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Sermon preached by Mr. J. Delves at Barton-in-the-Clay on Monday,
1st. August, 1960 - Afternoon

Hymns: 359, 1134, 927 Reading: Psalm 119 (from v.137)

Text: Psalm 119.175

"Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee; and let thy
judgments help me."

This sentence is one of many short sententious petitions that are in the Psalm. It is a remarkable Psalm, beautifully expressive. It is sometimes referred to as the epitome of a believer's experience. Though there are many words in it yet it is not wordy, that is to say there are not a lot of words that convey but little meaning. Every sentence conveys something worthy of notice and often states just what we feel to have in our heart; and indeed the Psalm conveys the fact that the author was alive in his own soul to God. Although he confessed to have gone astray like a lost sheep, as each of us have need to confess, yet he says, "I have longed for thy salvation, O Lord; and thy law is my delight." "Let my soul live and it shall praise thee." There do not appear to be many people today concerned about their souls. Are you concerned about yours? We all have souls, but how little, comparatively speaking, are we concerned about what is involved in the possession of one. Sad indeed it is to contemplate that so many people appear to be utterly careless about their souls and where they will spend eternity. The root of this hardened condition we know is on account of sin and unbelief, hardened unbelief in the fallen heart of guilty man whereby his eyes are blinded with respect to his future destiny and the tremendous issues that await him. But whether we have any prayerful concern about it or not, it makes no difference to the fact and the ultimate issue that very soon we shall have done with earth and must appear before God. This indeed is a trembling consideration, yet is lightly thought of by so many. What a wonderful mercy if

divine grace has made any difference between us and those who follow the course of this world, and who will follow it to their ultimate everlasting ruin, unless divine grace intervenes. Many people live as though they had no soul. They live as though they were just like animals, and they try to persuade themselves to believe they will die like a beast. Yet underneath this, even with ungodly people, there is I believe a voice which tells them it is not really so. They find no consolation in their conclusions, and they will find no comfort on a dying bed from their sentiments. But how few people realise the value of a soul. I do not believe that any of us do, properly speaking. Nothing actually can be of higher value than the soul. Even if we possessed the whole world it could not be compared with the soul in value, because everything we may possess here is of a material nature, soon to be parted with; but the soul must live for ever. "What shall it profit a man", said the Lord Jesus, "if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" When we come to the swellings of Jordan we shall need what earth can never give, what our friends can never give, and what we can never give ourselves. But mercifully there is One who can and does give that which is necessary to prepare us for death and to fit us for heaven.

"Let my soul live" - as though the author would say, and perhaps some of you say, there are so many things that bring a death into my soul. So there are. How easily we can be corrupted by things of any earthly nature, which may be quite lawful in themselves, and yet have 'death in the pot' with respect to our souls, and prove an occasion of inward, if not outward, backsliding. It may be that some of you just groan this out when heavily pressed, burdened, and weighed down; "Let my soul live". O beloved friends, after all, life in the soul is the first and most important, all-important, consideration. We cannot begin properly to estimate the value of the soul. Why is the soul of such preponderant value? I believe the value of the soul consists in its origin, in that it is the life of God in us.

The soul is distinct from the body in its formation. Although it is within the body it is distinct from the material substance that constitutes the body. The soul, according to the scripture, is the breath of God in us. In creation God formed man of the dust of the ground, therefore to dust it must return. But of the soul it is said that God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul; that is a soul, that is your soul and my soul. Is not this a profoundly solemn consideration? The soul is that which God has given to us and which is ultimately to return to Him. "Then shall the dust return unto the earth as it was, and the spirit return unto God who gave it". This places inestimable value upon a soul. But the soul is also immortal. That is to say, it does not die with the body. The Apostle, writing to the Corinthians with respect to believers, says that when we die it is "absent from the body, present with the Lord." There is also that particularly striking answer of the Lord to the thief on the cross. The dying thief prayed, "Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom", and the Lord said, "Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise". That could not refer to his body; it referred to his redeemed spirit; that soul was prepared for heaven when the poor man had come almost to his dying breath. Let my soul live, because it can never die as the body dies; it is immortal in its nature, and it is not composed of any material substance. This is a profound mystery, I quite agree, but it is according to divine revelation. The soul is of such vast importance also because of its ultimate destiny, and where that destiny will be. It must be either in heaven or in hell. How solemn is that word of the Apostle "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment". "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that everyone may receive the things done in his body whether it be good or bad." What tremblings some of the Lord's people have had about their destiny, and how it will be with them when heart and flesh fail. What a wonderful mercy where it is so, for where there is a prayerful concern, and a gracious trembling there is hope that

it will be well.

