

Luke 10

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon emphasizes the importance of looking to the heavenly Christ, the power of God's love, and the kingdom of God, and encourages listeners to rejoice in their place with Him in heaven.

Scripture: Luke 10:1

Topics: "The Word of God", "Grace"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the transition from Jesus as the earthly Messiah to the heavenly Christ, highlighting the urgency of accepting His message. He illustrates the importance of grace and the need for believers to focus on their relationship with God rather than worldly concerns, as exemplified by the sending of the seventy disciples. Darby also contrasts the rejection of Christ with the blessings of faith, urging believers to rejoice in their names being written in heaven rather than in earthly achievements. He concludes by stressing the significance of hearing and obeying the word of God, as it is the source of eternal life and truth.

Transcript

The Lord pursues the subject we have been looking at in the preceding chapter, connected with the change that has taken place in His own position amongst them. It is no longer the Messiah on earth, but the heavenly Christ, they are to look to. There is another thing brought out here in the amazing importance attached to that moment, the last testimony being applied to them: and those who heard it would be more the subject of judgment than Tyre and Sidon. Any among them would have repented with the truth you have, but they had it not. The blessing now was the Lord Himself being there; and He was so glorious and excellent that to hear Him was the prime source of blessing. All hung upon their reception or rejection of Him. In the sending out of these seventy, we see the same patient grace at work as when He sent out twelve. If they were not received, they were to shake off the dust from their feet, etc. God's love never stops, whatever the wickedness of man, until His work is done. His grace never fails. Christ looks at the power of grace in God, more than at the wickedness of men, and He went patiently on, and said, "the harvest is great," though knowing what there was all around Him. The Lord was not like Elijah who needed to be reminded of the seven thousand, who, as God knew, had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. He came in by the door, and went through everything with God. Nothing stopped Him from seeking out His sheep, scattered on the dark mountains. He laid down His life to save His sheep, and not one should be lost. To gather them, He went on in the power of grace. Paul was of this spirit when he says, "I endure all things for the elect's sakes."

107 Did Christ suffer nothing in it? Look at Him, weary with His journey, sitting at the well, and a poor wretched vile sinner coming to meet Him, to whom He gives the water of life. There He finds meat to eat that they know not of; and He says, "the fields are white unto harvest." He was as fresh and happy in His testimony, while sitting at the well with this poor woman, as if all Jerusalem had received Him; because the fountain was within. In Him was "a well of water, springing up," etc. So with us. If we are going on with Him, we shall be "troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; cast down, but not destroyed." The testimony is in the earthen vessel, it is true, but the fountain is within; and they were to be perfectly dependent on God, and independent of everything else. They were to expect to meet enemies, wolves. "Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves." You cannot turn a lamb into a wolf to defend itself. Peter was for taking a sword to smite off the servant's right ear. but the Lord forbids him, and says, "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." It is difficult to receive everything and do nothing, to be a lamb among wolves - like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in prospect of the fiery furnace, saying, "we are not careful, O king, to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver," etc.

108 "Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes; and salute no man by the way." Not be uncourteous, but waste not time in useless ceremonies, etc. When in God's service, and among God's enemies, God must be everything. It needs concentration of heart in Him, as knowing that the world has rejected your Master, and will reject you, if you are faithful to Him. Faith knows this, and goes on, not with carnal prudence and worldly wisdom, but as knowing what to do and going on to do it. Faith always carries peace to the house; it produces enmity - two against three, and three against two - because some will receive it, and some not; but the thing brought is always peace (v. 7-9). "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." Not merely such and such a thing is God's will, but whatever you do, whether you receive or reject it, "the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." The condition of the world now is, that it has rejected Christ. The Son of God, the King, has come into the world, put it to the test, and it says, We will not have Him. This fact has not lost its solemnity now, for we are walking through the world that has rejected Christ; we bring the testimony of peace to it - peace that has been made, for the sacrifice has been offered. It is also true that the testimony has been rejected. "Notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you" (v. 10, 11). Faith carries things in its own sphere, needing nothing but God's word. The sight of the eyes is constantly tending to dim the estimate which faith forms; and if faith is not nourished by the word, it sinks down and fades away. If I am not feeding on the word, faith is not fed, for it cannot be fed by sight of things all around. When the Lord spoke to Jerusalem, saying, Their house shall be left unto them desolate, and there should not be one stone left upon another, they could not actually see the stones then falling, but it was Christ's word for them to believe. Natural reasoning is fed by what we see, but faith is fed by what God has revealed to the soul.

