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Prayer Meeting Address by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer" Clapham
28th August, 1950

Reading: John 11

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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTIST

Many very touching incidents occurred in the life of Christ when He was upon earth and many miracles were wrought by Him; but probably this was one of those outstanding miracles that Jesus wrought, and one recorded in considerable detail, and has therefore some revealing features. It reveals the fact that the Lord had a particular affection towards that little household there at Bethany where lived Mary, Martha and Lazarus. But notwithstanding that mutual devotion and tender feeling toward each other and their love toward Him, affliction came and came in a grievous way. The fear of the Lord does not guarantee immunity from affliction, for all are mortal creatures and often these particular afflictions come to families, that are in themselves of a painful nature.

There was something striking about this at the outset, because of what Jesus said to His disciples even that 'the sickness was not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.' The sickness was unto death though it was but as a sleep as the Lord speaks, but though it was unto death for a short time, for four days, it was not unto death so to continue but that the glory of God should be manifest in this remarkable resurrection. Another remarkable point is that when the Lord heard of this He delayed to go; He stayed two days in the same place where He was. That must have been a painful two days to those two sisters Mary and Martha. How they must have longed for His coming; how urgently they must have watched for Him to come to them in their distress; but no, He abode still two days. But the Lord had His own reason; it was one of tender regard to them but which doubtless tried their faith. It may be that some too, in a spiritual way, or in some circumstance, urgently long for the Lord's appearing, but feel that apparent delay. But He never delays till it is too late in His account, though it may be in their point of view. It was too late, so that when He did come to them their words of greeting to him were 'Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died'. That was a very natural way of reasoning; but although they believed in their Lord and believed that He would raise the dead at the last day, their faith seemed put to the test concerning this. If only He had come before, 'if Thou hadst been here;' and so we find that Mary said the same thing when the Lord sent for her, 'Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died'. If only Thou hadst come a little sooner he might have been healed of his sickness, but now it is too late. That was nature's reasoning, but it was not too late for Christ, and what

words they were that He spake unto them concerning Himself. 'I am the resurrection, and the Life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead yet shall he live': most confirming words, 'though he were dead yet shall he live', even though he be in the grave four days, yet will he live and nothing is too hard for the Lord. 'And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?' Then they went to the grave and what a token of human sympathy prevailed here. In His deep, natural feelings evidently and tender sympathy, the Lord wept, and it may be too because of the element of unbelief of those about Him at that time. He wept and groaned and prayed and yet knew all the time what would be the issue of this unusual circumstance. When they came to the grave therefore Jesus groaned, He wept, He prayed before the dead body and then reassured them that if they would but believe they should see the glory of the Lord their God. Then the stone was taken away and in a loud voice the Lord said 'Lazarus, come forth, and he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, loose him and let him go.'

How striking is all this and yet how confirming to the Lord's waiting people, not only in regard to their souls, in their bondage and darkness, being spiritually bound hand and foot, yea even dead, feelingly so, And even those that are dead in sin of the Lord's elect people, when the appointed time shall come, divine power will quicken them into life and the same divine power in the application of His Gospel will bring that liberty spiritually that was given to Lazarus when He said 'Loose him and let him go'. Amen