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Sermon preached by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer", Clapham, on Sunday evening 5th. March, 1972.

Hymns: 312, 1116, 164

Reading: Isaiah 53, 54.1-8

Text: Luke 22.37

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"For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end."

After what we considered this morning concerning the Lord's words to Peter, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not", the Lord goes on to inform Peter of what was about to take place in his sad denial of his Lord. In the verse I have read the Lord is speaking still and He refers to something that is yet to be accomplished in Him. "For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me". What was it that was written? It was this: "He was reckoned among the transgressors". This takes in the prophecy that I have read in Isaiah concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom it is said that He was numbered among the transgressors, was with them and made intercession for them. A transgressor is a law-breaker; transgressing indicates a stepping over a boundary, going beyond the limit, doing what we are forbidden to do. Of this we are all guilty, we are every one of us transgressors, that is we have violated the law by going beyond its limits. This is universally true of all fallen mankind, and it is true of everyone in this chapel. There is no exception, for "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." There is a stepping over the limit and there is a coming short of the requirement; if we really know ourselves, I believe we shall have to confess that we are guilty in both respects.

What I have read is a remarkable truth. Although it was not yet accomplished it was about to be accomplished. "He was reckoned among the transgressors." Although He was reckoned among them He was never one of them, for He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. Although He was treated as a transgressor, that never made Him one. He was despised and rejected of men, a man of

sorrows and acquainted with grief; yet He was never a transgressor. Although all the sins of His people were committed to Him substitutionally, yet they never made Him a transgressor. He stood in the place of transgressors, for all His people are transgressors; but still it never made Him one. He was ever inherently and practically pure, holy and just. Yet though He was never a transgressor, He suffered and died to save transgressors. One of them was there crucified by His side, and for him the Lord suffered, as we know. He said unto Jesus, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom". And Jesus said unto him "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise". The Saviour died to save him and all His people as transgressors; and if He died to save you and me we shall be brought solemnly to know and feel that we are transgressors and that we have sinned against His holy law. His Word says "He that offendeth in one point is guilty of all". All those He died to save are brought to feel their guilty condition as transgressors, and something of the awfulness of sin. What an amazing thought it must be to every one of us that He condescended to take our nature upon Him, to redeem us as poor, vile transgressors of the law, and in ourselves under its curse,

There is something in the prophecy of Isaiah about this, not only that He suffered for these transgressors, but that He makes intercession for them. This is not a universal consideration; all for whom the exalted Saviour intercedes in glory will one day be there themselves, for they are the trophies of His grace, the purchase of His blood; they are the redeemed of the Lord, delivered from the power of darkness and transformed into the kingdom of His dear Son.

But it is said here "The things concerning me have an end". This is my point more particularly. The Lord refers to "things concerning me"; He Himself is the speaker, the only begotten Son of God. Yet being the Son of God He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. They were vital things that concerned Him, and if we have any grace in our hearts the things that concerned Him will concern us.

A great many people are about who apparently have no concern whatever; as far as we can observe they just live to this world; and so they die. But there are things that concern the Lord's people, and they are the same things that concern Christ. In this aspect the things that concerned Him were the things that He was about to suffer, the price He was about to pay, the death He was about to die; and, if we have any grace, the things that will concern us are those very things. But ours is a concern as to whether we have any interest in them, whether we have part and lot in the matter of redemption, whether He died for us - for you, for me. This concern bears an evidence of grace, and I wonder how many of this little company have this concern in their hearts. Of some I have no question. For myself, I would have to say that I could wish it was a much deeper concern, a heavier burden, a more pressing matter with me than often it is, for we are apt to become taken up with secondary things, although they may be consistent things. There are many things that come into our lives which can soon distract us from the one main thing which should be our chief and principal concern. In the days of the late Mr. Philpot, when he used to preach at Allington, the place used to be packed, people were listening outside through the windows, and during the dinner break the farmers walked about talking, not about the failure of the potato crop, but "Where do I stand for eternity?" - that was their concern. Is that really our concern - "Where do I stand for eternity?". Perhaps it is often a secret cry.

"'Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought;
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I His, or am I not?"

O dear friends, what little deep inward, prayerful concern have we about our standing for eternity, and where we shall spend it!

I was intending to speak particularly about the things that concerned Christ. He said, "The things that concern me have an end" - that is, they have an end in view. One of the things that concerned Him was to fulfil all the prophecies of the Old Testament that relate to Him. All through the Old Testament we have, as you know, under the Mosaic law, the sacrifices, types and shadows, the

promise of His coming, of His sufferings, and particularly in Isaiah 53 which I have read this evening. As you know, He often referred to the Old Testament Scriptures, and His concern was that every reference to Him, to His sufferings, His substitution, and His ultimate glory, should be perfectly fulfilled. What concerned Him was to give absolute satisfaction to the claims of justice, for unless that satisfaction was absolute and perfect, it could not be accepted. It is solemnly true what we have been singing concerning His substitution:-

"Many hands were raised to wound Him,
None would interpose to save;
But the awful stroke that found Him
Was the stroke that justice gave."

But that is what concerned Him - to receive that stroke, and to bear what was involved in it, because if the sword did not fall upon Him it would fall upon us. This was what concerned Him - that His poor sin-polluted people should be delivered from the sword of justice. Therefore He bore the stroke Himself.

What concerned Him was to fulfil the law. It is said by the Apostle in the Epistle to the Romans that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." That is what concerned Him - to honour the law to perfection, so that His dear people, as they stand in union with Him as His body, should thereby become dead to the law and be delivered from its awful curse. This is what concerned Him, friends. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." The whole of His substitution, then, was the matter that concerned Him. Solemn thought! it was a deep concern to Him; to drink that bitter cup, this brought matters to a point, and to this end, He set His face toward Jerusalem. He said: "I have a baptism to be baptised with and how am I straitened until it be accomplished". That is what concerned Him - to complete the work He came to do. He knew perfectly well what was involved, but He came to complete it, to finish it. As we know, when He was about to expire He said: "It is finished". And He bowed His head and gave up the ghost. These were the things that concerned Him.

There is another point that concerned Him, and that is that He should rise again and ascend up into glory as our great High Priest, in order to dispense the blessings he procured by His intolerable sufferings. So, as in Isaiah 53, "He made intercession for the transgressors." He is our all-prevailing intercessor enthroned in heaven above. This concerns Him - that He should be exalted a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins. His concern now is to dispense the blessings of pardon and redemption to His poor suffering people who have transgressed His law and in themselves are under its curse.

"The things concerning me", He says, "have an end". What is the end? It is not a termination of anything, but a fulfilling of things. This end is the effect of all that He suffered and had in view. One end that the Saviour had in view was the glory of God. In John 17 we read that He said, "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee". That was one end the Saviour had in view in all that He suffered; not only that His poor helpless people should be eventually redeemed, pardoned and justified, but that His Father should be honoured and glorified in the accomplishment of this. "Glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee."

Another end in view was the gift of eternal life to all for whom He suffered. The things that concern Him are linked with the ultimate result and efficacy of His substitution; these are bound together. It was a concern to Him that His Father should be honoured and glorified in His substitutionary work, and that He should be accepted by the Father. In John 17.2 we read; "As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him." One of two things awaits us then, either the awful consequence of sin in eternal death, that is separation from God and divine punishment, or eternal life. Oh what an inestimable blessing that will be - eternal life!

"Eternal life at His request
To every saint is given;
Safety on earth, and after death
The plenitude of heaven".

I remember visiting Mr. Allen's father in hospital just before he died and repeating that verse to me, "Eternal life at His request to every saint is given." And so it is. Yet these 'saints' are transgressors, but they are saints because they are separated from the world that lieth in wickedness; they have an interest in the Saviour's intercession, in His prayers, as I mentioned this morning. It is His prayer for us that holds us up, bears us along, brings us through, and will ultimately bring us into the heavenly mansions. "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not."

"The things concerning me have an end". Another end in view, I believe, is that day when all His ransomed children will be with Him, every one of them, when the harvest is gathered in. This may not be so very long now, for sometimes it does appear that the dispensation of time is closing down upon us. Christ will then have every one of His children with Him from the least to the greatest of them. What a wonderful mercy it will be if you and I are among them, most unworthy of all though we may feel to be. We shall feel to be the most unworthy, and yet what a mighty work it is! What encouragement there is for poor sinners to wait upon the Lord for this blessing, even though they may feel to be the vilest sinners out of hell; yet still they are "welcome to the throne of grace the Saviour's blood to plead." That which concerned Him, and the end the Saviour had in view, may also refer to that day when He would be able to say, "Behold I and the children whom Thou hast given me; here are the trophies of my blood; here they are, they have come out of great tribulation with their robes washed and made white in my blood." This was the end in view. What a glorious prospect it is for believers in Jesus to look forward to, especially when they feel a sweet hope spring up within that one day they will be there. It seems too great for us to contemplate, I know, but still, if it is really true that the dear Saviour died to redeem us, you and me, - if He did - may I not say that He will not be satisfied without us? If He paid the price to deliver us He would not be satisfied without us, for these are the trophies of His grace and blood!

Then there is just another point, another end in view; not

only will the Lord's people be there, but they will be conformed to His glorified image, as to His human nature. This the Apostle Paul refers to in his Epistle to the Philippians where he says, "He shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body." It will bear a conformity to His glorified body. I know this is all amazingly profound; still, it is the end in view. May not this take us to the glorious resurrection, when all the redeemed of the Lord will be raised from the dead, when this mortal will put on immortality and this corruptible body will put on incorruption? This poor body that is sown in dishonour will then be raised in honour. This is the end in view, and this is something that concerns Him, to be accomplished in the time appointed.

Here is the blessed truth, and here may be a point for some heart-searching in my own case and perhaps in yours. Do the things that concerned Him concern you? Do they concern me? Is it our great concern to be right with God, to be presented blameless? Is it our great concern to be found at His right hand in that great day? If that is really a prayerful exercise and a deep concern in our souls, then I believe that we shall be there; but if there is no concern about it, then there is no evidence that we shall be there unless it be on His left hand to hear that dreadful word "Depart ye cursed". Oh, what real concern is there in our hearts as to our standing? There is a lot of religion about, but how many are there that are really brought to a point, that are really concerned, whose language is "Give me Christ, or else I die". I have often mentioned this, but it is a real concern. May we feelingly say:

"Prepare me gracious God
To stand before Thy face.
Thy Spirit must the work perform.
For it is all of grace."

Amen