

# Luke 9

by John Nelson Darby

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*The sermon explores the identity of Christ as the Son of Man and the call for believers to embrace self-denial and faith in following Him.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 16:24, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:22-23, Luke 9:26, Luke 9:28-29, Luke 9:51, Luke 9:57-62, John 12:25, Hebrews 2:5-8

**Topics:** "Identity of Christ", "Discipleship and Self-Denial"

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## Description

John Nelson Darby explores the profound themes in Luke 9, emphasizing the identity of Jesus as the Son of Man and the necessity of self-denial for His followers. He highlights the significance of the Transfiguration, where Jesus reveals His glory, and the call for disciples to take up their cross daily. Darby stresses the importance of faith in recognizing Christ's power and the need to prioritize spiritual over earthly ties, illustrating the rejection Jesus faced and the implications for those who follow Him. The sermon concludes with a call to embrace the cross and the heavenly calling, reminding believers of the eternal significance of their choices in light of Christ's sacrifice.

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## Transcript

After the Lord had given a picture, as it were, of all that was going on in chapter 8, He raises the question in chapter 9 as to who He was, and He tells His disciples some should see His glory; for the mount of transfiguration shews what the glory of the kingdom would be. Peter speaks of the power and coming, "when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory . . . when we were with him in the holy mount." But it is a closing testimony at that time, though the glory would come; and as a signal that it was, the disciples were to shake off the dust from their feet, when they were not received. It is interesting to mark all the circumstances which bring out the fact of its being the Lord Himself there, and a test to Israel. He worked miracles, and could confer on others the power, as we have seen. Now we find another thing - He is committing the power to several together, giving to those men, a number of them together, power and authority over the demons, and not only entrusting it to whom He pleases individually.

Three things we have noticed in connection with the testimony of the Son of man; 1, the testimony of God to Him; 2, the misery of man set aside by Him; and 3, demons cast out, so proving that it was really the Lord visiting this world in grace and power. There will be the display of power by-and-by; but He was bringing in, in His own person, the manifestation of that which will be then full and perfect, so being an earnest of the powers of the world to come, alluded to in Hebrews. This was not redemption, but the

exercise of power in dealing with the enmity of man against Himself, and they would not have Him in this way.

Verse 3, etc. He is sending out His disciples, and in so doing He disposes of all their circumstances. While He was with them, He supplied them with everything - they lacked nothing. The power of the Lord was there to take care of them, wherever they were. Afterwards, when He was going to leave them, He tells them to take a sword. They would have to shift for themselves, as it were: but while He was with them He was their shelter, etc. As in the demand for the ass to ride into Jerusalem, He proves His authority royal and divine altogether - "the Lord hath need of him." The disciples depart, preaching the gospel, and healing everywhere. Then comes the question of who He was: He would have the conscience awakened about Him. There are two things in man brought out by the question - curiosity is excited on the one hand, and perplexity and dismay on the other. Verses 7-9. He goes on, and wherever there is an ear to hear, He ministers to them according to the grace of the kingdom.

89 Verses 11,12. The disciples ask Him to send the multitude away. Let them go and get lodging. No, says the Lord, "give ye them to eat." He does not now say He would feed them, but He is committing to others the same power as He had Himself, and He would exercise their faith in what He could do by them. This applies to the church now. Faith uses the power that is in the Head. "Give ye them to eat." What He expected was for faith to exercise His divine power, that which they saw in Him. We should be so reckoning on the power in the Head. The Lord was trying their faith in Him, "Give ye them to eat." But no; they had no faith; they began to reckon on their resources - "We have no more but five loaves and two fishes." So it is with us. No faith! Memory is not faith. "He smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed. Can he give bread also? "He gave us water, but can He give us food? We know He has done that one thing, but can He do this other thing today? We want to count on the energy of the Lord's love, and expect Him to be interested for us. When He said, "Give ye them to eat," they should have expected He would give them the power. Jehovah was amongst them, exercising His own power; but we see in their answer the horrid principle of unbelief. Unbelief shuts out God, and limits itself to what it sees - "except we go and buy meat," etc. "He made them all sit down by fifties in a company. And they did eat and were filled." It was said in Psalm 132, "I will satisfy her poor with bread," and here He was doing it. This was said of their King, and He had chosen Zion; He had desired it for His habitation. He was here giving a sign that He was the One to accomplish this blessing, for He was feeding their poor with bread. He was not only sending out the power through His disciples, but Himself among them; not only as a man, a messenger, but as it is said in Hebrews, "the word began to be spoken by the Lord." He was the Apostle. There were others sent afterwards, but He Himself was there first as their Apostle. It is a solemn thing to think that the Lord has really visited this world! He has come and presented Himself first to His people Israel, but they would not have Him. It shews us what the world is we are in. God is now dealing with it in grace, though His Son has been rejected. "Twelve baskets of fragments." Just observe, in passing, that the number twelve is significant of power exercised in the way of government - twelve apostles, twelve gates to the city in Revelation.

