spend eternity?

God has appointed a people, according to His divine foreknowledge, whom He has eternally loved and separated unto Himself as His own children, adopted them as His own; and they are a blessed people. "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound." They have a blessed standing; they are in a union, - "In union with the Lamb, from condemnation free." O, do we belong to them? And if we do, then there will be trouble; there is sure to be trouble. The Lord has not designed that His people shall get to heaven without trouble.

There will be trouble on account of sin, and more or less tribulation in the path of providence that the Lord has appointed us in this life. But here is the point, that when favoured and enabled in our trials and difficulties and perplexities to "consider Him", that consideration may be a great incentive to strengthening and confirming our faith, and enabling us to hold on our way. But it is only as we are enabled to live upon Him and look to Him and trust in Him, and renounce all beside, that we can continue in the face of inward and sometimes outward opposition, and can "press toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus".

"For consider Him." I attempted this morning to speak a little of this gracious, spiritual consideration of our great Redeemer in His eternal Godhead and eternal Sonship, as being very God and possessing every perfection of Deity that necessarily pertains to the Godhead. Perhaps you say, "O, that is beyond my understanding." Everything is beyond our understanding in the things of God, fully; but the point is just this, the things that are beyond nature's understanding, that are so perfectly blessed and important and vital, can be, as the Spirit of the

Lord is pleased to reveal them, most confirming and strengthening to a believer's faith. O, it is great to believe! I have often said to my people at home, it is sweet to believe; it brings such a rest into your heart. "O", said one, "could I but believe, then all would easy be." There is something very, very sweet in believing.

But that is a very different believing from what many people, - religious people, - talk about - a different thing altogether. The believing at which I have hinted arises from a sweet confirming view by precious faith of the Lord Jesus Christ in all that He is, which enables you, in the light of that manifestation, to cast yourself upon Him and renounce everything else; even as we have been singing in that remarkable hymn,

"To know my Jesus crucified,
By far excels all things beside."

This important point of doctrine must not be passed by or overlooked as something beyond us, or that may not be considered, because it lies at the very foundation, because it gives life and strength to all that follows in the salvation of His dear people. O, it is great to believe that He is very God. Once or twice in my life I believe I can say it has been great to me to feel a conviction in my soul that Jesus Christ is very God, the Son of God. In the case of the eunuch, after Philip had been preaching to him Jesus, it appears that they came to a certain water, and the eunuch said, "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" Philip said, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest"; and I believe he did. And what did he believe? What was his confession? He said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." O, I believe I have felt able to say that in my life, my spiritual life. Perhaps you say, "That is easy." That is not what I mean at all. What I mean is, to get a view by faith of His blessed Godhead, His divinity, in your soul, so as to feel that you can cast yourself for time and eternity, not only upon what He has done, but upon what He is; because there is something of this expressed in a hymn,

"O could we but with clearer eyes
His excellencies trace,
Could we His Person learn to prize,
We more should prize His grace."

Do you think you can believe that? Perhaps you say, "O well, the point is, has the Lord done anything for my soul?" Yes, I quite agree; but still, the point is also this, in order that what He has done may be of saving efficacy in your soul, He must be God, He must be very God, and also very Man. Here is a mystery, and an attractive mystery it is too,

a great mystery. He assumed human flesh and appeared upon this earth on which we live, walked upon it, conversed with men, preached the gospel, wrought miracles, suffered and died as a Substitute, standing in the place of His dear people whom He loved with an everlasting love. O sinner, has the Lord brought you to Calvary to weep and mourn there over your guilty, black, wretched sins, and to feel a little godly sorrow under an inward feeling that it was your sins that nailed Him to the accursed tree? O the cost, the cost of a sinner's redemption! It is beyond all our conception. The price He paid was the price of His own most precious blood. "Consider Him."

Consider Him, sinner. Consider Him groaning, sweating blood in Olive's Mount. Consider Him under the weight of imputed sin. Consider Him smitten, wounded and afflicted by the hand of justice, for thee, sinner, that is, if we have any part and lot in this. If we have not, we shall be eternally lost. Consider Him.

"Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
Which before the cross I spend."

A mercy to be brought there! O, friends, sin is never so hateful as under a view of a bleeding Jesus. Nothing is so sanctifying to the soul as this. O to get that "moment" in our experience, that revelation, to "creep beside Him like a worm, and see Him bleed for me!" Consider Him.

