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Prayer Meeting Address by Mr.J.Delves at "Ebenezer", Clapham
on Monday evening 4.6.51

Hymns: 80, 262 Reading: Romans 4 & 5

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The Apostle writes in these verses upon a most profound truth and yet it is vital to everyone of us if we are going to heaven, and it is our mercy that the Gospel makes provision for every sinner's need. However great that need may be the Gospel covers it, and when we can rightly believe that, it can be most confirming to us, because it will help to lift us a little from those despairing feelings that at times may weigh the spirit down when darkness is upon the heart and guilt upon the conscience.

It is noticeable here that the Apostle refers to Psalm 32 where the author speaks of the blessedness of pardon, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered", and referring to it, the Apostle says, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin". Here it may be said that God will impute one of two things to us, everyone. He will either impute sin or He will impute the righteousness of His Son. Here stands the great point, and that which is of vital concern to us. Some here may echo in their feelings what we have been singing with respect to the joy of salvation; "The joy of salvation when shall it be mine?" but even where that desire is, it is an evidence of grace in the heart; but that which alone can bring real joy and peace is forgiveness. What a mercy it is that God has ever disposed of His sovereign will and purpose to apply forgiveness; not only to provide it, but to bring it experimentally into the heart so that assurance is felt of interest in redeeming blood. The Gospel will never make sin cheap to us but the more we know of it the more tender will it make the conscience against sinning and the more bitter will sin be because of the perception of that great suffering the Saviour went through in order to bear our sins away.

Here the Apostle draws attention to the great matter of justification. Words fail really when we try to speak of this, but it has a distinction in this way, justification is referred to the Lord Jesus Christ but not forgiveness. He was not, in this sense, forgiven, because He never sinned, but He was justified

because He fulfilled the divine law, endured the cross, put all our guilt away, laid down His life and was raised again, which was an open evidence that His sacrifice was accepted. This is what is such an attractive point to believers more or less, for when the Redeemer rose from the dead all His people rose justified persons in Him, just as much as they were pardoned and forgiven when He shed His blood and made atonement for them. It is in this justification in which His people stand complete in Him. The Apostle speaks of that in Colossians, "Ye are complete in Him" (Col.2.10). We cannot be complete in Him unless we are justified in Him, and if we are justified in Him we stand in Him honoured and acquitted from all law charges as though we had never offended.

Now in this great matter of justification is first covenant union, because it embraces and incorporates every elect vessel of mercy who was in Christ in the covenant before the world was. In this matter the foundation standeth sure, for the Lord knoweth them that are His. This union may, in time to come, be much more to some of you than it may appear to be now. That is, some who perhaps are younger in the ways of truth, to whom it has a growing beauty, the wonder is this, that the blessed Trinity should have registered, from all eternity, everyone, clearly, minutely, accurately, and bound them up in a covenant to be ratified by blood when the Saviour died, so that their standing is absolutely sure. Though we may feel to doubt our interest at times, yet when a little of the light of the blessed Gospel shines into your soul there will be salvation in that union and if you read 17th. John you will see how wonderfully the Redeemer opens up that great mystery. "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one". There is the union and there is the justification of every trophy of grace,

"In union with the Lamb,
From condemnation free."

Not only is there this eternal union but there is also the power of faith which is particularly emphasised here, instancing the case of Abraham who is an example of faith under the most adverse conditions, and yet he remained firm and believed, though there was no human possibility of the promise ever being fulfilled. "Who against hope believed in hope", that is when the thing appeared hopeless and when nature would say, it is hopeless, and would say that it was to no point reckoning upon it or

believing in it. Nothing is hopeless to faith, where the Lord gives a promise concerning it, and this is believing in hope against hope. It is a venture of faith over all apparent impossibilities. "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness".

This is opened up by the Apostle to show that it is not restricted simply to Abraham but is for teaching to us also, "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead". Not that there is any merit in faith concerning this but that it is linked so closely to the foundation and is so necessary to it; it can never be imputed where there is no faith to receive it, so you will find in your own experience that the Holy Ghost will in the first place work faith in your soul, then, in His own good time, will bring this righteousness sensibly and experimentally, and faith will receive it. When you get it you will say, 'I am complete in Him'. Moreover you will be able to say, 'It is finished', that is to say that all that is necessary to carry you to heaven, soul and body, has been done and has been done for you. O what a place to come to!

May the Lord in His great mercy bring this inestimable blessing into many hearts who inwardly long for it and who may find a voice within saying, 'It will never come to me; I shall never know that'. That can be the enemy's voice, because if he could he would stop you praying; he would stop anything of a gracious character; he would say, 'Give it all up, it will never come to you'. But do not believe it will never come to you until the Lord tells you so. When the Lord tells you so, there is nothing but despair, but He never will, He never has done yet to one who often inwardly groans and cries, "Say unto my soul, I am thy Salvation". Then you will get a little experience of what the Apostle refers to here, "being justified by faith". That is, when brought into some happy experience of this in your own soul, particularly to have some comfortable knowledge of it. Then you will enjoy peace and truly it is a blessed peace. You will enjoy access and joy, and all the things that are here mentioned and in your experience you will find

that tribulation will work patience and when you are thus favoured and blessed in your soul you can glory in it, glory even in tribulation also knowing that tribulation worketh patience. And where He comes, truly it is a wonderful Gospel. It is very, very little that we know, but if you get enough in your heart to lift up the Saviour there in your affections then you will know that His Gospel is your Gospel because it is the fruit of this grace in your heart drawing you to him, humbling you in your spirit, making you willing to be nothing. Then it is we come to that place where "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ", and Christ is all and in all. Amen

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