

Notes of the Meeting of Brethren at Guelph, Ontario

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living in the light of God's love and holiness, and the consequences of rejecting that love.

Scripture: John 3:36, John 15:5, John 16:3, John 17:19, Romans 5:6, 2 Corinthians 5:21, James 4:8, 1 John 2:6, 1 John 3:4, 1 John 3:7-9

Topics: "Holiness", "Expectation of Christ's Return"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the profound contrast between God's holiness and human sinfulness, illustrating that true understanding of God's love comes through accepting Christ. He explains that while the world may reject believers, it is through trials and tribulations that Christians are refined and made vessels for God's use. Darby stresses the importance of living a life that reflects Christ's purity and holiness, urging believers to remain in constant expectation of His return. He warns against superficial faith and highlights the necessity of genuine belief in Christ for salvation. Ultimately, he calls for a deeper communion with God, which leads to a life of holiness and love towards others.

Transcript

1 John 3:4

Everyone that practices sin practices lawlessness. The gold of the gospel is in the Epistle of John; the germ of truth is there for it sets forth in such blessed, rich fullness God's standard of holiness and the working it out in detailed power, giving us to know the precious from the vile, and grace and wisdom to separate it and then you get a clean vessel meet for the Master's use, being filled with all the fullness of the knowledge of God - as a vessel hollowed out and as the gold of the sanctuary, sanctified unto every good word and work.

Where man in his sinful state has done his worst, God shines out most in all the resplendent characters of His perfect holiness. The world with all its wisdom and moral boasting power of doing good, pressed Christ out and murdered Him, and it will put the believer outside too, if he will walk with that blessed One as He walked. It is only they who will live godly in Christ Jesus that have the promise of suffering persecution and reproach for Christ.

There is nothing that tends to keep the soul of a saint in such a healthy condition as he ought to be in order to manifest Christ, but trouble of some kind or other. It is the sphere alone in which he can be kept happy, therefore Paul says, "I take pleasure in necessities, in infirmities, tribulations," etc. "These things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father nor Me" (John 16:3). They also took up stones to cast at Him but He went through the midst of them and so passed by.

Beloved brethren, can you and I so walk before Him and in the power of that new nature even as He walked? The hating of the Son of God is bearing upon the fact (not man's morality) of the contrast of God's holiness. See what manner of love is from God in His Son and towards the sinner - not in him until he has received Christ Jesus the Lord.

210 God so loved the world - not loves the world - that He gave His Son. The holiness and righteousness of God in this present dispensation calls for condemnation upon the sinner out of Christ now - and the only remedy for the sinner that God has provided is not the receiving of the love of God, but receiving Christ alone, and as soon as he does that he receives the love of God and can say, "We love Him because He first loved us." Hence it is very unscriptural to say, God bore your sins away on His Son, because they, the unconverted, have not believed but as soon as they have believed that Jesus is the Christ, then it is true of them. The children out of communion have had their sins put away, but sins are still imputed on account of their ungodly walk. See 2 Cor. 5:21, "He hath made Him to be sin for us" so consequently we have the standing of the righteousness of God, and God's claim upon us is that we should walk according to the measure and state of that condition in which God has placed us. So God has only wrath for the unconverted, the correlative (or opposite) of love is wrath. (See John 3:36.)

A divine righteousness and divine love has been shown towards this world and now divine wrath is about to be poured out on all those who are rejecters of God's righteousness. God could not possibly give any greater proof of His love than putting the sinner's sins on His own dear Son in whom was all His delight (or, were all His delights). The very nature of God is love, not derived from any other source, as we get it, but He Himself is the Author of it. 1 Corinthians and Ephesians 1 are the attributes of God having their reflection on the saint towards those in fellowship.