Consider Him on Calvary's tree; consider the agony of soul and body there. Consider Him under that desertion that He bore when His Father's face was hidden from Him and He cried, saying, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" O, friends, this will put us in our right place! This will bring down self, pride and other evils that are rampant in our poor, fallen, depraved nature, and will lay us low in the dust of self abasement as nothing else will. We find even Job saying, when the Lord was turning his captivity, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Not, "Now mine eye seeth Thee, and I am a good Christian, I have a great experience, I stand above my fellows." No! Grace always humbles, it always bring down; it brings a broken and a contrite heart. "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

Then, as I have read this evening, (John 20) it is sweet to faith to consider Him as rising from the dead. The circumstances attending the Saviour's resurrection from the dead are very attractive. We find that the women went early in the morning to the sepulchre, before it was light, as they thought to anoint His body; and on the way they said, "Who shall roll us away the stone?" But when they got there they found

the stone rolled away already. It was all done; and an angel was sitting upon it, as much as to say, "It shall not go back again." But the body was gone. The Saviour had left the tomb. He had left the tomb! O, what a mercy! I believe I can say for myself it has been, many, many times, sweet to consider Him as a living Jesus. O, what should we do if He were not a living Christ? He rose from the dead, and, as it is recorded in the scriptures, appeared to His disciples. What a memorable day that was when the Saviour rose from the dead! You see, He appeared first of all to Mary Magdalene; and you know what is said of her:— she was a sinner, and yet she was brought by divine grace to love her Lord to a great degree. She could not seem to leave the place. Even the disciples went away again to their home, but Mary lingered about there by the sepulchre, and she was the first to see Him. She was well rewarded for waiting. She was the first to see Him and to hear His voice. Later, the Lord appeared to the women on their way to tell the disciples, and said, "All hail!" And they held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him. I remember reading of that in my home many years ago, and it was so sweet to me that it seemed as though I was there with them. He was so real. I mean, a living Christ was so real in my soul just then that it seemed as though I was there. They worshipped Him. I worshipped. O, it is sweet to consider Him as a living Jesus. What words He said to His disciples about this! He said to them while He was with them, "Yet a little while, and the world seeth Me no more; but ye see Me: because I live, ye shall live also." O blessed words! Confirming words! Consider Him, then. "Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

Then what a speaking chapter that is that I read this evening, telling of the Lord's appearing to the eleven, and particularly appearing later to Thomas and saying to him, "Reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing." Thomas said, "My Lord, and my God." Has the Lord ever brought you there, to feel you can say that of a risen Saviour, "My Lord, and my God"? O, it is a sweet consideration, sweet to faith. Said the psalmist, "My meditation of Him shall be sweet." Is it sweet to you? Is sin bitter, and is mercy sweet, in your heart? Do you sometimes feel your soul drawn toward Him, as the church in the Canticles, where she says, "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of Thy companions?" Do you feel your soul moved after Him a little sometimes in the consideration of Him? O, it is a sweet meditation to faith, to consider Him as a living Christ!

Not only did He rise again from the dead, but He proved His identity to those disciples, He showed them His hands and His feet. O, why show them His hands and His feet? To prove that it was the same body that was nailed to the cross, to show that it was the same Jesus; not another body, but the same body that was nailed to the tree. O sweet thought, death could not hold Him! He rose again, and appeared to His disciples; and it says of them in the gospel of John, "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." Consider Him as taking our nature up into heaven. It was a pure, holy, sinless body that the Saviour had, and that He took up into heaven. We read that, as He was blessing His disciples He was parted from them, was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. O, sweet consideration this! There He is, you see, - as we were singing this morning,

"A Man there is, a real Man,
With wounds still gaping wide,
From which rich streams of blood once ran,
In hands, and feet, and side."

Yes there He is, John saw Him. Sweet thought this is! John saw Him as "a Lamb as it had been slain." O, these are profound truths, but very, very solemn truths. There He is, then, before the throne of God, interceding upon the ground of His own all-sufficient merit, able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him, discharging there His covenant offices in His people's interest, as Prophet, Priest and King.

"Consider Him that endured such contradiction." Endured! It is noticeable that the apostle used this word rather much. He used it in the verse before: "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross." He endured the cross; and He endured all this contradiction of sinners against Himself. He endured; that is, He was brought through all that pain and suffering and agony, blood and death, in order to fulfil the law, suffer its penalty and open a way to heaven for hell-deserving sinners. Consider Him. No hope without Him, no deliverance from the wrath to come without Him, no escape from a deserved hell without Him and all that He has done!

