

Obedience and Manifestation

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon emphasizes the importance of obedience and fellowship with God, and how Christ's presence can manifest Himself in our lives.

Scripture: John 14:15-27, Romans 8:1, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Philippians 3:8, Hebrews 4:16, 1 John 1:3, 1 John 2:1, 1 John 4:19

Topics: "Communion with God", "Obedience"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the significance of obedience in our relationship with God, illustrating that while we are assured of our position in Christ, our experience of His love and manifestation is conditional upon our love and obedience to Him. He explains that true peace comes from abiding in Christ and that our walk with Him is crucial for enjoying His presence and the blessings of communion. Darby warns against the distractions of the world that can hinder our relationship with God and encourages believers to maintain a close fellowship with the Father and the Son, which is essential for spiritual growth and joy. He reminds us that our actions and thoughts should reflect our love for Christ, as this is how we manifest Him in our lives. Ultimately, Darby calls for a diligent pursuit of communion with God, ensuring that our hearts remain attuned to His presence and love.

Transcript

It is striking here the way you get the settled knowledge of our place and position, and yet the ways of God with us are put conditionally on our love to Him. I get known life and perfect peace - "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." He also says, "He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." That is not, "We love Him because He first loved us" - the work of grace; but here it is, "If a man love Me, my Father will love him." It is dealing with children; not a question of whether they are children, but obedient children; the Father's love dealing with His child, and chastening it if need be. A parent does not scourge his child when it is doing well, nor is he pleased with it when it is doing ill. We are under this fatherly government of God which depends on the conduct of the child. Jesus has committed us to Him. He said, "Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me." He keeps us as Father; but as "holy," He must have a walk that suits Him. We know we are in Christ, and Christ in us; then we ought to be manifesting Him in everything, and reckoning ourselves dead. We are in Him in the power of life before God, and at peace with the peace He gives; so perfect that it is the peace He had Himself - "My peace." There never could be a cloud on Him. He was always in the perfect sense of divine favour. We are loved too as He was loved. Then come the dealings

of the Father with one in this state. The proof of love is obedience; just as a child that loves his father obeys his father.

It is of all importance, if we know peace - the peace He has made - and what it is to be in Christ, and Christ in us, how far our souls are walking in this present enjoyment of the manifestation of Christ. When we are walking in obedience, the Holy Ghost is not grieved; if not He occupies me with myself. The effect of His presence is to make me find I have gone wrong. "Your feet are dirty," He says. Of course anything gross comes to us at once, unless we have become hardened; but I mean carelessness. If I am not grieving Him, He reveals the unsearchable riches of Christ to me, and that is the manifestation of Him. "Now ye are clean," He says, "abide in Me," and that in order to bear much fruit. The Father deals with us with respect to our walk. What a blessing to know He takes notice of everything about us. "He withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous." There is not a moment that He is not taking cognizance of our state! Such a perfect settlement of our place with God, that the question is one wholly of walk and communion.

The question of acceptance should never arise; it is settled. "Because I live, ye shall live also." He must die before I can die. The question you have to occupy yourself with is, Am I joying in God? Is Christ manifested to my soul? or, Is there anything in your soul, in your ways, that hinders His manifesting Himself to you? "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you." He comes to be with you spiritually, that you may enjoy His presence. Are you walking in such a way that you are enjoying His presence? Would the effect of His presence be, to bring to light something in my soul that hinders the joy? or simply to enjoy the blessedness of it? Have we that character of obedience - the power of Christ's word - in our habits, ways, our dress, our houses, so that if Christ comes in we have only to sit down and enjoy Him? It is a very solemn question, if our hearts are not dulled to His love, whether our doings or our state are a hindrance to our enjoyment of Christ. Strength is wanting of course, and discernment, to do His will; but these manifestations give a sense of the interest He has in us; and it is that by which all the things of this world - things that were all gain to us - are dung and dross, by the sense we get of what Christ is, and His blessedness. They have more than lost their power, they are offensive to the Spirit - it is not Christ.

The manifestation of Christ gives the consciousness too of what we shall have for ever. If Christ was everything to the disciples, and they felt they could not do without Him, what was the comfort they got? "I will come to you." The thing is, we get accustomed to live without Christ. Look into your own heart and see if there is not, more or less, the habit of living without that full communion with Christ. It is that we have to watch against, if we desire to glorify Him, and live in the consciousness of the blessedness He has brought us to. It is what will be our everlasting joy. We have now the double joy of communion "with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." Just think what the force of that expression is!

I would desire for your hearts to have activity and diligence to get into this atmosphere. What is fellowship? Common thoughts and feelings and joys. If we have that with the Father, what a thing it is! His thoughts and feelings and joys will be the spring of ours. That is Christian blessedness; the Father and the Son, thus revealing themselves in grace, bring in their own thoughts and joys - and holiness to delight in them too - so that Their thoughts and ways become the spring of our feelings and actions.

