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

Text: Hebrews 12.3

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

After the wonderful day of Pentecost there was much persecution that was raised against the disciples, and particularly those apostles of the Lord who were raised up to preach the gospel; and among those bitter persecutors was the apostle Paul who, consenting unto the death of Stephen and taking a part therein, obtained letters from the high priest to go to Damascus, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lamb. But the Lord met with him and brought him down to the earth under solemn convictions of his guilty state, manifested His mercy to him, and raised him up to be a minister of Christ, to preach His Name before the Gentiles; and this epistle is a remarkable instance of that grace that was given him, and revelation in the knowledge of the truth and of the Lord Jesus Christ in His Person and in His priesthood.

In this particular chapter, following up from the preceding one where the apostle makes mention of a number of the worthy fathers and others, and of the power of grace in them, he exhorts these persecuted Hebrew believers, in view of this cloud of witnesses, to "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us," and to "run with patience the race that is set before us." He would have them to look back, then, upon those striking instances and examples of faith for their encouragement, but not lean upon them or put their trust there, but to be encouraged by the remarkable way in which they endured in the trial of faith and under their afflictions. But he would have them look up to One greater, and to seek that they might keep their eyes stedfastly fixed on Him as the most powerful incentive to endurance under their oppressions and persecutions. Hence he says, "Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith; Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

This brings us then to the point the apostle designed here, that these believers might in a gracious way consider Him, in the midst of all their personal sufferings, as the greatest incentive to endurance and comfort and peace of mind in their own cases. I believe this has sometimes been a particular experience with the Lord's people. It is sweet sometimes under our personal difficulties, disappointing things, trials, hard things, painful things, to be gathered up, as it were, in our soul's feelings, brought away from them to a consideration

of Him Who passed through deeper trials, suffered greater hardships, met with more painful persecution, and Who went into greater depths than any of His dear people could ever go into. It is at times, I believe, greatly confirming to the faith of the Lord's people to consider Him. The psalmist says, "My meditation of Him shall be sweet;" and I believe there have been some occasions, and it may be even with some of us, when in heavy things, a few moments of sweet communion and fellowship with the Lord in these things has been greatly strengthening in the path of trial and difficulty. I believe that the Lord has designed that His people should live by faith, walk by faith, fight by faith and endure, and eventually triumph by faith, as is recorded of those in the previous chapter.

I should like as I may be helped to consider this word here in the sense that it can and ought to be, and I believe is, strengthening to the people of God.

"Consider Him". When we look away from God, as we are prone to, and concentrate upon material things, or our difficulties and burdens and the things that press upon us, we can become greatly disquieted, and find ourselves in intense conflict, even as Asaph did in the 73rd. Psalm. But he was delivered from that conflict of mind by the Lord's mercy, and enabled to see things in a right light by divine teaching, so as to come to this notwithstanding all, "Nevertheless I am continually with Thee: Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me by Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." When we are brought there, our meditation of Him is sweet. It is sweet to consider Him; it is confirming in our souls, and strengthening to our faith. Let us consider Him, then. There are different ways in which this point may be taken up. In the first place, it is good to consider Him, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Author and Finisher of our faith. It is good to consider Him in the glory of His eternal Godhead. This point is all-important to us, because it stands as it were at the very foundation of all that follows in the salvation of our never-dying souls. O, it is great to get a view of Him in His divine and eternal Personality as the Son of God, a Person in the Trinity, Who ever was equal with the Father and the Holy Ghost, very God. O, I believe that a few times in my life I have blessed the Lord for this manifestation in my soul that the Lord Jesus is very God, equal with the Father and the Holy Ghost, and possessing every perfection of Deity in His divine Person. It is a great point, and can be greatly confirming in a believer's experience to consider Him in this blessed relationship to His Father as the eternal Son of the eternal Father. "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." A profound truth this! O how we need to be kept close to the Trinity, and to realise that Christ is God, and that there are three Persons in one glorious and eternal

Godhead! "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God;" so that, as may be seen, there is distinction in Personality, yet there is a oneness in essence, in perfection, in every divine attribute, and in all that follows in the redemption of His people.

But there is another point in which it is strengthening to a believer's faith to consider Christ, and that is in His wonderful condescension, in taking our nature into union with His divine Person. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," said John, "and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." It is good to consider Him in His human nature. "Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." He was born of the virgin Mary, assumed human flesh, and was born in those remarkable circumstances at Bethlehem; and yet here is the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh. In the fulness of time He came into this world, to fulfil His Father's will and to drink the bitter cup. Consider Him in this particular. I believe once I had a favoured experience of this in my soul, many years ago. I was in trouble in more ways than one, and on this particular afternoon I went down into Brighton, and I could hardly describe the conflict and distress of my mind, and, moreover, so much sin and resentment and bitterness and rebellion boiling up. I was in a terrible state. But as I was getting down into the town it seemed suddenly as though it was all taken from me, and two lines of a hymn came with very sweet power into my heart,

"He came to seek and save,
And pardon every fault."