But, on the other hand, how can I in the light of God's presence tell poor hardened unconverted sinners that God's love is on them (not towards them) when I know that God's wrath is hanging over their heads pending its execution. If he will not believe and accept God's remedy for sin, there is nothing left him but eternal banishment into hell. The eternal wrath of God is as true and scriptural doctrine as eternal salvation. Romans 5:6 is a broad, general statement. It is the blessed aspect of Christ presented to God in sacrifice for the world while dead in trespasses and sins. The commending of God's love in the gift of His Son does not keep the soul of a sinner from a sense of his condemnation in rejecting Christ, but enhances the reality of the inevitable consequence if he does so, showing him God's way of deliverance - the only door. Every blasphemer on earth is an object of God's goodness, but not a recipient of His grace. In 2 Corinthians 5 we get Christ's work complete, but man's responsibility brought out. Also, v. 19, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." Superficial belief is of no use. Evangelists are very apt to accept this sort of faith, but it is only the deep-rooted seed that God accepts, and that which brings forth fruit. Mr. Stanley was once, as he thought, very much encouraged, but he found they turned out stony ground hearers. He discovered too that Calvinistic preaching would not do.

211 It is a pure gospel that must be preached with the whosoever will receive it. Paul says, "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Romans 13:11). Yet the salvation of the believer is totally whole

- standing and state - complete in Christ, yet he is told to go on with it all the time (1 John 2:6). Propitiation for our sins, but for the world, it is not sins, but sin (2 Cor. 5:14, 15). Personal substitution is a responsibility of each individual; a broad aspect towards all, but only upon all them that believe. Atonement and substitution is God's positive satisfaction. Righteousness is met in Leviticus 16 in the Lord's lot and the people's lot. The Lord's lot is the blood being taken inside the veil. The people's lot is the sin confessed on the scape goat; the one was killed, the other taken away in the wilderness. What a beautiful type of the gospel of God.

212 There was a poor blind man in Liverpool who was sitting by the wayside reading his raised-letter Bible. When he came upon that verse in John 3, "God so loved the world," etc., he stopped at the word "whosoever." When a little boy was passing, he called him and said, "Little boy, can you tell me who whosoever is?" "Why yes, to be sure I can," he said; "it means you and me and everybody else."

"Well," said the dear old man, "if it's for me, I believe it," and that moment he received peace with God.

Faith does not belong to sinners in the aggregate because of their unbelief. Thus God manifests Himself. In contrast with what man is, He shows forth His righteousness and His holiness, and then, grace, mercy and peace towards poor fallen man, in the gift of His Son. All is presented to man and he is held responsible for receiving or rejecting it. Christ fulfilled the law and has shown what man ought to have been. Man could not be justified by the law; it merely shows how far he was from God. In Israel the lamb was kept up until the fourteenth day, but God's spotless Lamb - expression of God's divine righteousness - is what God has revealed in Himself, a co-operative and coequal working of God and His Son apart from all man's knowledge.

Wednesday afternoon: 1 John 3.

Judaism had this particular feature; it could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience. It was not that perfect work of Christ, but it was a type of it which gave the conscience rest for the time being; there was, in short, uncertainty, but the technical term here in John is "We know," being manifested wherever it appears with that blessed hope constantly before us, that, "When He shall appear we shall be like Him." It is not enough for us to be like Him yesterday or a week or three years or any time, but always with unbroken, undimmed delight, enjoying the assurance of His return; yea, longing to behold Him, and yet going on carefully, prayerfully, and patiently, until it is His good time and pleasure to call us out of this scene where He Himself has trod before us. It has been and is the constant stimulating hope of every saint in communion with Him that He is to come, and that ought to be enough for us under all the varied circumstances through which He has called His own dear blood-bought ones to pass. Like Stephen, when we are the nearest to the Lord, the more His divine image and His glory shine into our hearts and shine upon our faces morally, the more we shall be like Him now.