If you get to enjoy this real manifestation of the Father and the Son, you will find - I do - that there is very little power to keep it. You who believe and trust and reckon on His love, do you find you can look up steadfastly into heaven? Stephen looked up steadfastly, he was full of the Holy Ghost. But it does not last long with us. I find I cannot look up steadfastly, it dies out, some thought or other comes in. There is not the positive living in that place where all else is judged. The Son is the revealer of these heavenly things

on which our affections are to be set; but if I let My thoughts go to that which is not of God, He must judge it. If I am keeping Christ's word, the effect is this blessed revelation of the Father's thoughts and mind and joys, and that strengthens the heart and spirit, and gives us discernment of all that is in this poor world.

I would speak of the means of being sustained in the condition to enable us to enjoy these things; and then a word on the occasion of our losing it.

Hebrews speaks of maintaining us in it. We are in a world where the tendency is to distract us from it. What we have to do is to deliver the testimony of Christ in the world. "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world." It does not say it is not of God. God made the world - not as it is morally - but He did not make sin. He made the trees; but He did not create them for man to make money of. When I see these heavenly things we have spoken of, all this is dross and dung to me; but it is a constant solicitation to our thoughts and senses, and tends to shut out the Father's world, where the Son is, and that in things where there is no outward harm. Then I get the constant service of Christ. It is a question of communion, and there is grace constantly in exercise toward us. "We obtain mercy" - which we all need every moment - "and find grace to help in time of need." "He was in all points tempted like as we are, apart from sin." But you cannot walk through the streets of London without the devil having something in every shop window to draw the heart from Christ, and on purpose. Christ was tempted; that was not lust. Satan tries to turn us aside from the way, and tests the fidelity of our inward hearts, if we will follow Christ. "One thing I do." But Christ is always up there for us; and when temptation or difficulty comes, there is mercy, knowing our weakness and infirmities, and that there are trials in the path of faith. He understands all that; He was thoroughly put to the test; more than we can ever be; and He is perfectly cognizant of it all, not as a Jewish high priest who could not be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but He was tempted in all points - sin apart, that He might understand it all and sympathize.

It is not a question of sins here. I have "no more conscience of sins," they are gone; nor of failure - if I make an idol of my child it is sin, though perfectly right to have the affection for it, and woe to him who has it not. The word of God comes as a sword and detects sin; but here it is access to God. (Heb. 4) We come "boldly to the throne of grace." That I do not get in John, there it is fellowship with the Father and the Son; but then the moment I have an idle or an uncharitable thought, fellowship is gone; I have sinned, and if that goes on long, there comes hardness of conscience. Then he says, "If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father." Not a question of imputation, but of fellowship. "God is light," and in every detail, if any thought of that which is darkness is let into my mind, there can be no communion; but Christ is in activity to restore the communion. There is neither allowance nor imputation of sin; but I have not been obedient, I have let my old nature act, distractions have come in. If I have not kept His commandments, the effect of His presence is to awaken my conscience to whatever is not of God. I have not the abiding of the Father and the Son - the comfort of it in my soul, and then the effect of their presence is to make me uncomfortable. Grace is there, not to prevent sins being known, or that righteousness fails; but in virtue of the righteousness of that propitiation, not to let this breach continue in the state of communion of my soul. Advocacy comes in; for there is nothing more dangerous than to get to do without communion. Supposing a child is in the delight of fellowship with his father, and sees a cloud on his father's face, he says directly, "What is the matter?" What would you think if he saw the cloud and did not trouble about it? If you get hardened, you are away from God, without finding it out! Do you find out if you lose the light of God's countenance on your soul? Are you so walking with God that you get the consciousness of it if you are not walking in the light of His countenance? - or have you something

creeping in that makes you go half a day - a whole day perhaps - without having His presence? Are you content with living without any communications from Christ? Why does He speak of coming to us and not leaving us comfortless? Because He loved us and knew what would be the joy of our souls!

Has that an echo in your soul? Has this fellowship with Him such an echo in your souls that the joy of your path down here is, "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come again to you"? If the love of Christ has power in our souls, it will be so. Is it the need of our souls, because we have tasted His love? How can we manifest Christ, or be really effectual epistles of Christ, if our souls are not thus in communication with Him, and the flesh judged, enabling us to "carry about in our bodies the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifest in our mortal bodies"?

Only remember this, beloved friends, that "we are not our own, we are bought with a price." He has taken us up for eternal salvation; but He has taken our hearts up to be for Christ. Then it creates a want in our hearts, and he says, "I will manifest Myself unto him."

The Lord give us to be so near Him, that the affections of Christ, which He has declared so abundantly to us, may have an echo in our hearts! (1872.)

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