

Searched and Known Psalm 139

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon emphasizes the importance of integrity of heart, which is produced by sovereign grace and the work of Christ, and can only be achieved through confessing sin and trusting in God's love.

Scripture: Psalm 139:1

Topics: "Integrity of Heart", "Grace and Confession"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the necessity of grace in producing integrity of heart, as illustrated in Psalm 139. He discusses the psalmist's journey from initial trust in God to a deep desire for self-examination and honesty before Him. Darby warns against the folly of living carelessly, ignoring the reality of judgment, and highlights the importance of confessing sins to experience true relief and integrity. He encourages believers to invite God to search their hearts, recognizing that true integrity comes from understanding God's grace and love, which allows for a genuine relationship with Him. Ultimately, Darby calls for a heart that is open to God's scrutiny, leading to spiritual growth and freedom from guilt.

Transcript

The way integrity of heart is produced is by grace, and by grace alone. In the beginning the psalmist trusts God. At the close of the psalm, after he is brought to know God, after he looked at himself as made by God, his whole desire is to be searched out.

There is nothing that produces integrity of heart but sovereign grace, reigning through righteousness. There are people not awakened at all, careless people, away from God, who can boast of their delight to gratify their passions: it is folly as well as wickedness. It is the simple folly of the human heart to go on with an eternity before it, looking to get good out of things here, not liking to think what is before it, because knowing what is at the end of it - judgment, because there is guilt. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; walk in the ways of thine heart, etc.; but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." This is where the careless young man that hates the light is; he is gay like a drunken man. He does not know the care of wretchedness; well, he is drunken, morally drunken.

They say, "If you think of God it will make you melancholy." Why should the thought of God make you melancholy? Because you have a bad conscience. If I saw a child that is melancholy always in the presence of his father and mother, I would say there is something going on there very bad. What kind of heaven would it be if the presence of God made it melancholy?

"All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do," is described in a strong way in this Psalm v. 4-12. "Whither shall I go from thy spirit?" What do souls want to go for? There is a soul before God and afraid of Him. It is a terrible thing, and terrible because it is true. How am I to get out of the sight of God? What a dreadful state, but a great deal better than the state I described before, because I should hope souls would get out of this. What would heaven be to such? "Thou art there." Well, that is enough for one in that state not to desire to be there.

We know we are in His presence, because our conscience tells us. We may deny it; but when the conscience is at all awakened, it knows it is. It knows that it has to do with God, with One that has knowledge of right and wrong; and I have got a sense of right and wrong, and God has taken care I should. When man was turned out of paradise he got a sense of right and wrong, it may be very vague, in the mind; but when the truth comes, there is a distinctness about it; and I know then what I am, and what all things are, "naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." There is not a man in this city that would not be happier now if he could know that he would be happy for eternity.

Here the soul speaks of how it cannot stand in God's presence, and yet cannot get out of it. If God does work, there must be some little sense of goodness, because He is goodness - love, if you please. There is some hope in the soul where this is so.

Now, what man always attempts is to make excuse. It does not succeed with you about your children when they do it, and yet you try to impose it on God. The human heart, where it does not get to a thoroughly broken-down state, is always excusing itself. You will find it in the Christian who has fallen and is not really humbled about it: he tries to make excuses even to himself. The excuse was Eve's condemnation. There is no good in an excuse, because it admits the evil. It leads into falseness if we try to excuse ourselves. Did you ever find a child in the habit of excusing itself that did not get into telling lies? Never! We deal with God as no one would let his child deal with him. We try to deceive God, but we cannot; we never did. You will get plenty of religion in the world, provided it is not God. They may have it from dread: it cannot be rooted out of the heart of man that there is a Being above him, though it may be perverted. There is no truth in the inward parts till we get the conscience thoroughly judged.

"Search me, O God, and know my heart." Do you think that a person could say that if he knew it was as a judge? I could not do it if I thought I was going to be condemned. You may get carelessness, forgetting God, and you may find an honest heart that hates God's presence, and cannot get out of it; or the religious heart that is always making excuses for itself. What idea have you of God if you make excuses? Why, you could not put off a sensible man with them.

Well, what gives integrity of heart? Suppose a physician comes to heal you, would not you tell him all your symptoms. This produces integrity of heart, and nothing else. "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." No iniquity! no guile! I do not want to excuse what is all put away. Suppose I am in debt. I do not like any one to see my books; I do not like to look at them myself, and there is no integrity. But when forgiven the debts, I like to look at them and see how much is forgiven. I may blame myself, of course, for getting into debt; but a forgiven debt I do not want to hide. The poor woman in the city had got confidence in His love; the love of God manifested in Christ attracted her heart to Him.