It is this, "No harsh commands He gave,
No hard conditions brought;
He came to seek and save,
And pardon every fault."

I got such a humbling sense of hope in His mercy in my soul that it took everything away, and I had, I believe, a time of real worship. It was considering Him; considering "Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself."

This consideration of the Lord Jesus may sometimes be very sweet in relation to His temptations in the wilderness. You see, earlier in this epistle the apostle refers to this. He says of the Lord Jesus that "in that He himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted." It is sweet sometimes to come into this:

"He knows what sore temptations mean,
For He has felt the same."

This consideration of Him really means in experience coming into a little fellowship with Him in these things; and that can sometimes be one of the most choice experiences of a believer. "He...suffered being tempted." He did not sin, but

He suffered. It is difficult to understand this, but we know that, after those temptations, angels ministered to Him. They were sore and bitter temptations. He was assailed with great force by the enemy, and yet did not fail. He found nothing in Him; but they were sharp, bitter temptations; and sometimes a consideration of Him, of the Lord Jesus, under those temptations can be strengthening to a tried and tempted follower of the Lamb who may be assailed by this inveterate foe, and who may sometimes feel to be at the ends of the earth and tempted in certain ways that one could hardly explain. Let us consider Him who endured in all these things.

Let us consider Him in the opposition that was continually raised against Him. He endured contradiction of sinners against Himself. This appears to have attended the great Redeemer all through His public life. He was blasphemed, persecuted, hated, railed upon; He endured all these hard and bitter things, and especially in relation to His substitution. Consider Him in His amazing patience and meekness under His sufferings. Consider Him in Gethsemane under the load of imputed sin. Consider Him in His holy subjection to His Father's will when He said, "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt". Have you ever considered Him here? Have we ever been brought as it were to the fringe of Gethsemane to view by faith a suffering, groaning, agonizing God? Have we ever known a broken heart for sin under a sight of the Redeemer who was thus afflicted by reason of imputed sin, - our sins, if we are His? Have we ever rightly considered the awful cost of our deliverance from the hell we deserve? "Consider Him." Tried, tempted, afflicted, harassed soul, consider Him! This may strengthen thy heart, quiet thy mind, and enable thee in the face of all inward, and it may be outward, opposition, to continue on thy way. It is great to consider Him; to consider Him standing in our guilty place.

"Behold a scene of matchless grace,
'Tis Jesus in the sinner's place."

Have you seen Him here? Has there ever been in your soul's experience a moment when you have been melted under a view of the Redeemer suffering for your sins? "Consider Him."

Sometimes it is sweet to consider Him in His willingness to undertake all that He did thus undertake for His people's sake, realising what was involved. "I come," He says, "to do Thy will, O My God; Thy law is within my heart." "Consider Him," tempted soul. Do you feel dark, weary, shaken, ready to give all up? "Consider Him!" Do you feel resentful, rebellious? Do you have some inward fighting against the dispositions of the Lord's providence and His ways with you? "Consider Him."

Consider Him in His meekness and patience in suffering. It is said of Him in the 53rd. Isaiah that He was "led as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb." Have we ever considered Him in the 53rd. chapter of Isaiah? Have you ever had a soft moment in your heart in reading that chapter, and perhaps a little inward weeping and saying in your heart, "O could this ever have been for a wretch like me, a poor sinful worm? Could it ever be possible that the great Redeemer should endure all this, endure the cross, suffer, groan, bleed and die, for a poor, unworthy nothing like me?" Has it ever softened your heart? Has it ever made Him precious to your soul? Has it brought forth a little love to Him in your heart? If it has, then you have a real religion; because nature will never produce this. All the reasonings of nature can never bring a poor sinner to the Redeemer's feet, but His grace can, and His grace will, His grace does. "Consider Him." I have sometimes thought with great wonder and admiration, I believe, of that Scripture in the 53rd. Isaiah where the prophet says, "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief." Consider Him in this. It pleased His Father to wound, afflict, grieve His beloved Son in Whom He was well pleased. "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him." It is a great mystery; it is more than we can understand; and yet here is the mystery of godliness. The Redeemer condescended to stand in our place and to bare His holy breast to the strokes of justice. Consider Him as a divine Substitute, in the absolute necessity of Him for the salvation of thy soul. He is so necessary. There is no heaven for a sinner apart from a bleeding Jesus.

"A bleeding Jesus is the way,
And blood tracks all the path."

"Consider Him."

