

# Growing Up Into Christ Ephesians 4

by John Nelson Darby

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*The sermon explores how God's blessings and our trials lead to spiritual growth and unity in Christ.*

**Scripture:** John 15:12, Romans 5:5, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 2:19-22, Ephesians 4:13, Philippians 1:6, Colossians 1:27, Hebrews 10:24-25, 1 Peter 2:9, 1 John 4:12

**Topics:** "Unity in the Body of Christ", "Blessings in Christ"

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## Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the profound love and interest God has in blessing His people, illustrating that His thoughts are centered on bringing us into the fullness of Christ. He explains that through Christ's descent and ascent, we find strength and comfort, as He understands our trials and sorrows. Darby highlights that our natural portion as Christians is to enjoy God, and that the love of God is poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. He encourages believers to grow up into Christ, fostering unity and love among one another, as this reflects God's nature. Ultimately, our fellowship and communion with each other are rooted in the divine love that God has for us, which transcends worldly troubles.

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## Transcript

One cannot help seeing in such a passage as this the profound interest the Lord takes in blessing. There is profound love in it, as well as that it is a fact that He delights in blessing. His purpose is to bring us into the enjoyment of His own blessedness. His thoughts are blessings; and there is none anywhere else but in Him. If I speak of blessing, it must be what is in the heart of God. A father's thoughts of giving to his children are measured by his love for them. When we see what is in God's heart for us, and that all His thoughts have the form and power of blessing, what must be for us! He is bringing us to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ - this is to be the result; but it is the principle and spring of blessing that was in my mind to speak upon. He is conforming us as to His own thoughts in blessing at the end. The objects of such love, we, abject sinners, taken up by Him shew the greatness of His love. Christ is the great workman of it all. It is by Christ that He does it. When God sets about to bless, it is by the Son of His love. It is an immense foundation for us to rest upon - not only strong but wide and large and deep. "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." "He descended first into the lower parts of the earth." What then is to escape the power of Him, who has been borne up to the throne of God, after going down to the very lowest place of death under sin? He has been in the lowest place of misery and death, and is taken up to the highest place of glory - the throne of God - and all between is filled up by Christ. Thus nothing can escape. He went down to the place of death and sin, "made sin for us," and went up to the throne of God. There is strength for me a poor sinner, something

to rest on. Yet it is not distant from us, but we have the consciousness of its being in and around us. In Revelation it is said of the heavenly city, "the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

The Lamb is nearer to my heart than any. He has known me better than any, better than I know myself; and this Christ who dwells in our hearts by faith is the One we shall meet there. I shall find One in heaven nearer and dearer to my heart than any one I know on earth. Nothing is so near to us as the Christ that is in us, and nothing is so near to God as Christ. Yet the world is in a man's heart. All that is agreeable and outwardly good in this world finds its echo in a man's heart, and all the evil that has come in finds its place there too. Christ was here amidst it all. He met every whit without having the evil in Him, yet He knows it all. Everything we feel, all that passes through the heart of man, Christ has gone through, not by grasping at the thing but by resisting the evil. With all the sensibilities of the heart to good or evil (and this makes the heart of man such a wonderful thing) Christ can meet all. The centre key to all this is Christ: He has power to put away the evil. If there was one thing where my heart could not rest on Christ, it would be dreadful. All have the knowledge of good and evil, even the unconverted man. Without Christ he sets about racking his heart to find any good thing that is under the sun. All the best affections of a man are the occasion of his greatest distress, because sin has come in: the heart gets pulled and torn every way, but must go through it. See a wife losing her husband, a mother her children. The instant I see Christ in all this trial, I find the perfect good God delights in. Divine sympathy is found in God Himself. I may have trial and conflict, I must have it in passing through the wilderness; but I become weaned from the thing that was a snare to me by looking to Christ in it.

328 Present confidence in Christ is needed in trial (losing a near relative, etc.), but the practical effect is that every trial a man goes through gives him (if the heart is thus trusting) to know more and more of what Christ is to meet the need, and more of Christ as possessing Him.

"I bare you on eagle's wings, and brought you unto myself"; and there we find all the unfoldings of what God is in Christ. I cannot do without Christ. I want manna in the wilderness: God gives it to me; and not only do I get all this, water, manna, etc., but I have Christ Himself in it all.