90 Hitherto we have been looking at Christ presenting Himself among the people as Jehovah, the Messiah; we now see Him as the dependent man praying. He was Immanuel, God with us; Son of David; Son of man. He was to be all. Then the question is started among the disciples, who He was. Some said one thing, and some another; but Peter said, "the Christ of God." Upon this, He charges them to tell no man that thing. There was faith, however feeble, dictating this answer, and therefore there is no thinking about it. With perfect certainty, Peter says, "The Christ of God." So it always is with faith. When the Spirit

of God brings home the truth with power, there is no uncertainty about it. A man may not doubt whether Christ is the Son of God, or not; but the mind may work upon it, and think perhaps, I do not love Him enough to be saved? then there is uncertainty. But when the Spirit, with power, shews whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him; then I believe it, and I see that my sins and my iniquities He will "remember no more." It may set a man thinking about the consequences of a truth.

Verse 22. He now passes by the thing that has been already brought out, and He presents Himself to them as the Son of man, and He is going to suffer - to be crucified. They must therefore be content to take up their cross. A new thing was coming in; He was going to be rejected, and to be slain, and the third day rise again. It is no longer Messianic ground, but in another sphere altogether beyond this their hopes must lie. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily." "Daily" - this is the trial. A man might heroically do it once for all, and he would have plenty of people to honour him, and have books written about him; but it is terribly difficult to go on every day denying oneself, and no one knowing anything about it. It came to this that, if you spare the flesh in this life, you will lose your life in the next; and what if a man gain the whole world and lose his own soul; what should a man give in exchange for his soul? It is not a question of bringing life down to the flesh; but if you lose your life here, you will get it elsewhere-above and beyond this world: "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it." It is giving up the world for eternal life, or for eternal misery, that is the real question. "What is a man advantaged?" You must give it up; you cannot keep it.

91 There is the glory of the kingdom; there is the manifestation of glory coming. Those tastes and dispositions which are attracted by Jesus cannot find their portion here. "They declare plainly that they seek a country; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God," etc. "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me," etc., "of him shall the Son of man be ashamed," when He comes in the display of His own glory. (See Dan. 7:13.) One like to the Son of man came to the Ancient of days, etc., and there was given Him dominion, etc. Then He comes too in the glory of the Son of God - His Father's glory, and in the glory of the angels. The angels are waiting upon Him who created them, for they were created for Him as well as by Him, and thus give glory to Him as Son of man; giving Him His proper glory, for He has not lost a tittle of His glory; "Thou hast set him over the works of thy hands." "Let all the angels of God worship him." There was the same thing at Sinai. "The law was ordained by angels." "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels" (Psalm 68).

We are now finding the displayed glory in this triple character spoken of (v. 26?). It is that glory when He appears; and it is a question of His being ashamed of those who have been ashamed of Him; they could not deny themselves present advantage. I do not here allude to the Father's house, which of course has another character. Here it is the kingdom manifested in its glory to the earth.

92 Verse 28. "He went . . . to pray." This is not mentioned in the other Gospels. He was going to shew His disciples His glory, to give the declaration of His power and coming. From the other Gospels we find that, a week after this, He went up to Jerusalem where He was to be crucified. "The fashion of his countenance was changed." An entire change of things is here. He talks of His decease, which He should accomplish at Jerusalem, where He ought to have been crowned; but there He is going to be crucified. There, where this horn of David was to bud, shall this root of David be taken, and by wicked hands be crucified and slain. This is the deep centre of all the change.

"There talked two men with him, Moses and Elias." This we may look at in two ways; dispensationally, as representing the law and the prophets; and in this way Moses held a very peculiar place, for it was through

Him the law was given; Elijah had nearly as important a place also, for though the Jews were in a right position, they had failed in it, and he goes back to Horeb. The other prophets were never called to work miracles. Except the account of the dial of Ahaz, we hear of no miracle in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Habakkuk, etc. Those prophets, sent of God, gave proof that He was caring for Israel; but there was nothing like the calling back in Elijah, who stood as the maintainer of the law, when the people had departed from it most grossly, though all the prophets, even to Malachi, called back to law.

