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Prayer Meeting Address by Mr.J.Delves at "Ebenezer" Clapham
14.4.51

Reading: Isaiah 55

The chapter can, by the application of the Holy Spirit, be confirming and reassuring to those who have a real need of God, feelingly, and who hunger and thirst for the Gospel and cannot rest short of it or be satisfied with less than Christ Himself.

It is noticeable that the relevant invitations are repeated, "Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters"; "Incline your ear, and come unto me". "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near". We may be very familiar with these invitations of the Scripture but if we have real thirst for Christ and are feeling ready to perish and have earnestly besought Him for some manifestations of His grace, we may be comforted and encouraged to press on, seeing that the Scripture holds forth the invitation to such a character. It is a mercy to be thirsting for God and for the Gospel. Many people spend their money for that which is not bread and their labour for that which satisfieth not. They rest in their own confidences and are comfortable, but they will, if they are out of Christ, prove them to be a refuge of lies and a false hiding place.

What a mercy to have an aching void the world can never fill and in our hunger and thirst to have some view by faith of the sufficiency of Christ and the fulness of grace that is in Him. We may be too rich but we cannot be too poor. "He that hath no money" - that is the difficult point. That is so crucifying to proud flesh, because it means we must be brought down, stripped and emptied from vessel to vessel, so as to have room in our souls for Him, so that He may be welcome there. Such are invited to "Come, buy and eat". There must be sacrifice, but no equivalent, no purchasing of the Gospel by parting or paying with something of equal value. O no! "Mercy never can be bought, grace is free and all's the Lamb's". In order to be prepared for the Gospel and to receive it we must part with our own righteousness. There must be a sacrifice, and a sacrifice of a painful nature, for Christ.

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It is in this way as the Apostle Paul expressed it, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things". This is where the "buy" intended here comes in. To be brought to nothingness, to lose, to sacrifice what we may have trusted in, to be emptied and then to be filled, to be killed and then to be made alive.

The promise is very reassuring, "Incline your ear and come unto me". This is faith, the coming of a needy sinner, coming with his need and sin and hunger and thirst, coming with what he has which in itself is of no real value to him; yet if he comes to Christ he must come with his own rags and his own poverty and his own ruin. "Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David". "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon". The promises are linked with the invitations, and where repentance is real and is in the heart and where sin is forsaken, then God according to His promise, whoever it may be, irrespective of persons, will receive a repenting sinner. What a mercy this is! "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found". He may be found by His people sometimes in the means of grace, sometimes in prayer, sometimes in private reading. What a mercy it is that God is findable and that we are encouraged to wait upon Him to come over the mountains of our sins and to visit our souls with His salvation.

O may the Lord bring His Gospel to us in His own time and way and refresh our souls with the rich provision of His grace and give to those who hunger and thirst for Him a sealing of a promise of the covenant, as it says, "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David". The sure mercies of David are the blessings of Christ, the blessings that He is exalted to give and when they are made over to us, are felt and applied and experienced in their healing efficacy, the Lord makes His promise with us, He makes His covenant with us, and does thereby seal us as His children. What a mercy to be brought to some feeling of this. May the Lord grant it to us and give us to feel something of it even in this prayer meeting, that we may hope with some gracious persuasion that the Lord is our God.