

# Power for Conflict

by John Nelson Darby

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*The sermon emphasizes the necessity of following Christ's example and relying on His power to navigate spiritual conflicts and achieve victory over evil.*

**Scripture:** Joshua 1:9, Psalm 23:4, Isaiah 41:10, John 16:33, Romans 8:37, 1 Corinthians 15:57, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Ephesians 6:12, Philippians 4:13, Hebrews 12:1-2

**Topics:** "Dependence On God", "Spiritual Conflict"

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## Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the power of Christ in leading believers through spiritual conflicts, drawing parallels between the journey of the Israelites in Joshua and the Christian life today. He explains that just as the Israelites faced challenges in taking possession of Canaan, Christians must rely on the Spirit's energy to overcome spiritual wickedness. The sermon highlights the importance of following Christ, who goes before us in our struggles, and the necessity of recognizing our dependence on God. Darby illustrates that true victory comes not from our strength but from the divine power of Christ, who enables us to navigate through life's challenges. He encourages believers to trust in God's guidance and to embrace the spiritual energy available to them.

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## Transcript

This chapter begins the testimony about the work of power which the book of Joshua presents to us. The books of the Old Testament bring before our souls certain features or characters of the dealings of God with us. In Genesis we have all the great fundamental principles brought out, such as the first Adam, the type of the last Adam; Abraham, the father of the faithful; Isaac, the Son in a figure risen from the dead; and we get these types and figures of God's thoughts all through the book. In Exodus we have the priesthood brought out, and in Leviticus all that is connected with their service. Numbers is the path of faith through the wilderness, though we often see failure in it because of unbelief. In Joshua it is Christ in the energy of the Spirit leading His people through conflicts with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places. Here too failure came in through human weakness and folly. And in Judges the failure and break-down of Israel when in possession of their privileges. In Joshua we see the way Christ acts in the power of the Spirit in them, in obtaining their privileges. Saints are now under the leading and guidance of Christ by the Spirit, so in this book. (v. 14) Christ comes as Captain of the Lord's host, because the Canaanite was still in the land.

As Jesus was led up of the Spirit to be tempted of the devil, so the conflicts of the saints are under the guidance of Christ by the Spirit in us, therefore there are many things, as regards the conflicts we are now in, which it will be of much blessing to our souls to notice, as they teach us our entire dependence on God in every step of the way. The first thing we find here is Jordan standing in the way. This doubtless refers primarily to Israel in the latter day, when the power of evil will overflow its banks, and Israel will have to be restored as through death by divine power. In Numbers it is patience in going through the world. In Joshua spiritual energy in taking possession by conquest of that which is in the enemy's hand, thus enabling us to realize those things which we should never have known but through this divine power in our souls. Thus Joshua is the energy of the Spirit, and not the patience of the Spirit as in Numbers.

Redemption brings us out of Egypt into the wilderness through the Red Sea; that is, through death and resurrection. Then, being brought home to God, they have the knowledge of being a people with Him; for "the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day ye shall see them no more for ever." And they sing the song of triumph and deliverance from Egypt, as brought home to God, before they begin their journey as a redeemed people through the wilderness. There are two points connected with this. 1st. The Lord declares Himself holy, as in the "burning bush" and the bush not consumed. 2nd. Besides the holiness of His nature, He takes a covenant relationship in the ark of the covenant of the Lord. The proper place of the ark was in the centre of Israel, with all Israel around it, "to keep the charge of the Lord." And this is what we are called to do - to watch for the Lord's honour. But when Israel are taking a journey, then the ark quits its place of being kept by Israel, and goes before to seek out a resting place for them. God thus takes His place as going before them on their journey.

God is not a consuming fire out of His people till the day of judgment, but He is now a consuming fire in His people. The patience of grace is going on with the world now, though "everyone shall be salted with fire" - His people and the world too. Now in the midst of His people His fire is working. His people are offered up to God in Christ first, and then they are salted with fire. The spiritual energy of divine grace is not absent, but the holiness of God in judgment is now in His house, not out of it. God's fire, although burning in the bush, did not consume it, neither does the fire with which the saint is salted consume the saint. The Lord presents Himself in the burning bush as the Holy One, but as come to redeem; and they were to come back to the bush - the place where He was - and serve Him on that mountain. God started from the bush, and everything contrary to His will must be consumed. The Father judgeth every man sojourning here in the wilderness state; therefore we ought to judge ourselves first in divine intelligence. Redemption was not by the ark, but by the rod on the sea; but when they started from Sinai, where God had made them His people, then the ark of the covenant of the Lord goes before them. So when we have been brought to God and made His people, we are afterwards brought to the place His hands have made. We have come to God, but not yet to the place His hands have made, for we are not yet come to our Father's house; but being brought to God we start from the place of His presence to go through the wilderness. All the dealings of God are centred round the work of Christ. The God of holiness having brought them to Himself, His ark goes before them a three days' journey, seeking rest for them, and they follow on as the people of His choice, enjoying the knowledge of His presence with them - He going before and leading them on, and giving them patience in the way. "For ye have need of patience" to go round this wilderness. We have not got the world, neither have we got Canaan; so if we are not contented with the manna we have nothing.