Moses and Elias were taken away, and Jesus is left alone. Law was gone, prophecy gone, and Christ is alone, and He was going to be crucified. All the fabric built up by law and prophets (not the testimony given by them, but law as given to man in the flesh) is broken up, because man ended by killing the Lord come in the flesh; therefore all is gone. Peter would have had the three established together, taken all alike, "Let us build three tabernacles," etc. But that moment Moses and Elias disappear, and the voice is heard, "This is my beloved Son, hear him." It is now the righteousness of God, without law, in Jesus. Law did not send Christ. What law could have been put upon God to do it? Nothing but divine love could have originated such a thought. "Grace reigns through righteousness." The law was good and perfect, but Christ was far beyond the law. Moses and Elias, therefore, were not to have any place with Him. God the Father put them aside, when Peter wishes to put them in connection. They disappear immediately. This is the important thing for us. Every word of law and prophets is the truth of God, but these were until John. Now the Son of God is the messenger of the Father's love, and the accomplisher of divine righteousness. When He is there, the voice says, "This is my beloved Son: hear him" - and He is left alone.

93 Mark, too, that they were occupied with His death, while talking with Him. One thing occupies the minds of heaven and earth. He was going to be crucified where He ought to have been King. Under such circumstances, there was nothing for heaven or earth to talk about but His death. And so for us, the great thing to talk about Messiah is, that He died. Though He could destroy all the evil that had come in, He must die - in grace of course. It must all end in death, because the carnal mind is not only under Satan's power, but enmity against God; therefore heaven has to speak.

Zion, the very place He had chosen, where He had been and is to be - the special place of God's favour, is to be the scene of His death. There they cast Him out of the world He came to save. The One in whom all human and divine righteousness and perfections were centred must die there. All man's nature, under the most advantageous circumstances: all man's wickedness, spite of the public and patient and varied ways of God in government, are brought out here.

Moses could deal with man as man; and bring water from the rock for them, in answer to their murmurings; the prophet the same, "Plead with me," "Put me in remembrance, let us plead together." But now, all this was gone. God had cultivated the vineyard - done all that could be done for it. There was yet one thing; His Son - the best of all. Him He sent, and they cast Him out and slew Him. And now the testimony concerning man is, that he has "killed the Prince of life," and "denied the Holy One and the Just." We never can have peace then, till we get pardon through Christ on the cross. Then we see a true picture of heaven: but all the intermediate dealings of testimony are entirely short of what we have in Christ on the cross, because short of the ground of what man actually is, which fully came out only when he "killed the Prince of life."

When the Lord's Messiahship was given up, we have seen He takes the place of translation from earth to heaven. He, being rejected, was no longer to be looked upon as the Head of Israel down here, but as the heavenly Christ; for He takes His place on high, when cast out by man, and this fact was to give a

character to the path of those who follow Him. The two things go together - rejection on earth and a heavenly place. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me," v. 23. The Lord shews them that this heavenly calling involves the cross down here, as it was with Christ Himself. The peculiar place given Him in heaven was, in God's counsels, dependent on the cross which He bore as the Man. "He humbled himself and became obedient unto death," etc.; "wherefore God hath highly exalted him," etc. It was through the cross that He went there: and, if we are to have a place in heaven, we must have it too. The cross was for the destruction of sin and for the destruction of self, in which sin dwells. We have the same place; therefore He says, "Let these sayings sink deep into your ears, for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men."

94 We want the heavenly calling to give power to take up the cross; and it is at the same time in proportion as we are dead to things down here, that the heavenly things are realised. When the blood was taken within the veil, the sacrifice was taken without the gate: so we are to go "without the camp, bearing his reproach"; and if we apprehend the value of the blood, and go within the veil, we get to the place of being where the burning outside the camp was; for while we are in spirit where His blood has been carried in, our bodies are where His body was burned. Judaism only put men between the two: for they did not go in within the veil, His blood not having been shed; and they never went without the camp; v. 18-22. He is going to take another place, and they are to follow Him in it; and then, in order to strengthen them for it, He shews them what the heavenly place was. "He took Peter, and James, and John, and went up into a mountain to pray," etc.; v. 28. The heavenly part of the kingdom is here represented by Christ, Moses, and Elias - the earthly part by the disciples (and there is one part in which the church on earth is alluded to as down here). Peter speaks of this scene as the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, etc. Christ Himself, in the position of the dependent man (praying), takes them up into a mountain. "Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep"; asleep in the presence of the glory, just as in Gethsemane, shewing what human nature is. There is no power in it, in suffering or glory, to fix the attention on Christ and His interest.