No matter what it is that exercises my heart in the knowledge of good and evil, and the need of the heart in consequence, it makes Christ more known and more enjoyed. Our natural portion as Christians is to enjoy God. Where has God planted us? In the enjoyment of an accomplished redemption; and the result is that love has not only been manifested towards us, but poured out in us. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which He has given unto us. We dwell in God; for His love is infinite, but I am in it. I dwell in it, and He dwells in me; I, a poor little thing, nothing, dwell in Him. I must learn it, as a sinner, in Christ. A proud sinner will try to prescribe to God this and that, but God will have His own way; and blessed it is that it should be so. "Builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" - this is the "vocation." What a thought! What a bringing down, not of heaven, but something more, by special blessing bringing Him down to dwell in us. God would not dwell in angels: there is not the same want in them, but He will make Himself better known to angels through His kindness towards us by Christ Jesus. There is a great deal more for us than the bringing down heaven. "Whosoever shall confess Jesus the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God."

329 What is the first practical effect of this calling to be "the habitation of God through the Spirit"? "With all lowliness and meekness," etc. (chap. 4:2). "A vessel of God"! All the passions of the flesh there, but having the presence of God makes us unspeakably happy: that is our portion! "In all lowliness," etc. A man who is humble needs not to be humbled. There is no safety but in being low. Then what is the

consequence if self is not working and there is lowliness? Why, love works. I cannot be happy with you really, if self is working; but if self is not working, love is, and I am full of love towards you all. What a spring of blessedness in communion there is! so far as self is down, broken to pieces, there is an out-going of perfect love to the brethren. "Love is of God." His nature is at work when we love one another. The spring of the fellowship we find just now is God being here. God is our joy, and love (God's own nature) working, and God our common object. There are trials and difficulties for us all; but there is blessed joy in knowing one another thus, and seeing Christ in one another. "Receive ye one another to the glory of God." If we meet a Christian, though he may be a stranger, we can be more intimate with him than one's own family who are not. Why? Because God is there. Another thing - there is the consciousness of what this unity is. "There is one body, and one Spirit, etc., one Lord, one faith," etc. We are brought together, not only through being united, but by what we possess together, whether we be outwardly rich or poor. He has his particular trials, and I mine; but both have God.

330 "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all and in you all." God is above the world: you cannot tell me of one thing God is not above, and therefore there is not one thing that can separate me from His love. He is "through all." You cannot find yourself in trouble and God not there; you cannot find yourself in any difficulty, perplexity, and not find God through it all. And He is "in you all"; He has come to be the spring of all happiness in us. If I know what water is, it is by drinking; if I know what sweetness is, it is by tasting it; if I know God, it is by His being in me. We can look upon one another and see God in us all. Then these light afflictions, what are they? God is come to take possession of us, and He is the spring in our hearts also. He comes to make us love, because He loves. We shall find it is fully so in heaven. If any thing is a safeguard against evil, it is that such an one dwells in us; but it is more, it is the spring in the new nature, God's nature.

The perfecting of the saints is before God and should be before us. Christ is the object of His thoughts; and He will have these loved ones like Christ: therefore what God does is to make them grow up unto Christ. In the unity of the body, and in all the communion, and through all the exercises of heart, we have the end of all. In ministering to you or you to me, it is to grow up into Christ that there may be more of Christ in us. All the flow of Christian affection, all the enjoyment we have here, is for this end. I can look at my brother and know he is going to be in heaven with me. The enjoyment of all this shuts out the world - you are not thinking of your cares and troubles now. Fellowship with the brethren is perfect deliverance from all that is of the flesh; flesh cannot enter into it; all that is of the world is gone. I am dead to all. Every bit of fellowship I have with a brother is a proof that outside things are now done with. The more we are individually full of divine things, the more this communion with each other is realised. Two together, if both are spiritual, open the sluices that all the wells in the world cannot dry up. The power of the Holy Ghost that makes me now overcome evil will make me enjoy heaven, where there is nothing but good: "they that dwell in thine house will be still praising thee." The power of evil, of the world, of Satan, is all gone. Our common joy now is in Christ, in the communion of His love; and, when we are with Him, it will be completely without alloy.

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