The burden of unconfessed sin is a terrible burden upon the heart. A secret is hard to keep, but a sin is dreadful to keep. One is always afraid of its coming out, and yet we know God knows it all. There is a

comfort in being honest in the inward parts. And did the Lord ever reproach a poor sinner who owned his sin? Never! Though they had been insulting Him the day before, He tells them He came to seek them. Oh what a comfort to find I can perfectly trust Him! The heart rankling under the burden - and now to be able to bring it all out to One we can perfectly trust! The thief says, "we indeed justly." He tells it out because he can trust the Lord. I can go to Him and get my conscience perfectly relieved. I tell it out, and find nothing but love. He comes and presents Himself to us and says, "You may trust Me." You say, "No! I have sinned too much." "That is the very reason for coming to Him; you cannot escape judgment - so I have come in grace." I get the two names of God revealed (ver. 12): and when everything is fully revealed, I meet perfect love. God is light: in Him is no darkness at all. Well, here I am in the light, and in the light just as I am; how came that about? Why, that He is love. What the gospel does is not to allow a single sin to stand in the presence of God, but to have it taken away in grace - and that gives integrity of heart.

There I am weeping (Luke 7:38) It is an immense relief, but it is not peace. But then comes another fact. You all know that He died for sins to put them all away. The person of the Lord Jesus Christ brought down to man, in grace lifted up upon the cross, has wrought propitiation for our sins. When I know He has come in grace I can say, "Oh, but He has borne MY sins upon the tree;" it has nothing to do with any work in our hearts. As I have often said, the importance of it is, there is nothing of mine mixed up with it, only my sins; and He finished the work according to the perfection of God, when there was not a single thought about it in my heart. I find that it was when I was an enemy the work was done for me. Whenever a person believes in God all the fulness of the work belongs to him. The heart that is utterly bad does not like to submit to the righteousness of God - to a work done entirely outside ourselves, it is too humbling. We mix up in our hearts the work for us with the work in us. Good feelings we ought to have; as a result we ought to walk in them. God will have right feeling for Christ, but no right feeling along with Christ.

You say, My heart is not happy about my debts being paid. Well, the reason is you do not believe it: when you do, you will be happy. If you do not believe what God says you cannot be happy. Feelings are right, for they are the work of the Spirit in us: but that is not the work for us. We must have Christ and His work, and nothing else whatever. "The worshippers once purged should have no more conscience of sins." The dread of consequences is not the motive of the Christian's walk. You cannot know the love of God and not love Him. A real love to God is a sense of His love in the soul. Love is shewn in the child's sense of the parents' love to it. The moment I have my conscience cleansed for ever - for ever, because the blood is always under God's eye - I find Christ, who has put them away. Then I take God's side against myself.

Verses 23, 24: "Search me, O God, and see if there be any wicked way in me." I can say to God, I want your eye to search my heart. There is the integrity of the saint. The integrity of the sinner is letting out all before God; the integrity of the saint is, "O God, search me" He does not say, "and see if there is any way of goodness in me." That he found in God. He does not want to find any goodness in himself: God does, for He has put Christ in him. The more spiritual we grow, the more we find out what we are.

And now, beloved friends, can you honestly say, "Search me, O God?" Are your hearts honestly so before God? Have you so seen the love of God as manifested in the Lord Jesus Christ that you, as sinners, can open your heart to Him? He does see it. It will come out in judgment, if it does not come out in your conscience now. The very thing God is exercising us ALL about is thinking "no eye shall see me." A man cares for his character before man, who does not care about what God thinks. A man who would not cheat men is cheating God continually. We cannot, in reality; He knows it all.

Now, do you trust Him enough to tell all out to Him? As Christians, are you able to say, "See if there be any wicked way in me?" I am not afraid of His imputing it, but are you afraid of His taking it away? You may be afraid to say it, because He may cure you of it. There are some Christians that keep their own will in a little cabinet, locked up. They pray and get answers up to that; but that is locked, and they never get on. Such a man is preparing something for himself - decay of soul, if not chastening. Whenever self works in anything Christ is not all: whatever hinders Christ is a wicked way. I am not now speaking of what is positively evil.

If you begin to think of your heart, are you glad that God should bring up what is in your heart, and say, That is the way I look at it? Could you say you would like God to give you His thoughts of it all? The Lord give us so to be under the eye that is never withdrawn from the righteous, as to be capable of enjoying Him without hindrance; every Christian in the bottom of His heart does wish it, but practically, if you knowingly keep a part in that way, you are sowing something for yourself that love must chasten. When I can see blessedness in the day of judgment, then I can say, Remove from me everything that hinders.

There is no integrity of heart without a perfect knowledge of grace. The heart cannot be with desire before God, unless the work of Christ is known. The Lord give us to have truth in the inward parts - and that we can have, because He visits us in perfect grace - that we may grow unhindered as a garden of the Lord's planting.

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