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Notes of Prayer-meeting Address on Monday 4th April, 1966

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at Ebenezer, by Mr. J. Delves, Pastor.

Opening Hymn:- 945. "Saviour of sinners deign to shine  
On this benighted soul of mine."

Reading:- 12th & 13th Chapters of Romans

Address:- In these chapters the apostle proceeds from certain doctrinal expositions to precepts, and to a number of very timely injunctions that he enjoins upon these believers at Rome, pointing out to them their duty as professing the Name of Christ, that they should walk in His ways, keep His commandments, observe the commands of the law, and to realise that "Love is the fulfilling of the law."

This is not to be considered in a legal aspect as though we can merit eternal salvation in moral duties, but in the gospel sense, and perceiving that the commandments of the law are, as it were, embodied in the precepts of the blessed gospel, it is by the grace of God. It concerns all of us to realise that the tenor of the law is "Perfect love to God, and to one another;" so that although we cannot attain to this legally as to merit the favour of God, He has had and does have mercy upon us. We feel, at times, a sense of His love in our own hearts, and we desire to love, to honour our profession, to put on, in this sense, "The Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof"(v.14). This is not a legal spirit of mind, it is a being dedicated to the services of God with holy motives of love to Him and to His people.

In Chapter 12, verse 2, we have brought before us "That good and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." It is said to be the "Perfect will of God". It is necessarily so, because no human will of a poor fallen creature is perfect, even though there may be very good motives. The will of God is good, and acceptable, and perfect in every aspect. In the beginning of the Chapter the apostle beseeches these Romans, by the mercies of God, to present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God. Note! this is to be "By the mercies of God". This is a very important point which I would have you to consider. We receive the mercies of God, daily,

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we live by the mercies of God, and not only temporal mercies and blessings, but all our spiritual mercies, the provision of the everlasting gospel, which is for His poor redeemed people. This gospel is the revelation of the "Mercies of God"

"That ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, which is your reasonable service". Note the apostle says "I beseech you, therefore as though he would stress all that he had said previously, therefore, in view of all that I have brought before you, all, is "By the mercies of God" as in the closing verse of the 11th Chapter "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things". All is through the blood of Christ, the Love of Christ, the love of God as we read in that wonderful 8th Chapter of the Romans. Those which are in Christ Jesus are freed from condemnation, are freed from the law of sin and death. This is a great and blessed gospel. This presenting of the body as a living sacrifice, would appear to have some reference to the old time sacrifices that were continually offered under the legal dispensation. Now in a Gospel sense this "Sacrifice" is taking up the cross and following Christ. It is bearing reproach for His Name's sake. It is devoting ourselves to His service, and whatever we may be called upon to do that may be honouring to our God, all will be done in love to Christ. This sacrifice will be a glorying in the cross of Christ, and a conducting of ourselves, as it were, by not being conformed to this world, but transforming ourselves by the renewing of our minds. This indicates a gracious spirit with faith in exercise, a love to Christ, and a spiritual mind that so influences us, as that His own honour and glory is ever before us, and that we devote ourselves to serve Him, and to worship Him: not that we merit anything by it, but it is called for, by the mercies of God, and we shall each live to Him, by following the precepts before us. It is, as though he would say, devote yourselves to His honour and service, and in so doing, you will prove that His will is good, acceptable, and perfect.

The will of God may be said to be "GOOD" in the sense that God is good, therefore His will is essentially good, good in its decisions, good in its effect, good in its purpose. If we have a sanctified mind, and our affections are drawn to the Lord, and we are

not conformed to this world, but are transformed, we shall find that the revealed will of God in the Scriptures and the precepts is "ACCEPTABLE". We may look at them, consider them, examine them, study them, and prove them, and faith says "All these are acceptable and perfect to the spiritual mind, that is, that the will of God is perfect in every aspect. It must necessarily be so, perfect in His decrees, perfect in His word, and in what is enjoined upon His people.

Another point is the fact that the Church is one body, see verses 4 & 5 "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." Here the apostle illustrates from the human body, which is complete in itself, that it is one body, although having many different members which are used for different purposes and have distinct uses of gifts, so it is in relation to the body of Christ. The body is a complete body in a mystical sense standing in union with Christ as abiding eternally, chosen, adopted, redeemed, pardoned, sanctified, justified, and to be eternally glorified, we see them as ONE BODY, yet this body consists of so many "ONES" of itself, both naturally and spiritually, though differing in their life's providence, in their circumstances, in the path in which they walk: everyone differs one from the other. However close the union, and though much communion may be enjoyed, yet we must walk our own path, the path which the Lord has appointed unto us! We do this as part of the body of Christ. Some have more grace, some are more lively, some have more tribulation, more trouble, and more distress, some may seem to go along more easily than others, but in each case, "The heart knoweth its own bitterness. We are so many "ONES" , members, we are one body in Christ.

The Church is said to be the Body of Christ, and this is a union that is indissoluble, it is very beautiful, very blessed. It is an abiding union. May we be favoured sometimes, friends, with a hope that we are each, really, in this union. If that is so, then all is well, well if we have an intimation of it.

"If ye love me, keep my commandments," so follows quite a number of injunctions which I cannot go into now . Some of the things

come home very closely to us, such as that we should love one another in sincerity and in reality, that is, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, and this love is to be as in verse 9 "Without dissimulation," that is to say, not hypocritical, but a real and practical love, yet, in the same verse, the apostle says "Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good." This is in conformity with love, to abhor that which is evil. This love does not indicate that there should be a glossing over wrong things, no, it is the love which is derived from the Love of Christ; love that is holy in the nature of it, as we have it in Psalm 97 verse 10 "Ye that love the LORD, hate evil."

Then there are exercises about HUMILITY. We are not to think highly of ourselves, and the apostle goes on to say we are to "Think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith (v.3.). It is almost, as though the apostle would say, now the more faith you have, and the more it is in exercise, the more humble you will be, or, as is the measure of faith, so is the measure of humility.

PATIENCE. We are to be patient in tribulation (v.12) There is sure to be tribulation, there will be things to try us, difficult things to walk in, and perhaps some persecution. There must be a path of trial, more or less, but the injunction is to be PATIENT in it! Patient in tribulation. We read quite a lot about this matter of patience which appears to consist very principally in the conformity to the will of God, following His commands, and bearing the cross that is laid upon us. We are not to be rebellious, or to rebel against God, but to bear even injuries from others, subjecting ourselves, not to exercise vengeance, but patience. In verse 9 the apostle says "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." It is as though he would say, no, do not take vengeance, it belongs to God. If a path of trial is given, we shall find, where help is given to walk therein, subjection to the will of God, and this will bring peace of mind. We shall be brought through, and sanctified by the trial. We shall overcome at last. As to our enemies, he says,

"Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." If we remember the mercies of God to us, we shall be merciful to others, and show acts of kindness to them, even if it should be that one should wound you, as grace is given, show kindness in return, and in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. This is referred to in the book of Proverbs chapter 25, verses 21/22. I understand this refers to an ancient practice, in olden times, of softening metals by covering them with hot coals, so this figure is used to point out that by showing acts of kindness, charity and love to others, even those who may have injured us, we shall soften their hearts, as no other way can be so effective as this, so we find that to show kindness to a hard-hearted enemy, it may soften his heart and bring him down in a spirit of contrition, sorrow and regret for what he may have done. This is not easy, but we have to remember that none of the precepts of the gospel are really easy, for many of them go cross-current to our natural propensities. We need much help and we need much grace to follow the preceptive teaching of God's word, and in so doing this will be the result, we shall not be overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

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