

Letter: 29e 56 Gillett, Lausanne, 1843

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon emphasizes the importance of faithfulness in trials, the difference between error and heresy, and the exercise of the gift of teaching with charity.

Scripture: John 15:2, Galatians 5:9, 2 Timothy 2:3, Titus 3:10

Topics: "Faithfulness in Trials", "Spiritual Gifts and Edification"

Description

John Nelson Darby writes to Gillett, emphasizing the necessity of faithfulness to Christ amidst trials and the importance of leaning on the Lord during difficult times. He distinguishes between those who are in error due to lack of understanding and those who propagate heresies out of a willful heart, urging a careful approach to teaching and the exercise of spiritual gifts. Darby reflects on the blessings experienced in France and Switzerland, despite his own illness, and expresses a longing to return to England while remaining committed to serving the Lord. He acknowledges his weaknesses and the need for prayer, while encouraging the brethren to remain united in charity and edification.

Transcript

p56 Dearest Gillett, - I was glad to have some news of you; we must not expect to pass through the valley without combats, also "the husbandman labouring first must be partaker of the fruits." All we have to seek is to be faithful to Christ in them, and then there results always blessing; it is a purging process, the evil being let out; the secret is to lean thoroughly on the Lord. I pray for you, and not to seek to do good even, in our strength. I do not doubt, dear brother, that you do so much better than myself.

As to heresies, I feel a difference between one who, for want of light or from early prejudice, cannot get rid of error, and one who propagates it ever so secretly (for in general where there is an evil will, it is secretly propagated at first), because then there is the love of error, and the will of the flesh is at work, they are the fruits of the flesh. What is written as to heresy - not as to every one that is in error, even where the error is grave - is, "after the first and second admonition reject." But I doubt not, you have been better directed of the Lord in waiting on Him, than anything I could thus write, but I believe these principles correct. But all these exercises are good. Surely it would be happier never to give the Lord occasion thus to exercise us; but it is much more merciful to be put through the exercises, which brings out faithfulness, than to be left in what separates us from the Lord - far, far better.

As to the second point, that of teaching meetings, if I remember, the same difficulty had occurred before, but it appears to me the matter is very simple. I scarcely understand the difficulty, as it seems to me to

deny the exercise of a gift which I am bound to exercise according to my responsibility to Christ. As to the circumstances of its exercise, they are comparatively immaterial. That one teach, or that more than one take part if united in work, is a matter for them to judge of, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost. Paul and Barnabas assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. He who has the gift of teaching is responsible to Christ for the exercise of his gift; it may be exercised in private; in the meeting together of brethren, if so led, on the Lord's day; or he may assemble them to teach them if he has the capacity for it, for he is acting then on the responsibility which lies on him to trade with his talent. That this should be done with the concurrence and in the unity of the brethren, is natural where charity exists, and desirable: but if one has a gift of teaching, one is accountable for its exercise in charity where it can be a blessing to the church. Only, if in the assembly he act in the flesh, that, not his gift, is a subject of discipline - as when tongues were used for vain glory. It is a question of edifying. Charity uses a gift for edifying, but charity is bound to use the gift for edifying. Besides, if there are brethren who in conscience do not approve of it, their path is easy, not to sanction it by their presence; but they ought not to make their conscience or scruple the law of others' conduct, where it is a matter of spiritual judgment.

There has been so much blessing in France, that I cannot regret not having got home to England, though indeed I desired it. Since then I have done little here, having been ill, and I doubt that the Lord has much for me to do here, but the brethren who read with me are all blessed in their work in this country, French Switzerland, and there is awakening in all parts. Yet I long to be back in England. I suppose still that I may make my journey back by France, where doors were more and more open to me the last time I was there. May I be only the Lord's servant, and that within, as well as, and before, being it without. I have been in general happy, and how otherwise with fresh grace; yet I have seen several times lately my deplorable weakness. Yet having been ill, I have been astonished how deeply I felt utter and entire separation to the Lord. Work more or less occupied me with things and people here; when incapable of it, as I have been latterly almost entirely, I found I had nothing but Christ and His importance beyond all our highest and fondest and most sincere thoughts: it was a sort of experience morally of death, not perhaps all its force on conscience, but all on my position.

Our brethren who have died lately have been in sweetest peace, and have felt in a peculiar manner the importance of the Lord's coming for the church, even when dying, and sorrowed only, where sorrow was, at not having more entirely acted on all principles they had received. The awakening produced by these principles in Switzerland and France is really deeply interesting.

The anxiety of dear - 's followers to propagate his views, seems to me the flesh. Some brethren and sisters here have the same difficulty, but it does not seem to me as flowing from or accompanied by increased spirituality, but a tendency to bring down the mind to earth. But I have never combated it much. My mind has opened out to many wider views and details. I find many more classes of saints and glory in the Apocalypse than heretofore, though all blessed. It may be some will pass through, but I am more than ever confirmed that it is not presented to our faith, but the contrary, and that the faithful will be kept from it. If some pass through it, it would make a difficulty for those who could not separate the signs of special blessing there, from the evidence of greater faithfulness which made us escape it. This, I believe, happens often. Lot experienced mercies not manifested to Abraham in the same way, and the proofs of righteousness are occasions of sorrow if we go far enough. He vexed his righteous soul; and the Lord knew how to keep. Does this identify his case with Abraham? But farewell. May the brethren pray for me, for I am a very weak vessel, that feel often my want of discernment in the midst of, for me, an arduous responsibility. Grace, mercy and peace be with you. Salute all the brethren. May they be kept in lowliness

and peace.

Your affectionate.

Lausanne, 1843.

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