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Prayer Meeting. Ebenezer. Clapham. 31st March, 1962

(Our Pastor's return)

Hymns:- 410 and 738. Lesson:- (Psalm 116. Address:- Psalm 116
(Eph: 3.12 to end)

There are undoubtedly moments, and choice moments they are, when the Lord's people can say without reserve, "My Jesus has done all things well." I hope, without presuming, to make a personal reference; I feel I can say that in relation to the Lord's dealings with me. The need of His chastening hand I have felt, and I hope its sanctifying effects in repentance, sweet repentance, I think the sweetest repentance I have ever known, with a contrite heart when love flowed out toward Him because of His mercy to such as myself.

In this Psalm the author says "I love the Lord." Why did he love the Lord? Because the Lord had answered his prayers. That will always make you love Him. Some of you will know what I mean. If you get a real answer to prayer in your soul, then love will flow out to Him Who answered that prayer. Those, though probably concerning yourself, may not necessarily concern yourself. You may get an answer to prayer for another, for a friend, one in trouble, in distress, in affliction. That will cause you to love Him; indeed every communication to your soul from Christ will move you to love Him. These can be among the choicest spots of one's experience in their pilgrimage here below.

Whoever the author of this Psalm may have been, we can see that he had a wonderful experience. He went down into the depths, so that the sorrows of death compassed him, and the pains of hell gat hold upon him; he found trouble and sorrow. Have you ever been there? I believe, all the Lord's people, more or less, under divine teaching, come to this, somewhere. We have to be brought down before God. What the "Sorrows of death" and "Pains of hell" may have been, exactly, or what was the cause of his trouble and sorrow, we do not know; but I am disposed to believe that it was in his own soul, and also under certain extreme circumstances of a distressing nature through which he passed, that brought him to the last extremity, so there was, as it were, but a step between him and death. He was in distress indeed, but not in despair. There is nothing about despair here! We read about trouble and sorrow, and the sorrows of death, but nothing about despair! Instead of this, he says, "When I was in this trouble, in these depths, in this affliction, " I called upon the name of the Lord and the Lord heard me." That was why he expressed his love to Him; the Lord heard his prayer. And He has heard some of yours. What then? He experienced deliverance and restoration: "Return unto thy rest O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee."

Have you ever had a moment of this, some view by faith of the Lord's bountiful dealings that has filled your heart and humbled you in the dust, so as to make you amazed that ever He should

manifest a spark of mercy to a poor hell-deserving sinner? But this is what makes it so sweet. The Psalmist speaks of deliverance: "For Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears and my feet from falling." This would appear to indicate deep distress of soul or danger to life, intense grief, many tears and something in his circumstances, evidently in his path and in his walk, that was of an extreme nature. But the Lord delivered him from it all, not one thing but all of it. This brought a gracious resolve. What a mercy when it does this. When it does bring this resolve, it proves its reality. There may be many of the Lord's people who pray in the time of trouble and get some deliverance in some measure, and that is as far as it goes; and they seem just to hide it up. But that was not like the Psalmist here. "I will take the cup of salvation" he said;— What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" They were so great that he was lost to know what to do to make any right acknowledgment of the Lord's mercy to him. "What shall I render to the Lord? Have you ever known that? Perhaps you say, I feel as opposite to that as I can be. That may be so, and sometimes it is so. What does it need then? It needs the Lord to come, and that will soon turn your captivity, disperse the darkness and bring this gracious enquiry, "What shall I render unto the Lord?" So the Psalmist says, "I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord." He would still keep praying; he had not got beyond that. He would take the cup of salvation. This evidently has some relation to an ancient custom of passing round the cup at the time of joyous feasts; but spiritually it means to give thanks to the Lord for all His great goodness, and especially His salvation. "I will pay my vows unto the Lord now, in the presence of all His people." Everything the Lord does is worthy of acknowledgment, although it is not always acknowledged. If you have any indication of His mercy to your soul, or in your providences, that is worthy of acknowledgment. "Them that honour Me I will honour".

I will not say more this evening. I can hardly express myself in that it is a joy to me to be among you again, and I hope the Lord will grant me grace and strength to speak a little to you tomorrow as I may feel led, and that we may have reason to rejoice together. I pray that it may be a good Sabbath to us and that we may flow together to the goodness of the Lord in confession of sin and repentance and faith and hope and love; because all these sweet graces flow together in the heart. Some of you can understand me. You see, if the Lord's favour softens the heart, unbelief will not be allowed to prevail. You will not be cold, icy, hard, distant. Faith and love will flow together in your heart, and that is worship. May the Lord grant it to us.

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