109 Verse 15. "Thou, Capernaum, shalt be thrust down to hell" - in God's eye, not man's. In man's eye it might be exalted to heaven. So with this world. And what does that prove? That it may last as long as God permits, but that His word will be fulfilled, "the earth and the works that are therein shall be burnt up." There is nothing stable here. When God comes in, where will it all be? though there are scoffers who say, "Where is the promise of his coming?"

Verse 16. "He that heareth you heareth me." That is where faith has its resource. In hearing the word the disciples spoke, I am hearing Christ Himself. That is where faith walks. I know it must be true, for Christ has said it. Everything may go wrong, the world, Jews, the church, etc., but God's word never. And it has been given. It never changes, for it has been given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, etc.

The church, as ground of confidence in testimony, is gone (though we know it is founded upon a rock, and as to its security, it can never be destroyed), but God's word will not fail. Whatever we see tends to weaken and deface faith puts to the test what the affections of the soul are, because it is not to be what I like, but what God says.

Verses 17-20. "Rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." This shews the change of everything. Demons may be subject to you, but the Lord says, That is not the portion for you to rejoice in; I am now shewing My power in another way. This word, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven," alludes to the time when Satan the "accuser of the brethren," will be cast down. Now he is in heaven, not in God's presence, in light inaccessible, but before the throne of judgment - two different things. "Hast thou considered my servant Job?" It proves that when others came before the throne, Satan came also. Contrast verses 19 and 20. The one speaks of what can be seen, the other of what could be known only to faith. The unseen thoughts of your heart are much more important than what can be seen. The invisible is always more important than the visible.

In this world, it is not merely that man is a sinner, but there is the introduction into it of the power of evil. Satan has got hold of this world through man's sin. So in the case of the poor woman it is said, "whom Satan hath bound these eighteen years." But when the church has been caught up, Satan will be cast down. There was war in heaven; but when he is on the earth, he will for three and a half years be raising up the man of the earth against the Lord from heaven. When He comes, Satan's power will be put away. He is not put into the "lake of fire" until the close of the thousand years, but into "the bottomless pit." That is just what the demons asked to be saved from when cast out of the man whose name was Legion (chap. 8:31); "deep" meaning "bottomless pit." The Lord did not cast them down to it, because the time was not then come.

110 This ability to cast out demons was a great thing. The communicating of the power by the Lord was a power above the immediate working of the miracles themselves. It required divine power, and none but that could give the power to others. In the millennium there will not be the power of good and evil together; the latter will be cast out. "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee?" etc. The pit shall be digged for the wicked. Satan must be cast out. And when Christ was upon earth, He was presenting Himself in the power of God to bind the strong man, and spoil his goods, etc. It was a wonderful thing to meet a man under the power of Satan, and to cast Satan out. It was an earnest of the "powers of the world to come"; "the world to come" referring, not to heaven, but to this earth being renewed. He was then putting forth the same power that He will exercise fully in the coming kingdom.

Verse 19. "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents," etc.; and it was at the point when He was rejected that He says this. He knew what was really going on, and though He said peace, they did not say peace to Him. "I give you power" over all the power of the enemy. "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." That is the church's place. When Christ was manifested on earth, it was a blessed thing; but it is better to be His companion in heaven, as we shall be when He comes to take us. Far better to be with Himself and as Himself in the Father's house. We have nothing to do with earth - our names are not written in the earth - kings in it indeed, but our portion is not in it. "He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places." We shall have the inheritance with Him, but it is below us; our hope is to be with Himself above it. The inheritance is the consequence of having this place with Him (Eph. 1). We are children of the Father, to be "holy and without blame before him in love." Now we have our portion according to the riches of His grace, of poor sinners whom He has saved; and we shall be to the glory of His grace in the manifestation

of it. The inheritance comes in afterwards.

111 "Rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." As though He would say to them, Do not let your minds be filled with things down here, but think of what you have in Me and with Me. We find two things brought before us in God's ways; first, the government of this world - that which is still prophetic, connected with the kingdom; and then the church up in heaven. When the inheritance is spoken of, it is always future: but when our place is spoken of, it is always up in heaven. The Lord saw that the present setting up of the kingdom would all fail, and He was bringing in a better thing than any kingdom, and He rejoiced in that; for when He gives joy to another, He cannot help having it also Himself. When the thief on the cross asked Him to remember him in His kingdom, He said, "this day shalt thou be with me," etc. He was gratifying the thief and also Himself. So with these disciples. He would have them not be rejoicing in the good down here, for it is not good enough. Not only do not be troubled with the bad, but rejoice not in the best thing in this world. "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit." "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." He felt the circumstances deeply, but His soul was up to the source, and He would say, It is quite right that these proud and haughty ones should see they are nothing, and that these poor despised lambs should get the glory. "Even so, Father." He must bow to the evil, because the time to judge it was not yet come. Evil is going on; people are saying, Where is the God of the earth? We have to bear it - the Lord did. We must get our thoughts away from the expectation of having things better down here. The soul that enters into God's thoughts and purposes bows to His will. "Even so, Father."

