

# Feed Thy Kids

by James Durham

*James Durham's sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual guidance and the role of ministry in nurturing believers amidst their struggles and weaknesses.*

**Scripture:** 2 Peter 1:4

**Topics:** "Christian Assurance", "Spiritual Guidance"

## Description

James Durham preaches about Christ's comforting response to the Bride's afflictions, sins, and fears of new failings, emphasizing the importance of following the footsteps of faithful believers and seeking guidance from the ministry of the word. Christ assures the Bride of her worth and beauty in his eyes, highlighting the believer's participation in the divine nature, imputation of Christ's righteousness, and God's gracious acceptance. The directions given by Christ encourage believers to walk in the good old way, imitate the practices of former believers, and rely on the ministry for guidance and protection from snares and errors.

## Transcript

Verse 8. If thou know not (O thou fairest among women) go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.

From the 8th verse to the 12th, follows Christ's express return to her former suit; and because it is he that speaks, we take it up as the second part of the chapter. In the Bride's condition there was, 1. Crosses and afflictions. 2. Sins and infirmities. 3. Snares and hazard of new failings. Now Christ so frames his answer, as he may meet with all her necessities most comfortably and lovingly; and because she was most affected with the fear of sin, he answers that first: and so he doth, 1. In order to her being guided against snares, give a direction for her duty, verse 8. 2. In order to her consolation under her suffering, and the sense of her failings, he commends her, verse 9, 10. 3. He gives her a promise, in order to her further consolation, verse 11. The scope of all is, to comfort her; and every part of the answer being from Christ's mouth, may be effectual for that end.

In the direction, verse 8. there is, 1. The title he gives her. 2. The directions themselves, which are two. 3. A supposition, or ground upon which he gives them.

1. The title he gives her is, 'O thou fairest among women', which is much from Christ to the Bride, who immediately before styled herself black: believers who are humble under the sense of their own infirmities,

are nevertheless highly esteemed by Christ; nor are always his thoughts of believers as theirs are of themselves; nay, by the contrary, blushing at their own deformity, is a chief part of their beauty. The giving her this title, implies these three things, 1. A real worth in a believer, beyond the most noble person in the world. 2. A real respect unto, and esteem that Christ hath of them, which he hath of none other. 3. Wonderful tenderness, condescending for her consolation, to intimate these his thoughts of her to herself, now when she was otherwise sadly afflicted, and under a double distress.

If it be asked, how these excellent titles and commendations may be applied to a sinful believer. Answer. These four ways, 1. By communication and participation of the divine nature, they have a stamp of the Spirit of holiness imparted to them, whereby they resemble God, 2 Peter 1:4, and none other in the world can compare with them in this. 2. In respect of the imputation of Christ's righteousness, wherewith they are adorned, and which they have put on, which makes them very glorious and lovely, so that they are beautiful beyond all others, through his comeliness put upon them. 3. In respect of Christ's gracious acceptance, whereby he doth esteem otherwise of them than of the most royal and beautiful in the world, they find such favour in his eyes. 4. In respect of his design, project and purchase; she is so, and to be made so in end; he will have his people made completely beautiful and spotless, before he have done with them, Eph. 5:27: 'Without spot and wrinkle:' all which are peculiar to a believer, of whom glorious things are spoken and written, which are applicable to none other.

2. The directions are two. Wouldst thou know, saith he, how to be kept out of snares? then 1. Look how the old worthies walked, and follow their way. 2. Have respect to the public ordinances, and hold near them, that you may have direction from the word, by these to whom I have committed the trust of dispensing the same: I have (saith he) no new light to give you, nor any new way to heaven to shew you, nor any new means, ordinances, or officers to send amongst you, nor yet must ye expect immediate revelations; but walk in the light that shines to you, by the preaching of the word by my ministers, who are the under shepherds, which I have set over you: for thus I guide all by my counsel, whom I afterward receive to glory.

The first direction ('go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock') holds forth, 1. That all believers, of old and late, are of one flock, of one common concernment, and under the care of one chief Shepherd: this is the flock spoken of, verse 7, whereof Christ is Shepherd. 2. That there is but one way to heaven, for the substantial of faith and godliness, in which they that went before have walked, and these that follow after must walk in the same way, if ever they think to come there. 3. That there are many in all ages, whom God hath helped in trying times to keep in his way, and have been carried well through all difficulties to heaven. 4. That believers should observe these beyond others, as being especially worthy of imitation. 5. That they should, and may follow the commendable practices of believers in former times, and not affect singularity. 6. That it is commendable, and often safe in times when new opinions and doctrines bear sway, to follow their way, who we are sure went before us to heaven, Heb. 13:7; 1 Thess. 2:14; Heb. 6:14. This imitation of others, is to be limited with that necessary caution, in so far as the practice of others agrees with the first pattern, Christ, 1 Cor. 11:1. In a word, this direction shews there is no way, but the good old way to be asked for, and followed in the most declining times, Jer. 6:16, and that we should keep the very print of their steps, studying to be followers of their faith, who have been honourably carried through before us.