"Consider Him.. lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." The apostle writes very tenderly and yet very faithfully to these persecuted Hebrews; and he encourages them to seek by God's grace to hold fast the profession of their faith. In the tenth chapter he says to them, "Cast not away therefore your confidence. which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." This is an encouraging word to afflicted, suffering people; and it is evident that they bore their sufferings well, even joyfully, - joyfully! - the spoiling of your goods". Could we take

it joyfully if we had our homes ransacked and almost everything that we possessed taken from us? Some have, for the truth's sake in days gone by. They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods. But there was a secret behind all this. They seemed not to live to this world; they realised that everything here was liquidating. They lived not to this world. How could they take the spoiling of their goods joyfully? "Knowing," he says, "in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance." "Lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

The apostle refers later to this fainting under divine chastening. He says, "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; but if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons;" and he says, "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." You see, there are many things that may dispose us to faint or be weary; many things opposite in their nature and character to the life of faith and grace in our souls. Sin, sin in itself, as a burden upon the heart, may cause a fainting condition. Sometimes sore temptations may cause this; and the hiding of the Lord's face, unanswered prayer, inward turmoil and disquietude of mind, cross providences, afflictions that come upon us, opposite things in themselves, may and sometimes do cause a faintness, a weariness. "O," you may say. "I do not know how I can continue; I do not feel I can go on any longer." Perhaps some of you feel like that. Perhaps there are things pressing upon you, weighing you down, bringing a weariness. Jonah said, in one place, "When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord: and my prayer came in unto Thee, into Thine holy temple."

Do you feel to be in a fainting condition? Have you become weary? Do you look on things and say, "Everything seems dark and conflicting and opposite to what I would have it?" What can help you in this? Well, to consider Him, "lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds". You see, the way to heaven is a difficult way; it is a narrow way; it is a way attended with much opposition; a tempting devil, inward voices, sin within, unbelief, infidelity within, and everything that is bad in us, all this rises up. Sometimes questionings about matters. I could hardly express the things that rise up in the heart sometimes and make it very heavy travelling, so as to bring faintness, a weariness. So it was with David under those painful circumstances that he was passing through. He said, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me." There was a weariness, despondency, faintness. Yet still, you see, a consideration of the Lord seemed to sustain him: "Yet will I remember Thee," he said; "although

my soul is cast down within me, although I am weary and ready to faint and in great despondency, yet will I remember Thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar". O, when by His grace we can look away from everything of an opposite nature, and fix our eyes on Him, on Him alone, when we are enabled to do this, then and only then, are we able to hold fast and endure, stedfastly hold fast the profession of our faith. What was it made these Hebrew believers weary and faint? Was it not their sufferings for the Lord's sake? They had much to bear, and were evidently as wandering upon the face of the earth. When we think of what the martyrs suffered, how they yielded up their lives, and with what fortitude they endured in the flames, we can only say that it was the power of divinely-given faith that enabled them to put their trust in their God, to confide in Him, and truly to believe. "Lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

Some may be wearied because of the Lord's withholding of His presence, His power, the light of His countenance. Some may be weary by reason of unanswered prayers; and when prayers remain unanswered the enemy may make a use, as it were, of your prayers against you, and try to put you to confusion; he may suggest that it is to no purpose to pray, and you had better give it all up and go back into the world again. He can tell you all kinds of devilish things; but in the face of all this of an opposite character, a believer rests. His strength, his comfort, his peace and his joy consist in a revealed Christ. It is only as we can lean on Him that we can endure and hold fast.

What a mercy it will be, then, to be brought through, to endure to the end, to be found right at last, and to prove that, notwithstanding all our fears and temptations and darkness, (for the days of darkness are many,) after all we have a real religion, and that when we come to die we may prove that it is well. "Lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." May the Lord help us, then! Indeed in these sad days in which we live there is much to distress the minds of the Lord's people; but amidst all that may tend to drag us down and bring a cloud of despondency over our minds, - I say, amidst all this it is sweet just to get a glimpse of Him, in His sufferings, in His agony; to view Him by faith as ascended up into heaven, enthroned in glory there as our great High Priest, whose blood prevails for the redemption of His people.

The Lord help us to lean on Him, to trust in Him, and to trust nought beside. "Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

Amen.