213 Brother Stoney said to Dr. Wolston, "You may think it is a very little thing to look at Christ in glory, but let you or any saint try it, and he is sure, unconsciously, to be growing more and more like Him." Peter and Paul talk about the grave and death, but John in his epistle never speaks of death. The Lord had said of him, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me." What a sad thing it is to hear of the saints talking as they are on the way to the Lord's table, as if they were fully sure they were coming away again, whereas God has given us not a vestige of room to expect that such will really be the case. If such a thought is on the mind of any of God's children they are not in the full, unhindered enjoyment of the place of blessing, and guidance of the Holy Ghost.

The gathering of the Lord's saints to meet Him at His table should always be with the blessed thought accompanying that He will come, and so never speak certainly of returning from that spot. Instead of feasting with Him in unshackled blessing, we seem to be keeping our difficulties, sorrows and trials hanging on us like heavy death palls while we should be free from every thought and be in the full liberty which His blessed presence demands of us. He Himself bids us to have His own joy, that He may have our joy.

214 Here is another thought too, worth the consideration of every poor failing child of God - which we all are such more or less - that more than half the sorrows of man are made up of anticipated sorrow that never comes at all. The joy of the Lord is our strength. The hope of His speedily coming, keeps me looking upward and onward, and if He should tarry, I still find He is holding fast to His own promised word. I have His joy and hope which fills my heart with gladness that He has ratified His own word to me thus far and told me by His Spirit that "All things are yours," and He bids us unitedly by the Holy Ghost to comfort one another with these words. The proper, normal Christian's sphere is to be abounding in hope.

Brother Cecil asks, "How do you purify yourself?" By just remaining constantly in the light of His blessed presence who has eyes as a flame of fire, and His feet as fine brass, so that my every thought, word and deed is measured by the standard of Himself, and His claims of holiness. As an illustration, the husband asks the wife when he leaves in the morning to get something done by the wife before he returns. Would then a wife who really knew the desire of her husband wait till nearly evening before that thing was carried out? I need not answer; every sincere, affectionate wife would disdain such a thought. She seizes the first opportunity of putting everything exactly according to her husband's wish so that, come when he will, she may not feel the smart of a glance of his eye. Now for the comparison: have you and I got everything in our spiritual testimony ready for the Lord's return? So, practical holy walk in any child cannot be maintained except there is the constant expectation of His return, and what is so indicative of the Lord's being near at hand as the present outside and inside testimony that professional Christendom is now giving - quarrelling and drinking is the picture of Cain's religion of the world.

215 Mary at the grave on that notable morning of the resurrection, and John in his epistle to the saints have the conscious closeness of the Lord's presence, that they do not even name Him, Christ of God, but it is He and He alone, as if there was nobody else to speak of. "When He shall appear, we shall be like Him." In John 17:19 how precious to find He sanctifies Himself for our sakes that we might be sanctified through the truth - set apart for God. What a wonderful thought! How our souls should pause and in solemn, silent meditation in His presence ask ourselves how much we each individually for ourselves understand and realize this wondrous fact. In James 4:8 it was needful to warn, for the spiritual condition of the saints had become so corrupted: "Purify your hearts, ye double minded." It is the moral power of purifying my soul in His presence for His glory; for God's standard of holiness is the state and measure in which Christ is, in all His perfect purity in glory. He never knew anything else but companionship with God, except when sin was imputed to Him on the cross which is not necessary to say. It was His voluntary act to bring guilty man's case in God's presence and settle it by laying down His own life's blood; but in the believer's walk, God sets forth a glorified Christ as His standard of purity and we - every believer - are to purify ourselves even as He is pure. A wonderful thought - a man on earth and a Man in glory, even Christ Jesus; to know ourselves united! And the proof of my knowing myself united with Him is effective of producing holiness.