"Let my soul live". What kind of living does the psalmist refer to here? We must conclude that his soul was alive already. He was not in a state of death in trespasses and sins, otherwise he would not have breathed a prayer like this - "Let my soul live". This prayer, coming from the heart of a poor sinner, evinces life in that soul already, because a prayer breathes life and evinces the fact that such a one is a living soul. That is to say, he has been quickened from death into life by divine grace, born again and made a partaker of the divine nature. This is the prayer of a living soul. The life here is a spiritual life. For, says the Apostle Paul, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." Where this is the case then we are not in the flesh, but have been gathered out from the world and given something which nature could never give. It is a spiritual life that is intended here; in other words, it is the life of grace in the soul; it is a divine work, the work of the Holy Ghost. There is no real experience or religion, apart from the Holy Ghost. It is His blessed office to convince of sin and He is the Author of the new birth in the heart of a child of God. To this the Apostle Peter refers where he says "Being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." This is that spiritual life wrought within us by the Spirit of God. "Ye must be born again" - a familiar word, but an essential truth. This spiritual life is by His gracious indwelling in the soul. "Know ye not", saith the Apostle, "that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you, and ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price." Oh what a mercy to possess something from heaven in our souls. If we do, that will take us to heaven in the Lord's own good time. This life is also the life of Christ in us, which is according to the Lord's word when He said, "Yet a little while and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me; because I live ye shall live also." It is this life that unites us to Christ, that brings us into sensible union with Christ, that moves the affections

after Christ, to say as in the Canticles, "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon."

Some of you may question whether you have any life in your soul, and it is a mercy if there is a concern about this. But if you do possess life in your soul, that life will be continually moving after Christ. It will be sure to do this, because the teaching of the Holy Spirit is to set Him up in the heart's affections as the desire of all nations in your soul and to bring Him before your faith as the one thing needful. What a mercy to possess a life in our souls that moves after Christ continually in pressing earnest desires, for the sweet manifestation of Him to our souls will prove the reality of our religion. One sentence can prove it, in a sense, if the Lord brings us to this spot to say feelingly, - "Give me Christ or else I die." If that is in your heart, then your religion came from heaven. I know the devil can bring up all kinds of suggestions, but the devil will never incline a poor sinner after Christ. He will make all kinds of attempts to drag him away, and a hard battle may be fought within, but he cannot destroy this life. This is the life of Christ. It is largely a life of desires. "Let my soul live." And the more lively you feel in your soul the more earnest will be your desires after Christ and for more communion with Him.

"Let my soul live." This life, consists also in a knowledge of things. It is a life of knowledge, as opposed to that state of ignorance in which we were before our poor blind eyes were opened, and we were brought to any consciousness about eternal matters. We may often feel painfully lacking in this knowledge. We shall not get beyond desires for knowledge. The Apostle himself did not, for he said, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but dung that I may win Christ." The salvation of his soul was more to him than anything else, and a knowledge of Christ than all other considerations which were counted

as dung and dross that he might win Christ, and be found in Him. The seeker who can be satisfied with his desires is not a seeker in a proper sense. How can a hungry person be satisfied with his hunger? The more hungry we are the greater the need to satisfy that hunger. Nothing can satisfy a living soul but Christ revealed and a partaking in his soul's experience of that living bread that cometh down from heaven.