Then He, as it were, retires into the glory of His own person. The Son has to reveal the Father. The world rejects Him, and He submits to the rejection of the kingdom, and brings out, instead of it, the blessedness of the heavenly thing, and now speaks of Himself as the Son, and glories in that. The present result of His coming is the Son revealing the Father; and this is even better than the kingdom. The testimony is brighter as to what God is about, when I take things quietly and submit, not desiring to be a wolf among the wolves. It is exceedingly difficult for one's heart to bow and say, "I will be nothing but a lamb"; but that is our place, for the Lord says, "Vengeance is mine": "rather give place unto wrath" (Rom. 12); and "neither give place to the devil" (Eph. 4). But if you do not give place to wrath, you will give place to the devil. Shall we lose anything by being quiet, and taking things patiently? No, "all power," He says, "is given unto me in heaven and on earth." We must bow to what it is, without, and be satisfied with what is written. If not we shall be only wearing ourselves in the greatness of our way. May we be satisfied to have our "names written in heaven."

112 Verses 23, 24. "He said to them privately." These things could only be enjoyed by faith. He would have them in consciousness of present blessing.

Verse 25. Now that the Lord has shewn out the dispensational change, He shews the moral change. A lawyer comes and asks how he is to get eternal life. The Lord brings him to the law - Keep the law, and you shall live. But he is stopped directly with the simplicity of this, "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." He does not love his neighbour as himself! He asks, "Who is my neighbour? . . . This do and thou shalt live." Who does love his neighbour as himself? The good Samaritan is the one who does not ask who the neighbour is, but acts in grace, without asking what title the other had. Christ has the title of doing good to him that is in need and misery. This is grace that gives without a title.

See how thoughtful this grace and love is. He went to him - did not send some one else, but went, bound up his wounds, poured in oil and wine, set him on his own beast, brought him to an inn, took care of him, gave him in charge to the host, and said, "When I come again, I will repay thee." How beautiful are all the

details of the actings of this love which flows from what is within, and acts according to what is working there, and not according to the claims upon it!

In the closing part of chapter 10 (v. 38-42), we see the one great thing was to hear Jesus' word. Hence the approval given to Mary above Martha, who, in a certain sense, was doing a very good work. She received Him into her house and served Him; but there is something better than this: "Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her." He wanted His words to enter and to have power in the heart. The only thing that endures for ever is "the word of the Lord." The wisdom of this world is against it, and so is human reasoning; but it is the only thing worth waiting upon diligently; and if Christians reason about the things of God instead of appealing to the word, they are sure to be going down. We want to have the word in our hearts, to sit at Christ's feet that we may understand and treasure it up. To hear Jesus is the "one thing" needful. No attention, even to Himself in the flesh, though it were from one who loved Him and whom He loved, could replace this. The "many things" end only in disappointment and death, instead of leading into life eternal, as did the words of Jesus, issuing from a heart broken, that it might let forth the stream of life. The hearing ear for His word delighted Him. He was bringing in truth to people's souls.

113 "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." "Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth." "Now are ye clean through the word which I have spoken to you." Truth sets everything to rights; it sets God and man in their place, or it is not truth. Sin, and righteousness, and love - these never came out fully by the law; but "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Everything was set morally in perfect light by Him: but men saw it not, because they knew Him not. The word now is the instrument of revealing truth. The law was perfect because it was of God, but it did not tell what man was, much less what God was - it told what man ought to be. Christ comes in as the light and says, You are all dead, but I can give you life. His coming into the world shewed out everything exactly as it was. As the living Word He came and revealed to those who could see God - not at first in redemption, but in testimony. What value to Him was it that Martha cumbered herself about serving, in comparison to a soul listening to His word!

It is the same now to a Christian. When God's word comes with nothing else, it has a right to have power over the soul. It makes its way by its own authority and its attractive grace to the hearts, and where received it gives life in Christ. There is no living power in a miracle to quicken a soul, but there is living power in the word. It is by the word that any soul can get into heaven. We are begotten by the word. If the word cannot do it, it will never be done. There are three things constantly pressed in connection with the power of the word. 1. The words spoken will all come up against them another day (John 12:37-41). 2. Though perilous times come (2 Tim. 3), the word is able to make wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. There is another thing also. When a soul is quickened by the word, the moral effect is to make it dependent and obedient - "sanctified to obedience." Such is the character of the new man, as the old man would be independent.

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