How then can a saved sinner take up the law as his rule of life? Sin is lawlessness; it is a violation of God's will, which, if I deny or sin against, proves at once that the fact that I am crucified with Christ has not had

its proper place in my soul; and more, a creature has no right to a will. The Creator alone has an unlimited, indisputable right to a will. Man was pronounced dead on the cross in the Person of Christ, and it is true because He was there, though perfectly sinless, yet was my substitute and God has declared that man is dead as to his nature, dead as to practice and dead as to avoiding results. Nothing but the grace of God in providing the blessed Lord Jesus could meet his case. Whether under law or without law (Rom. 2) - no law or lawlessness - it makes no difference as to what man is as he stands before God. Consequently, no man will be in hell without a conscience; for the cross and He who hung upon it has been the evidence to God and to man as to his real enmity toward God Himself. So the Lord could truly say: "hated Me and My Father." John 5 is again a blessed testimony. He (Christ) was manifested to take away our sin, and in Him was no sin.

216 How often does one meet with some who would try to maintain the idea that Christ could be tempted, but reasoning upon the same ground as the theologians, it infers He must have been the same as Adam. But there was no sin stained scene when Adam fell; and Adam stood in innocence. But the Lord Jesus came right into the midst of evil and banished it on every hand; the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the gospel preached, and more - "blessed is he whosoever is not offended in Me." And He alone could say too, "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me." The second Man stands in the midst of ruin, untouched; and that is where we are if we are abiding in Him. Man cannot bring a clean thing out of unclean thing; but God can, for He by the Angel, said to the virgin, "That Holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). Christ had not a mortal body; but He had a human body! What sorrow and difficulty often comes in through entertaining a wrong conception of the incarnation of Jesus as the Son of God, taking human nature (1 John 3:6). The devil is a liar from the beginning. But the practical walk of the believer - abideth in Him, sinneth not - is quite another thing. His seed (Christ's) remaineth in him, for it is based on what Christ is and in unbroken communion with Him, is never anticipated by God the Father, Son or Holy Ghost to lose a sense of what Christ has been and is to him.

217 In John 15 the vine is a figure of the good effects of abiding in Christ. My mind, heart and body should be perfectly under His control, the Holy Ghost directing that new nature to which everything should be subordinate, for He, Christ, is my life. "Sinneth not" is the negative side. The fruit bearing in John 15 is a positive thing - the fruit of the fact that eternal life is in me now, down here. It has nothing at all to do with the Church; it is individual responsibility. How could God admit sin when He gave His Son to put it away? Can He then in the smallest degree allow it in me? Salvation is one thing; holiness is another. A man may have salvation and not have holiness. The Lord has provided it for him and offers it to him. 1 John 3:7. "Let no man deceive you." Verse 9. "His seed remaineth in him." What is it that manifests the claims of their nature? Their behaviour. Abel proved his claim by offering a lamb; Cain his estimate in a broad abstract by offering (not life, but) death, his own righteousness, so that on either side, the walking or doing gives evidence of the standing, and sadly true it is that calling each other "Brother" now has been terribly misapplied and misunderstood. Verse 14 accepts exclusively brethren in Christ. The character of Cain in unrighteousness and self-will - just the character of the world now, in this present day of professing Christendom, which will enable a person to get on best in this world - is the one that will get the most patronized. Romans 7 is the walking of a bad nature, but this is the devil forcing into effect that nature which is corrupt and condemned of God. "No flesh can glory in His presence." The greatest opponent to Christ was a Jew under all his privileges, not Cain. Gentile power was taken up in the time of Nebuchadnezzar, and has been allowed more or less by God in His sovereignty to hold the government of the world since.

218 Verse 16. We can only know and show love according to the measure by which we know Him, instead of taking the lives of God's children, as the Roman Catholics and Protestants did some time back because of what they did not believe in or did not know about the Church. The Word of God is that we should lay down our lives for the brethren. There is no negative work, but positive good, or positive evil must necessarily be the inevitable development of the believer, or of the infidel or professor. Let us then be more in His blessed presence within the veil that the light of His presence may have such a divine effect upon our souls, learning alone of Him what was that love of Him who laid down His life for us, and gaze into that blessed One's face while going out in His service, that He Himself may so absorb our souls, so that no other object may take our attention. He and His glory are indeed worth all our love, and His Person alone is worth gazing upon. May our good Lord thus keep us and bless us for His precious name's sake.

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