At the end of Numbers we see the Lord declaring, when Satan sought to curse Israel by the mouth of Balaam, that He beheld no iniquity in Jacob, nor saw perverseness in Israel; still they do not come into the

land yet. Numbers ends in failure, but in an unqualified determination to bring them into Canaan. Acceptance is past, but getting into Canaan is another thing. Moses could not take them into Canaan, and the book of Joshua goes on practically where Numbers ceased. In Joshua is the fact that they get into Canaan; for in the details of this book we get in figure the heavenly condition of the saints now, as in Ephesians - "Sitting in heavenly places in Christ," but having our conflicts there, too, with wicked spirits. The book of Joshua then shows the heavenly path of the saint's life now, while the book of Numbers is the earthly path. The Red Sea was death and resurrection by which Israel was brought to God, whereas Jordan is the saint's moral death - death and resurrection in spiritual power. As such the saint is under the Captain of our salvation - the warrior Christ in spiritual energy. The more the saint realizes what it is to go through Jordan, the great power of evil overflowing its banks so that there is no fordable place to put one's foot upon, the deeper will be the sense of the conflict; but it is all swept away so that there is no passing through the water at all. To have a heavenly life here, or enjoy a heavenly life hereafter, nature must pass through death. When flesh came to deal with Satan then there were giants, and the Israelites were but as grasshoppers, and they could not go up; so God has to take them round another way.

The ark takes the first place on the journey of death to lead God's people into it, because through death and resurrection is "the way by which ye must go; for ye have not passed this way heretofore;" that is, nature or flesh had never passed that way before. But now ye must go through this Jordan with the whole power of death overflowing all its banks. Therefore, when ye see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God remove, "ye shall remove from your place and go after it;" that is, seeing Christ passing through the very same circumstances first, we must remove from our place of fleshly ease and follow after Him. But there is another thing true to us - that the power of spiritual life can only be enjoyed so far as we are dead to the world, and entering, with spiritual energy into the conflict. Therefore the apostle, having the sentence of death in himself, could go into the conflict saying, "I am a dead man trusting the living God." You cannot pass through Jordan without going into it; you cannot fly over it. It must be passed through by the feet; but then Christ passed through before us. We do not learn to pass through Jordan when in it; we learn it before. It will not do to enter Jordan by natural effort; it must be by the power of Christ's presence in the place of death, When we have courage to follow Christ, then we find Christ, and there is no Jordan at all. Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego were raised in the world by being in Nebuchadnezzar's court, and therefore got into the fire; but being faithful they found the Lord there, and no fire at all. The moment the priests' feet touch the waters, the waters cease. Were we to attempt to go through Jordan in our own power, we should be drowned; but when in the power of Christ, when we "behold the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passing over before into Jordan," then we find the water all gone. We are called to take the place in resurrection which Christ has taken, and death has no more dominion over Him. Nearness to God in the place of death is divine power in the saint. The flesh would be drowned by the water overflowing its banks unless there be the manifestation of the superior power of Christ over it.

In John 18, when Judas and the band of men and officers came to take Jesus, He said, "Whom seek ye? They answered, Jesus of Nazareth;" and as soon as He said unto them "I am He," they went backward and fell to the ground, thus manifesting the superiority of divine life in a man over the whole power of evil. Therefore we do not get the scene in Gethsemane in this gospel, because it is the Son of God passing onward in divine energy; consequently the waters even do not touch His feet, and the whole power of evil falls down before Him. When we find our feet touching the waters of death, it is the power of the divine life of Christ over the waters of Jordan exhibited in us; for the priests were to "stand still in Jordan." To the people Joshua said, "Hereby shall ye know that the living God is among you, and that He will without fail drive out before you the Canaanites . . . from the land." It was but enumerating the catalogue of things

which were to be the occasion of manifesting the divine power. "The priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan until all the people were passed clean over Jordan;" so the power of Christ is there until every one is gone over. If our souls are occupied about going through Jordan, we shall never be able to venture into it; but if we see Christ there, and follow Him without thinking about Jordan, but only about Him, we shall pass right through, and find no Jordan at all.

To Joshua, when the Lord was acting in the midst of His people as Captain of the Lord's host, He said, "Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy."

The Lord does not bring them immediately into conflict, but first gives them the corn of the land - the natural growth of the country - and the manna ceases; for they are now at home. Thus we have not merely the strength we need to get through the evil, but the enjoyment of feeding on that which is the fruit of the land itself - feeding on Christ in heaven. They are circumcised, keep the passover, and eat the corn of the land: the reproach of Egypt is rolled away. When we have the taste for heavenly things, we disrelish that which savours of the reproach of Egypt; but there must always be the getting back to Gilgal. From thence begin their conflicts. Then there is the Captain of the Lord's host; for if we enter into conflict without the spirit of dependence we shall fail; there may be undetected sin, which dependence and nearness to God would have brought to light and put away. There was more trouble in conquering Ai by stratagem than if they had gone up trusting in God.

May the Lord teach us how to walk in the spirit of lowliness, and as having full confidence in Him all the way that yet remains before us, seeing it is a path we have not trod heretofore.

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