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Prayer Meeting Address by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer" Clapham
on 18th. September, 1950

Reading Luke 18

In the earlier part of the chapter we have two striking parables in relation to prayer, and in each case the teaching is drawn by means of a contrast between two different parties.

In the case of the importunate widow we find her making her repeated requests to the judge to be avenged of her adversary. For a time he regarded her not, yet when she persisted in her request he said "Though I fear not God, nor regard man, Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me". And the Lord said, hear what the unjust judge saith". This judge was an unjust man, he had no fear of God, he had in a sense no conscience concerning the matter, yet because this widow was importunate, that he might not be continually troubled by her coming, he avenged her of her adversary. The Lord draws a comparison by this; if an unjust judge shall so do, "shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though He bear long with them?" He does bear long with them. The widow in this case was continually pleading with the judge to be avenged of one who was evidently persecuting or oppressing her, so at times it is with the Lord's people in that particular, under their persecutions and oppressions, that is when they are pressed by their enemies, their adversaries, God may bear long with them, that is He may for the trial of their faith allow their persecutions to continue for a space, He may bear long with them, with their enemies, with the avenger, He may bear long with the avenger for certain purposes but in His appointed time He will speedily and quickly deliver. I tell you that He will avenge them speedily, that is He will hear prayer and will work deliverance for them from their avengers. He will avenge them, that is He will deal with the enemy, the avenger, in punishment, to give satisfaction to the person avenged. So with the Lord's people when they are under

certain oppressions, afflictions and difficulties, or it may be some kind of persecution, though the Lord bear with them, bear long with them, yet if they continually cry unto Him He will surely avenge them, He will work deliverance for them. And if the unjust judge should so do, will not the Lord Himself? This parable is used as an encouragement to the Lord's people under their own oppressions, and particularly oppressions under the bondage of sin, He will surely deliver, full forgiveness is with Him, and though the burden may long lie heavy yet He will avenge them speedily.

In the case of the publican contrast is drawn between the two men. The Pharisee was full of human nature, pride and self satisfaction; he had no confessions to make, except it was that he was so much better than the other poor man standing in the other corner of the temple, he was so much above him, he was not even as this publican who was extorting taxes or money from others in an unjust way according to his view; but the publican was in a very different case, he had not much to say, but he smote upon his breast saying "God be merciful to me a sinner".

There are three striking points in the prayer. One is its brevity; it was a very short prayer, but it was a prayer to a purpose. It embraces a great deal, here is a poor man confessing his condition; he had nothing good to say of himself and could make no comparisons, but was just under a sense of his own guilty condition in the sight of God, "God be merciful to me a sinner". Another point about the prayer is its reality, there was nothing superficial about it, and though just seven words, he had a sight of the holiness and justice of God, His mercy and compassion, and also of his own need. It was a very real prayer, like the poor woman who came before the Lord worshipping, saying "Lord help me", a very short prayer and yet so expressive. The third point is its acceptance, he did not pray in vain, he was honoured in his petition, he went down to his house justified rather than the other, the other you see justified himself, but the publican had need of mercy and the Lord justified him in the petition, "Everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted".