Prayer Meeting Address by Mr.J.Delves at "Ebenezer" Clapham, on Saturday evening 13.9.52

Hymns: 622, 274 Reading Philippians 4 Job 5.17 to end.

In this concluding chapter the Apostle acknowledges the practical kindness, consideration and charity which this Church at Philippi manifested toward him, pointing out that it was not because he desired it of them, for he had been made willing to be content in whatever state God had placed him, so that he could say concerning himself that he knew both how to be abased and how to abound, and that he could do all things through Christ which strengthened him. The reading of the chapter shows that he was enabled in a gracious way to follow out the exhortation he gives to this Church, even to be careful for nothing, which is indeed a narrow and difficult path, and one where we may often feel to need special grace; particularly when, as is the case with many of the Lord's people, they are careful and troubled about many things. But the Apostle, feeling in his own case a spirit of contentment, falling into the Lord's hands, a willingness to be what or where the Lord would have him to be, this spirit enabled him to exhort others to be careful for nothing.

There are two or three things which may help us to walk according to this rule. The first is a confirming perception that all our providences are in the Lord's hands; all our circumstances and affairs, difficulties or afflictions, or whatever the trial may be - are in the Lord's hands to lay them upon us, to continue them upon us, to deliver us from them, or to support us in them. When we can rightly feel that, a feeling that only He can bestow upon us, we can at such a time, at least for that time in some degree, be careful for nothing. This being careful for nothing does not suppose a careless attitude or disposition of mind, but a gracious perception of the fact that our concerns are under His control, in His care, in His keeping. There is something more than that; there is also a promise that He will supply His people's need. This can enable us to be careful for nothing, because it is confirming to faith. We can only rightly be careful for nothing when we put our trust in Him and are enabled to cast our burden upon Him and leave our cares in His hand. This is a sweet

place to be brought into. At such a time, even if it is only for a few minutes, it is very restful and very sweet to be careful for nothing.

Another point is really to believe in a right way that whatever cross may be laid upon us is designed in the Lord's purposes to be for our good. I know it is impossible for nature to believe that, particularly when many things appear to be against us; but there are times with the Lord's people when faith can rise above appearances or natural tendencies, and can really believe that however dark the cloud may be for the time being, God has a purpose of good in it unto His people. This is specially so when you can really feel that you are one of His people and can have some comforting inward assurance that God is your Father.

It is wonderful counsel that is here given, not only to be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving,to make our requests known unto God. A sweet relief may often be felt in our trials by access in prayer, laying our case before the Lord, receiving a token, getting a word that may be supporting and quieting. Everything by prayer. Some may feel that it is to little purpose to pray, because answers are apparently with held; but that does not mean that it is to no purpose to pray. God has the matter in hand and will surely deal with it wisely, and we cannot go wrong when we are enabled by His grace to take it to Him. As we read, "For all these things will I be enquired of by the house of Israel to do them for them". Many mercies are necessarily mingled with our afflictions, so that at times at least His people can sing both of mercy and of judgment. It needs special grace to sing of judgment which may involve the Lord's chastening, whereby His dealings are rendered bearable to us, so that He stays the rough wind in the day of the east wind; but if you can sing of judgment, you can surely also sing of His mercies. Moreover, His people do find and feel that both of these are mingled together in their experience and in their life.

Now a great promise attends this: "And the peace of God, which

passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds by Christ Jesus." It passeth all understanding to believe that such as we could ever have peace with God, but the peace itself when it is felt does not pass understanding. It is enjoyed. It is like the love of God which is beyond all our comprehension. There is more in it than we can fathom. But when you really feel this peace it is wonderfully sweet, and you will know it to be so because it reconciles your spirit to the Lord's ways, brings subjection to His dealings and produces a conformity to His divine will. It is a wonderful thing to have dealings with God in mercy, to hear His voice in our afflictions, to receive profit by them and to experience deliverance. The chapter is wonderfully confirming. "My God", says the Apostle, "shall supply all your need." I cannot, I have no power to do this, but I know one who can, and one who has supplied all my need. It is a very confirming way of putting it. It does not say "There is a God who can supply your need, but "My God shall supply all your need", as though he would say "What He has done for me He can do for you." May the Lord help us to lay hold on this and strengthen us in Himself. Amen.