

# Decline and Its Antidote

by John Nelson Darby

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*John Nelson Darby's sermon emphasizes the importance of grace and abiding in Christ to combat spiritual decline and maintain a vibrant faith.*

**Scripture:** John 15:5, Romans 8:1, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 2:8-9, Philippians 3:8, Colossians 3:1-2, 1 Peter 5:7, 1 John 1:3, Revelation 2:4

**Topics:** "Spiritual Decline", "Grace and Restoration"

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## Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the danger of spiritual decline when believers become distracted by worldly motives, losing their initial fervor for Christ. He warns that the inquiry into the harm of certain actions indicates a departure from being absorbed in heavenly matters, leading to a diminished sense of grace. Darby asserts that true restoration comes not from legalism but from a renewed understanding of grace, which fosters genuine practice and holy living. He highlights the importance of maintaining a spirit of confidence and gentleness, rooted in fellowship with God, which allows believers to navigate life's challenges with peace and joy. Ultimately, abiding in Christ leads to a life marked by quietness, confidence, and a focus on eternal truths.

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## Transcript

291 When we first receive the knowledge of life in Christ, we are absorbed, we readily admit all else to be "dung and dross," Phil. 3 But when decline comes in, we get old motives into action again. Little by little, we are not absorbed, and then a hundred things begin to be motives - things of which I took no notice, which did not act before. People say, "What harm is there in it?" When I begin to inquire, "What harm is there in this, or in that?" there is the tendency to decline. There may be no harm in the thing, but the thought about it shews that I am not absorbed with that which is heavenly. "Thou hast left thy first love." It is not in great sins, but here, that decline in the saints is manifested.

When the sense of grace is diminished, we decline in practice. Our motives must be in God. Sometimes, effort is made to press conduct, works, and practice; because (it is said) full grace was preached before; now, that there is decline in practice, you must preach practice.

That which is the rather to be pressed, is grace - the first grace. It is grace, not legalism, will restore the soul. Where the sense of grace is diminished, the conscience may be, at the same time, uncommonly active, and then it condemns the pressing of grace, and legalism is the result. When conscience has been put in action through the claims of grace, that is not legalism; and there will be holy practice in detail.

We may fall into either of two faults - that of (because fruits have not been produced) preaching fruits; or, that of getting at ease, when certain things come to have influence over us again, through thinking that what we approved of before, was legalism.

We shall not get back by dwelling on detail. Christ is the great motive for everything; and we must get up into the knowledge of resurrection in Christ, to remedy detail. Here, there is a wonderful truth, and wonderful liberty.

Another very important point is, the tone and spirit of our walk. Confidence in God, and gentleness of spirit, is that which becomes the saint. For this we must be at home with God. The effect of thus walking in Christ, setting the Lord ever before us, is always to make us walk with reverence - lowliness, adoration, quietness, ease, and happiness. If I go where I am unaccustomed to be - if I get, for instance, into a great house, I may have much kindness shewn me there, but when I get out again, I feel at ease; I am glad to be out. Had I been brought up in that house, I should feel otherwise. The soul is not only happy in God for itself, but it will bring the tone of that house out with it; because of its joy in God, anxieties disappear, and it will move through the ten thousand things, that would trouble and prove anxieties to another, without being a bit troubled. No matter what it may be, we bring quietness of spirit into all circumstances, whilst abiding in God.

292 If a man be risen with Christ, if he be dwelling there, it will shew itself thus. We shall not be afraid of the changes around. We shall live, not in stupid apathy and listlessness, but in the exercise of lively affections and energies towards the Lord. One great evidence of my abiding in Christ, is quietness. I have my portion elsewhere, and I go on. Another sign is confidence in obeying.

This connects itself with fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ - fellowship, not only in joy, but in the thoughts of the Father and the Son. The Holy Ghost, the third person of the blessed Trinity, is our power of entering with the affections into the things of God. "The Father loveth the Son" - what a place this puts me in, to be thus cognisant of the Father's feelings towards His beloved Son.

In our proper place, we get our mind filled and associated with things, that leave this world as a little thing - an atom, in the vastness of the glory, which was before the world was.

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