The second direction puts them to the right use and improvement of the ministry of the word, which he will have them to respect; 'feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.' Shepherds here in the plural number, are the servants of that one Shepherd, whose own the sheep are: so ministers are called often shepherds, or pastors, both in the Old and New Testament, 1. Because of their relation to Christ, by whom they are

intrusted to feed his sheep; he is the owner, they are but shepherds, Ezek. 34:2.

Because of their relation to the flock, which is committed to their care, and for which they must give an account, Heb. 13:17. 3. Because of the nature of their charge, as being assiduous, difficult, and tenderly to be gone about; for, such is the work and care of a shepherd, as we may see by what Jacob speaks of himself, when he had the charge of Laban's flock, Gen. 31:40. 4. To shew the necessity of that ordinance. And 5. The respect people ought to have to them who are over them in the Lord: no flock needs a shepherd more than a congregation needs a minister; people without labourers, being like sheep without a shepherd, Matt. 9:36, under a sad necessity of wandering and being lost.

Next, 'shepherds' tents' are mentioned, with allusion to these parts where shepherds in the wilderness carried tents about with them; and so to be near the tent, was to be near the shepherd: it is like they kept lambs and kids nearest unto their tents, because they needed more oversight than the rest of the flock; for a lamb to be at its liberty in a large place, was dangerous, Hosea 4:16. By 'kids,' we understand young, unexperienced believers or professors, whereby it is clear, 1.

That there are kids and young ones in Christ's flock. Yea, 2. That the strongest believers, even the Bride, have their own infirmities; and there are some particulars wherein they are weak: for this direction is given to the Bride, as a particular and experienced believer; and seeing ordinarily weak believers are called lambs, and unrenewed men goats, it may be kids here are mentioned to point at the relics of sinful nature, even in believers, which is the reason why they need still over sight. 3.

It is clear, that the office of the ministry, is a standing, perpetual, and necessary office in the church, otherwise this direction would not always satisfy the believer's question here proposed. 4. The strongest believers, have need and use of a ministry. 5. It is a great part of a minister's charge, to keep believers right in snaring and seducing times, Eph. 4:12,13, &c. 6. Believers should make use of public ordinances, and Christ's ministers, especially in reference to snares and errors; and they should take their directions from them, and in their difficulties consult with them, and their counsel should be laid weight upon. 7.

Allowed dependence on a ministry, is a great means to keep souls from error; whereas on the contrary, when no weight is laid on a ministry, unstable souls are hurried away. 8. Christ hath given no immediate, or extraordinary way to be sought unto and made use of, even by his Bride, in her difficulties; but the great means he will have her to make use of, is a sent ministry, and therefore no other is to be expected: it is no wonder therefore the devil (when his design is to cry down truth and spread error) seeks to draw the Lord's people from the shepherds' tents; and no wonder souls, who once do cast off respect to their overseers, be hurried away with the temptations of the times, as in experience hath often been found a truth. 9.

Ministers should have a special eye on the weakest of the flock, their care should be that the kids may be next them; our blessed Lord doth so, when the lambs are carried in his own bosom, Isa. 40:11. And therefore, seeing weak believers have most need of Christ's oversight, if they begin to slight the ministry and ordinances, they cannot but be a ready prey; and the devil hath gained much of his intent when he hath once gained that. O that men would try whose voice that is, that saith, come back from the shepherds' tents (when Christ says, abide near them.)

It is as if a wolf would desire the lambs to come out from under the shepherd's eye: and lastly, when Christ gives this direction to his own Bride, we may see he allows none to be above ordinances in the militant church; it will be soon enough then, when they are brought to heaven, and put above the reach of seducers.

3. The supposition is in these words, 'If thou know not,' &c. which is not any upbraiding answer, but tendeth to insinuate the direction the more; I have given you means (saith he) and so he puts her back to the serious use of these, as he sent Paul, Acts 9, to Ananias, to have his mind made known by him: which implies, 1. That a believer may be in many things ignorant. 2. That Christ pities the ignorant, and hath compassion on them who are out of the way, or in hazard to go out of the way, Heb. 5:3. That believers should not in praying to Christ, neglect the ordinary means in seeking knowledge: nor in using them, neglect him; she prays to him, and he directs her in them. 4. Directions for a believer's walk, given by Christ's ministers from his word, are his own, and are accounted by him as if he did immediately speak them himself. 5. Christ would have his ministry and ordinances kept up in esteem and request amongst his people: therefore, he will not be particular in giving answer to his Bride, but sends her to them, that she might know the usefulness of them, and learn to know his mind from them. 6. They cannot expect to make great progress in religion that neglect the ministry, seeing it is to them that Christ recommends his own Bride; if people were enquiring at Christ, what should they do now in a time, when temptations to error and defection abound? No other answer were to be expected, than what he gives to his Bride here: yea, if Abraham were entreated to send some from the dead, to advise people to abhor profanity and error: his answer would be, they have Moses and the prophets, they shall have no other, and no other would prevail, if these ordinances do not: people should conscientiously, and thriftily use the means and light they have; for, it is by such the Lord trains his own Bride and though he will admit her as a courtier to his chamber, yet this familiarity he admits her to, is in the use of ordinances, and he will have no believer above ordinances and need of ministers, while he keeps them within the compass of snares.

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