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Prayer Meeting Address by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer", Clapham,
on 27th January 1951

Reading: Proverbs 18

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I think there is no doubt as to whom the wise man refers in this last clause, "There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother". Earthly friendships are among the choice treasures of this life, more valuable than riches and more conducive to that true natural happiness that pertains to such friendship, where it is real, even in natural things. And it is particularly sweet where there is a spiritual friendship founded upon a union felt between one and the other in the things that accompany Salvation, and attended with some measure of communion and opening of heart to heart whereby a bond is formed that is peculiarly sweet. But earthly friendships, although they are very choice, are subjected to changes; they fade. In our lives, in your lives possibly, you look back upon some close friendships of earlier years which have not in the same degree continued. So it is in this life, everything is subject to change, decay and death.

Although real friendship is wonderfully choice and conducive to much happiness of mind, there is one friend who has never been and never will be subject to changes in relation to His friendship toward His people. He is said to be a brother born for adversity, which is entered into, I believe, by the Lord's people when in their own trials and adversities and afflictions they are favoured to feel and experience that divine friendship. He sticketh closer than a brother. Some brothers have a very tender friendship, others have not, but where brothers are joined in a spiritual friendship and union it would take a great deal to sever that bond as to the communion and joy. But the Lord Jesus Christ is an immutable friend. Although His people may suffer a sense of desertion according to their own feelings and are subject to many changes, yet the friendship subsists always the same on the part of Jesus. He is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother, which infers that not only is it a closer friendship and an abiding friendship but it is of a higher nature and order. He sticketh closer than a brother.

This friendship reveals itself first in the sacrifice He has made for His friends. "Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down His life for His friends", and this is where the closeness of that friendship reveals itself and takes effect at all times with respect to His church and is not subject to changes for

it is immutable in Himself. There is a saying that "a friend in need is a friend indeed", and so we prove it to be where acts of kindness are shown to others in their time of need or distress. What friendship can compare with that of Jesus, who seeing His children, His friends, in their hopeless condition, like an infant cast out into the open field, did thus manifest His affection to them by laying down his life and making the supreme sacrifice.

But His friendship also reveals itself in sustaining them under their infirmities, trials and difficulties, in grace bestowed according to their day, whereby they are supported under all their afflictions and their anxieties. He is a wonderful Friend, and He reveals it also in providing for them according to His own riches which are infinite, so that there cannot be a need beyond the power of this Friend. And on occasions I believe the Lord's people can experience a peculiar sweetness in their souls in the friendship of Christ. You may actually have felt that in a particular way in some of your things, especially when the Lord just drops a word into your heart which has been refreshing, reviving, supporting or reproving, because His friendship can be just as real in His reproofs as in His promises. Not only so, you do not feel left alone do you when you have a friend like this. I do not mean that we have not friends or do not enjoy friendship one with another. We do, and I bless the Lord for that, but this is what I might term even a closer and sweeter tie which occasionally the Lord's children enjoy. What has He said? "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee". That can, as it were, survive through all the changing conditions and circumstances. He still remains just the same. Friends are taken, removed, but this Friend lives after the power of an endless life and He shows it in His gracious sympathy which is peculiar and very real when it is felt, in relation to His priesthood as Paul says "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities". If you walk in the beauty of that word in your trials or afflictions you will know that you have a Friend, "a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother."

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