Consider Him pouring out His soul unto death. Consider Him paying the price. O what a price! what a price! Well, sinner, do you sometimes believe, or at least hope, that you will get to heaven? How can you believe it to be possible? "O," say some of you, "we have always heard about this; we know how it is." Do you know how it is? If you get just a glimpse as it were of how it is, it will break you to pieces. But how can it be? It must be like this, as the hymnwriter expressed it,

"We bruised His body, spilt His blood,
And both became our heavenly food."

It must be by the Saviour's enduring the hell due to us, if we get to heaven; and as we may be helped to consider Him in this it will point our souls to Him, it will make Him unspeakably precious in our hearts, the chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely. Has He ever drawn you by the cords of His love to wonder in holy amazement that He should ever manifest such love and grace and mercy and condescension to a poor, unworthy wretch? Unworthy me! O, unworthy me! And yet here it is, love filled His heart, brought him with holy willingness

to go down into the lowest depths, lower than we can go. O, look at that psalm I read! (Ps. 69) There it is in that psalm! "O," say you, "but that psalm is about David." Yes, but in the spirit of prophecy it refers to a greater than David; it refers to the Redeemer. That is clear enough. But O, look at that prayer! "Save me, O God," he said, "for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing. Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me." Consider Him in these depths, in this awful conflict! Consider Him exposed to divine wrath and yet with holy meekness, determined to fulfil that which was committed to Him.

Sometimes it has been very, very sweet to consider Him in the perfection of His holy obedience. It is as important to you and me, if ever we are going to get to heaven, as anything can possibly be, because we have "sinned and come short of the glory of God." Sin has made a gulf between us; it has brought a separation, hardness, bondage, darkness, ignorance, death.

"O thou hideous monster, sin,
What a curse hast thou brought in!"

What then? Is there no hope? There is no hope on nature's ground, there is no hope if it were to rest upon anything in ourselves. But there is hope here in the Redeemer's obedience to the law that we have broken, and in the imputation of that obedience unto us. This is the great point. He fulfilled the law and made it honourable. Salvation must be according to the character of God and His divine perfections, and upon the ground of absolute satisfaction rendered. O, the mystery, the mercy, the grace, the glory of this great doctrine of substitution! And as to this obedience rendered by the Lord Jesus, that is our standing ground; it is our hope of deliverance. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;" we are lost, we are ruined, we are undone to the last degree; and yet here is a provision, a wonderful provision. "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." This is where our hope lies, then, not in anything of ourselves or in any effort of our own either, or any merit of our own or anything of that kind; but in this,

"My breaches of the law are His,
And His obedience mine."

That is my hope! If it were not for the blessed truth of those two lines I should have to give up preaching at once, because I should have nothing to preach. But O, the glory of this, the glory of His obedience on our behalf! "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." O, what does this mean to you? Has it ever trickled into your heart, and brought a little hope there? Has it sometimes made you say, "O, I hope I shall get to heaven after all, notwithstanding my guilty, wretched sins"?

"Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself." This seems to incorporate all that bitterness in the mind of men against the holy Redeemer when He was upon earth. When He was upon the cross they railed on Him, and gnashed upon Him with their teeth, and said, "If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." They said hard, cruel, bitter things. O, what a contradiction of sinners it was! What a bitter path! What bitter ingredients there were in His path! Yet He endured it all. They were all like ingredients in the cup that His Father gave Him to drink. "Consider Him!"

Then there is another point that might be considered, and that is the fact that, though He thus suffered and died, laid down His life, and was buried, yet death could not hold Him. On the third day the angel rolled away the stone, and, unseen by human eye, He came forth, He rose from the dead, as the justification of His people; that is, as an attestation of the acceptance and satisfaction of His sacrifice, of the blood He shed, the price He paid.

Well, what is all this to us? What does it mean? It means just this, if we are indeed His favoured people, if we have any part and lot in this, and if the Lord has designed us one day to dwell where He is, then all our hopes stand as it were upon what the Saviour said just before He expired on the cross, when He said, "It is finished." It is finished. "Consider Him!" Consider Him, then, as rising from the dead and taking our nature up into heaven.

A sight of all that, a little entering into these profound mysteries, will sweep away everything else; it will fill you; a sight of Him will fill your soul. We could not bear much, I know; but O to get a glimpse, to see Him made sin for us, made sin, "that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him!" "Consider Him." This is an exercise of faith then, a divinely given faith, that centres in the Person of the Redeemer, lives upon Him, feeds upon Him, holds fast to Him. May the Lord help us, and may He help us who profess His holy Name to keep close to the cross, for that is where our hope is, and that is where our mercy lies, and this is where the wonderful, sovereign love of God is revealed and may be seen by us in measure in its glory. "God forbid," said the apostle, "that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." The Lord keep us there! It is good ground. There is much that we can do without in what is called religion, but we cannot do without Him. We must have Him, or perish. What a mercy it is to have a religion that has in it, "Give me Christ, or else I die!"
Amen

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