95 Moses and Elias were in the same glory (v. 30-32), and we are made the associates of Christ in the same glory (the glory of the kingdom in its broad character), not of course, the essential glory. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly," even of God's Son in glory. "We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him." "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory." The portion is not to be under Christ, but with Christ. "We shall appear with him in glory" - with Him in the same glory. We look for the Lord from heaven, "who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned," etc. We shall be with Him and like Him, and this we shall all alike share, though there will be different degrees of glory for one and another: for example, Paul's measure will not be mine. What we speak of now is all the same glory, and we are predestinated "to be conformed to the image of his Son." "The glory thou hast given me I have given them."

The next thing that we see is the perfect familiarity in this glory. They are talking with Him - not presenting a petition - not at His feet (though this is our blessed place too); but this part of the scene represents communion, familiarity of intercourse, the same as that of the disciples on earth, though better of course. On the holy mount they had a higher understanding about it, but it was the same subject occupied them. This shews us the kind of intercourse we have with Jesus now, for we belong to the heavenly part of the kingdom.

A third point to mark is the subject they talked of. This is quite a new thing, for He ought to have been a king. But man was a sinner, and there was the determinate counsel of God to be fulfilled - redemption.

Jerusalem was the place of royalty, and His decease was to be accomplished there, where He ought to have been acknowledged king. There was full intimacy on the theme which occupied His heart, for they talked on this, His decease. Then He told His disciples afterwards the consequences of it to them. They must deny themselves. "Let these sayings sink down into your ears. The great subject on God's heart should be that for us.

96 Another thing is, it is the glory which enables us to talk on this subject. We cannot talk of it until we have peace with God through the knowledge of forgiven sin. When a man has not this, he has to come in his need and get it: but when he is in it, he can contemplate and enjoy it. Besides this, God saw all that was passing in Christ's soul as to obedience unto death, etc. We shall never cease having interest in this subject: when with the Father in the glory, it will be the absorbing theme. He said Himself, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life." How much more shall we not love Him for the same cause? Think what it must have been to be occupied with Christ about His decease! What His knowledge was, of what He was going to do! He knew what man was, what the counsel of God was. He came to "reconcile all things to himself." It was so effectually done that the eye of God could only see the effect of that blood in what was washed away. The rejected Christ a Saviour! and this the subject of intercourse with Christ Himself! "They spake of his decease." Peter says, "Master, it is good for us to be here," etc. Then immediately there was a voice from the cloud: "This is my beloved Son; hear him." The effect on Peter's mind is a wish to put Moses and Elias on a level with Christ.

We have spoken of this, viewing it dispensationally, law and prophecy mixed with Him; but there is another thing to be noticed in it; namely, that which characterised the Son was peculiar. Nothing could be put on a level with Him. There necessarily comes out, therefore, the Father's testimony to the Son. "This is my beloved Son," etc. When a saint knows Jesus, though he also knows he will be like Him hereafter, and that all the saints will be like Him too, yet Christ has the supremacy in his heart. He is single and alone in blessedness, having supremacy in the heart, as well as being the object of faith. I delight in the saints, but Christ is the alone object of faith. Then I get into this fellowship with the Father. I have the Father's thoughts about the Son, as well as the Son's thoughts about the work. I have fellowship with the Father and the Son. We cannot have communion with the Father about redemption work because He has not been made a man. Notice, the Father does not say, This is the Son whom you ought to adore and admire, but He tells us His own thoughts about Him. "This is my beloved Son." Wherefore "beloved!" "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life"; thus I know that I have one thought with the Father, in delighting in the Son and in His death. The Father communicates His own thoughts about the Son, and by the power of the Holy Ghost they are put into my heart, and I have fellowship; and as a consequence I know that he that hath everlasting life shall never come into judgment.