"Let my soul live" in confession of my guilty sins. Would it not be right to say, the nearer we live to the Lord, the more we live in confession of our sins, and repentance too? Nature cannot produce godly sorrow for sin or repentance on account of sin. This is the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart in His gracious indwelling and divine operations. You may have a wet eye and a soft heart in confessing your guilty sins before the Lord, especially when you are favoured with a glimpse by faith of the Lamb of God who died to bear those sins away. Nothing will break the heart like a view of Calvary, and nothing can produce such sweet compunction as a view by faith of a dying Saviour. A view of the cost of the removal of sin is that which will make it hateful to us. A sweet sense of pardoning love will produce hatred to sin. Some have said 'Oh that I could live without sin, or be taken home so as not to sin against such mercy.' It has been genuine with them, too, not just pretence. What a mercy it is for us that there is a provision made for guilty sinners. "Let my soul live" in a knowledge of Christ. As we are thus brought to a knowledge of Him, we shall feel a sense also of our own guilt and sin.

"He must increase but I must decrease." When a dear Redeemer rises in our affections, self goes down, and we are glad to have it so. The sweetest humility we can know, is to cast ourselves into His blessed hands, to renounce everything of our own, to place our hope of salvation and heaven solely upon His finished work, His all-sufficient merit, and His sin-atoning blood. Sometimes when engaged in secondary things and feeling so far off, your heart so cold and worldly, you may just groan this out, "Let my soul live."

Oh to get something from the Lord, a little light upon my case, to have another token, to feel a little sweet renewing. "Let my soul live" in closer communion with God. Have you ever prayed like that? If life is in your soul, you will long for communion. Communion is sweet; it is the life-blood of real religion. Where is that communion to be known? At the mercy-seat, at the appointed throne of grace, where God said to Moses, "There will I meet with thee, and there will I commune with thee." What is this communion? It is when faith gets hold of the Lord at the throne of grace and you pour out your heart before Him and feel you are accepted, and when you hear His voice in response in some kindly word, saying, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love." Oh, this sweet communion with the Lord! If you have known it in truth for a few minutes in your life, you will enjoy it in a never-ending eternity, for none know what communion with the Lord is, but those who are quickened into life and brought consciously into some knowledge of Christ and are made nigh through Him. "Ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Nothing else can make us nigh. Thus the Lord's people by the removal of the cause of separation were made nigh by the Redeemer's precious blood, made nigh in their soul's feelings. This is a sweet nearness. When you can understand the words of the Church, "As the apple-tree among the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste." Oh, you may say, I would gladly have a religion like that. You have got one, if that desire is in your heart; you are under His shadow when your love moves after Him in warm desire. Where are we sheltering? Not in anything of our own, for death is everywhere except in a crucified Christ. He is my hope, my trust, and my prospect. When you are sheltering beneath the blood, and the avenger of blood will never destroy you there. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you."

"Let my soul live" in the sweet manifestations of His grace. Have you ever seen Him? His dear people do see Him; they see Him by faith, when the Holy Spirit reveals Him. He can be just as real in the view of faith as with the natural eye. Many saw Him when here below with their natural eyes who never saw Him by faith. But many who have never seen Him with their natural eyes have seen Him in the view of faith. "Whom having not seen ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." When you get a sight of Him you get a sight of Heaven; He is heaven, He will be your heaven. It would be no heaven if He were not there. What a mercy it is to be acquainted with these things. Happy are they whose eyes are opened, who mourn and grieve over their guilty sins before God and are brought to the foot-stool of mercy to seek forgiveness. Will it be denied you? Oh, say you, the devil told me. You would not believe him before the Word of God, would you? "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh ^{to me} I will in no wise cast out." Oh, say you, I feel so dark and dead. All the more reason why you should cling hard to the promise and not let Him go.

"Let my soul live." May the Lord grant us to feel a little of this life in our souls, even today, then it would not be a barren day. If we get a touch of His mercy it will be a good day. Yes, say you, but it is such a long time since I felt to have any token from the Lord in my soul. All the more reason why you should press your case hard upon Him to come now. Say to Him, Jacob-like, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." That would not be presuming; it was not presuming in Jacob, and it would not be presuming with you. May faith rise in our hearts; so as to press our case upon Him. "Let my soul live and it shall praise Thee, and let Thy judgments help me." Amen.