97 Mark, further, how they came into the excellent glory. There came a cloud and overshadowed them. The cloud is the Shechinah, the dwelling-place of God, which the people had to guide them through the wilderness, and they were to stay or move according to it. It was the divine presence, and "they feared as they entered into the cloud." They were not protected by the cloud, as Israel were, and as they will be by-and-by. "Upon all the glory shall be a defence"; but here they enter into the cloud. The fact was, coming into the cloud was coming into the presence of the Father now, a dwelling-place for us. It was thence the Father's voice was heard. "This is my beloved Son," etc. Thence they were told who this Son was. He had been with them as one of them. He was the Father's beloved Son, in a place worthy of adoration, but the companion of their hearts. He brought them to the Father, the only place into which redemption brings us (as to our relationship). Until a man knows redemption and is brought into His presence, he can never

know the Father's love: but when there, he can never know the end of it. It is the kind of love the prodigal never knew till he was in his father's arms. He had doubts and fears as he went on, and thoughts about the hired servants, but none when he was in his father's house. It is known only by the teaching of the Holy Ghost in us - in the cloud - God in us. It is in the presence of the glory, realised by faith now, we know the power of redemption; and by its brightness and its truth, it blots out all other relationship.

Notice who are learning this glory. Saints walking on the earth - Peter, James, and John; and so with us. The truths written in this book are not for us to know in heaven. Is the Father's love not to be known till we are in heaven? Is redemption only to be known there? Was God less intimate with those on earth than with those in heaven? Not at all. It was to Peter, James, and John this was communicated, not to Moses and Elias. The Father's voice was to men on earth. We learn the rejection of man here and the grace which has brought us to share in the glory.

98 In what follows we find the Lord coming down into the crowd of this world, not remaining on the mount. We may listen and enjoy, but we have to come down and pass through this world. The Lord comes down and meets three things - a throng of men, Satan's power, and the disciples' unbelief. There was no seclusion here for Him, but He comes to a crowd. What a picture of distress this is! The son of one, possessed with a devil (v. 39); and the father's heart racked more than the son's body. The world will weep till they are tired of weeping, and then go on with the same-thing again.

We have seen before how the Lord was come in the display of His power and bound the strong man. The disciples could not do it. The power of Satan remains the same unto this day. He is not literally cast out, but remains the "prince of this world," the character he has gained, not lost, by Christianity. He will be bound; his power will be overthrown as a fact, and not to faith only. The question was to be settled about Satan's right, and what did the Lord say of him?

"Now is the judgment of this world" - "Now is the prince of this world cast out." His tide is "cast out," but Christ has not yet exerted this power. Therefore in the epistles we find him spoken of as still ruling in this world. In Ephesians he is called, "the prince of the power of the air," "the spirit that now worketh," etc. Then we hear of the "rulers of the darkness of this world." When "the powers of the world to come" are in their full display, Satan will be cast out entirely; but these instances and more shew he was here then as he is still. "How long shall I be with you," etc.; v. 41. It was not because Satan was here that Christ said this, but because the disciples could not use the power He had brought in; and that closed the dispensation. So it will be in this. The power and goodness of God brought Christ into the world, but the incapacity of man to believe, so as to use that power, will close it. So we read in Romans 11, "Toward thee [the professing body now], goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off"; but until His grace ceases, there is refuge for us to go to Him. While He was here, the moment the father of the child sought to Him, He cast out the spirit. As long as Christ's grace is at work, if there is only one saint on the earth and everything else failed around, he would find the power of Christ ready to be exercised on his behalf. There can be no failing in meeting the need of a soul, because as there is Christ to go to, there is help in Him. However dark the dispensation may be, there is exactly the grace that is needed for the position. Not that God would have our eyes blinded to the darkness around, for if we do not take heed to the ruinous state, conscience is not in its right place. If I am ready to say, Why should He not stay? when He says, How long shall I be with you? I am insensible to the state of things around me, and I am not awake to the response that Christ's love to the church demands; but, on the other hand, if I am not able to look up and count on the grace of Christ to meet that state, however bad it may be, I am powerless.

99 Verse 43. "They were amazed at the mighty power of God." It is very humbling to see how amazed they were about this power. They did not wonder at the power of the evil. But they ought so to have counted on His power as to have been amazed if the power were not exerted. Christ brings them back to the cross. "Let these sayings sink down into your ears, for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men" (v. 44). You ought to have been able to get this power; but you must now know not only the power of Christ, but the cross of the rejected One. "Rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." We have more to be rejoiced at in this than if a miracle were to be performed to-morrow. It is more blessed to know the cross. It was as though He had said, "I had rather you should come now to own the rejected One than be looking for this power even." Beloved friends, you are not thinking of what God is doing at this present time, if you do not see that now it is not power on the earth, but rejection.

Verse 46. "There arose a reasoning which should be the greatest." What a tale this tells! What a selfishness runs trough and through! Even at the Lord's supper it was the same thing. In Luke we find it, where there is so much of what man is brought out.

We see then, from what we have been tracing, that we need to come down from the hill; not to be without Jesus, but to learn what man is. It is not necessary to come down from the mount, as some people say, lest we should be puffed up there; for we shall never be puffed up while on the mount. Like Peter we may be afraid, but we are never puffed up in the presence of God. It is when we quit it that we are in danger. Paul was not exalted above measure when in the third heaven; but after he came down, he needed the thorn in the flesh to prevent it.

100 Besides, there is an historical necessity for us to get through this world. But Jesus was as much with His disciples when they came down as while they were on the mount, and that is our comfort. Do not let us suppose we have lost Christ. We have to serve Him, walk with Him, learn from Him, and mark His patient grace towards us in and through all circumstances. The Lord give us to know, while passing through this world, what a Christ we have, taking our hearts clean out of the defiling circumstances around, so that, whether we get a taste of the glory, or are passing through the crowd of this world, He may be everything to us, as He is everything for us.

Verse 46, etc. The Lord is now shewing His disciples the place they are to take upon earth. They are not to be in a position connected with Him as Messiah in earthly glory - heavenly glory they could not have till the end. In the meantime they have to take their place with Him in rejection, and this put them to the test, for they were to give up things right enough in themselves, for example, to hate father, mother, wife, etc., all which earthly relationships had a claim upon them, and especially so upon the Jew. "Honour thy father and mother," etc. But all these relationships would not stand in association with the cross. Everything must be sacrificed, everything that linked man with the earth must be snapped asunder to faith, when Christ was rejected.

The character of the world was fully manifested in His rejection: its deeds were evil and it rejected the light. The incarnation, which should have been the link to man's blessing, is rejected. He accomplishes redemption by His rejection on earth, and He has a place in heaven. This alters the character of everything. It brings in the judging of self. There never would have been this if Christ had been crowned on earth. He was "delivered into the hands of men," etc. He whose very name carried power and authority is to be delivered up. If Christ had had His place on earth, the heart of man would never have been put to the test. Why? Because, if men had seen all the dignity and glory displayed on earth which was His right, it

would have gratified their flesh with its greatness. But flesh cannot inherit heaven, and what place has it on the cross? There they go together so blessedly - the cross and heaven; and for the flesh there is no place in either. There was a terrible breach between man and God, and the One who would have healed it they crucified. Then every carnal thought that was in accordance with such an act must be judged.

101 The disciples were disputing who should be the greatest - not the greatest in the world, but the greatest in the glory. It is self after all. They have not to tell Him much, but their thoughts are judged. When in the light, everything is judged. Jacob had the word from God to go to Bethel (Gen. 35), and he immediately says to his household, "Put away the strange gods that are among you." And why so? Everything is detected when getting into the presence of God. Jacob could get the blessing before he went to Bethel; but when he goes into God's presence, the idols are judged. When he has got rid of the idols, it is "El-bethel," the God of Bethel. The disciples were reasoning which should be the greatest, and when He detected their thoughts He "took a child and set him by him," etc. This shews us our place: we ought to seek the lowest place. We never can have it, because Christ has taken it. He went down under sin, wrath, death. He took the lowest place, because the servant of all. This is the truly happy place for us, but how it judges self! This is what the cross does. Not only are the idols judged, but self is judged.

It is a blessed thing to have done with self. When there is room for God, we can be full of joy and happiness. We are not humble, even when we are occupied with our own nothingness, or how bad we are; but we are humble when we do not think of ourselves at all. When we have to learn our nothingness and badness, that is being humbled. If we get away from the Lord, we have to be brought back, and that is a humbling process. We want to judge the flesh in ourselves. It is pretty easy to judge it in another, but it is in ourselves we miss it (v. 50). Things are brought to a crisis. "He that is not against us is for us."

102 Mark how conscious the Lord was of His utter rejection by man; so utter that He said, he that is not against us is proved to be for us. Christ was perfect; therefore He was a perfect test to men's consciences; and, as far as He is manifested in us, we shall be so also. Paul could say, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." Why could he say so? Because it went out from him as pure as it went in. John said, "We forbid him, because he followeth not with us." That tells the whole tale. They were thinking of themselves, not of Christ; of their own importance, and not His honour. If it had been His importance, they would have thought how blessed it was to find the effect of His name, and rejoiced to know how His power was being exercised by man. But no; they were looking at themselves as well as at the Messiah. Even John was thus using Christ Himself to further his own importance. And is there not something in us of the same thing, a satisfaction at that which aggrandises self as well as Christ, instead of seeking the honour of Christ alone? The Lord takes him up and answers him on the ground of His utter rejection, which was coming. "He that is not against us is for us." And mark that the very selfishness of John brings out the grace of Christ. He says "us." You do not know the lot you have with Me. If you find one who can use the power of My name, rejoice in it.

Verse 51. "It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." I am going to get a portion in heaven, and you are to have the same portion, but it must be through rejection here. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily," etc. "When the time was come that he should be received up, he set his face stedfastly to go to Jerusalem." In Isaiah, "I set my face as a flint." He was accomplishing His Father's will here, as in all His course. Redemption must be accomplished through the cross. He "learned obedience by the things which he suffered." It was the same obedience as at the beginning, when He was coming amongst them with "Blessed are the poor," etc. - more painful, and of course, He felt the difference; but still He goes in the same blessed spirit and earnestness. Are there not

twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, etc. He had found it His meat to do the will of Him that sent Him. There was joy to Him in this; but in the cup of wrath which He was going to drink there was no joy. He had met with scorn here, smiting there, rejection all through, but nothing like this cup, and therefore He cried, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me," etc. Christ proved His perfectness, for He felt what it was to be "made sin," etc. His holy nature shrank from it, yet there was the same quiet, steady, patient obedience, for "He stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem," as all through. He knows His Father's will and He does it. He sets His face there, where His Father's will is to be done, not looking to this side or to that, but there - Jerusalem.

103 We, according to the measure we have of the single eye, shall be following in the same course, going to the cross steadily, with one purpose: and, in proportion as we do so, will those who do not so set their face oppose us. But the Lord says, "If any man serve me, let him follow me." Service is not doing a great deal, but following the Master, and the world and half-hearted Christians do not like that. There is plenty of doing in the world, but "if any man serve me, let him follow me." Paul wanted to serve every way, but we find the Spirit forbidding him to go into Bithynia or Troas, and yet two years afterwards we read that "all Asia heard the word." God's work was to be done, but it was to be in His time and of His ordering. His servant had only to follow in obedience. It was the same with Moses. Nature would say of him, Why not stay in Pharaoh's court that the people there may be converted, instead of leaving it? Flesh cannot understand what faith leads to. Afterwards he goes out in all the earnestness of his spirit, natural energy comes in, but then there is no deliverance. Moses has to go and keep sheep, for forty years, to be broken down, and made nothing of, and what were Israel to do all that time? To wait. Then when he comes back to serve them, how is it done? There is the flesh appearing in another way. "Lord, I am not eloquent." Then Aaron is sent back with him, and the work is done in the power of God.

Verse 52. "They went and entered into a village of the Samaritans," etc. (v. 53). We see the reason why they did not receive Him was because His face was set towards Jerusalem. His obedience and singleness of eye, going to do God's will without honour or attractiveness or repute, going to Jerusalem, is the very reason they would have nothing to do with Him (v. 54). See the religious opposition of the disciples to them. The Samaritans would not submit to God's way: Christ did. That is the difference; and the disciples want to command fire to come out of heaven as Elias did, and at the very place where Elias worked the miracle. In fleshly reasoning they think Christ was as worthy as Elias to call down fire. This is a more subtle kind of self than the other. It seemed like direct zeal for Christ, but they did not understand the zeal of Christ. He was not come for judgment nor to destroy men's lives, but to suffer Himself for them. If they had known God's thoughts, they would have submitted quietly. Peter again understood not the Lord's mind when he drew his sword and smote the servant of the high priest. All the miracles of Elias were characterised by the spirit of judgment, not like Elisha who had his commission from heaven. Elijah stood in the place of judgment and righteousness, like John the Baptist who came in the spirit and power of Elias, saying, "Every tree that bringeth not forth fruit shall be hewn down," etc., and "the axe is laid to the root of the trees." Elisha had life-giving power, on the contrary, and was a type of grace. Elijah passed through Jordan (death in type), while Elisha starts from the other side of Jordan in resurrection.

104 Verse 56. He turned round and went to another village. It is not pleasant to be trodden upon in this world, but Christ was. To do well, suffer for it, and take it patiently, is what we have; and is it to end there? Yes, and that is "acceptable with God." Christ came to suffer, to bear anything for the sake of others; and He would not have been doing this, if He had called down fire from heaven upon the Samaritans. We have to follow Christ in carrying the testimony of God's love into the world in all our walk through it. The world

needs it. We must not be seeking for ourselves, but have Christ the object. At the end of the chapter He goes on to shew how the links with this world are to be broken.

Verses 57, 58. One says, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," but Christ puts him to the test. You cannot go if you do not take up your lot with One who had not where to lay His head; for you may sooner go to the birds of the air for a nest, or to the foxes for a hole, than to the Son of man for a home in this world. They were not now to come to Him as the One who had the promises, etc., but to One whose portion was utter and entire rejection. Following Him could not be accompanied with ease and comfort here. He was to be delivered into the hands of men. At His birth we see the same thing. Every one found room in the inn save He, but any who wanted to find Him whom angels celebrate must go to the manger!

105 Verse 59. He says to one, "Follow me." The first one wanted something with Christ; but here where He says, "Follow me," then immediately a difficulty is started; and it is when He calls a man that difficulties are felt. There was no sense of the difficulties of the one who said, "Lord, I will follow thee," without His call. But this man who is called says, "Let me first go and bury my father." He is going presently, but there is a link felt. Jesus says, "Let the dead bury their dead"; you must leave them to follow Me. You may be ready to say, the things of the earth have no power over you; but just try what it is to have them, and you will learn the extent of their power. A man may go to the length of his cord, but when he gets to the end he is checked. A father had the first claim in nature, and especially to a Jew, but Christ says, I am calling you out in the power of life; I am putting in My claim for the life I give you, and it breaks every bond here. It is a question of life in the midst of death. The word "first" (let me first go and bury my father) shews something put before Christ, as though the man said, There is something I put before Your calling. Death had come in, and this very plea told Christ they were all under death. It was quite a right thing for the man to bury his father; but if life has come in, and the question is one of redemption, to be lost or saved, you must give yourself up to it. In the divine light which is in the cross, He saw all dead, and therefore He said, "Let the dead bury their dead." The one thing to be done now is to follow Christ. The question is, Death in the world or life in Christ? Where are the affections?

Verse 61. "Another also said, Lord, I will follow thee, but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house." In the previous case it was just this: When my first affections are settled, then will I come and follow Thee. There is no good in that: the Lord says, "Let the dead bury their dead." But this case shews that those at home were not left in heart. He felt he had to break with them, and yet his heart lingered. "No man looking back is fit for the kingdom of God." "Remember Lot's wife." "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." If Christ be not first and last, He will always be last, for faith is not in exercise. The question is, whether we are walking as seeing what the cross tells us. The cross lifts the veil, shewing the skeleton of the world, and when I see this sentence on all that is in the world, on self. as well as what is outside, and our links of affection with it, I learn that all is to be given up: but there is Christ Himself and the love which is in Him to meet it. It will and must judge self: and it brings out the will too, for there is a great deal of will in all this shunning of the cross. People may speak of the claims of affection, yet it is not really and only family affection, etc., but the end which connects with self is felt. Natural affection there should be - indeed it is one of the signs of the last evil days to be without it; but if you have power to judge yourselves, you will find that many an excuse you make has this secret at the end. So in affliction, bereavement, etc., it is not only the affection that is touched, but the will. There is sweetness in the sorrow, so long as we realise Christ in it, and affection only is sorrowing. But if the will is touched, there is rebellion, resistance, struggling; and all this the Lord must judge, for a mass of flesh and self can never follow Christ. What a wonderful detail all this is! It is God going through our hearts entering into every

corner and crevice. Why? Because of the constant undeviating steadfastness of His love; and as a father loves his child when it is naughty, as well as when it is good, so our God takes pains, as it were, with us all, even when so bad.

106 The effect of all is not only to make us practically righteous, but happy - "imitators of God as dear children." It is well, on the one hand, for us to judge ourselves and see what there is to detect in us, and, on the other, to see the fulness of His grace in Christ.

May the Lord give us to feel more and more that "the friendship of the world is enmity with God," and that the energy of the flesh cannot accomplish the work of God, so that we may learn to work from God, for God, and with God.

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