

Self-Knowledge Deuteronomy 8

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon emphasizes the necessity of self-knowledge and aligning our hearts with God through trials and His love.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 8:2

Topics: "Communion with God", "Self-Knowledge"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the necessity of self-knowledge and communion with God, illustrating how God leads His people through trials to reveal their hearts and draw them closer to Him. He reflects on the importance of being in tune with God's heart, as true rest and satisfaction can only be found in Him, not in the world. Darby encourages believers to allow God to search their hearts and to recognize their dependence on Him, highlighting that self-judgment leads to joy in God. He reminds us that through God's love and discipline, we can achieve a deeper understanding of ourselves and a more profound relationship with Him. Ultimately, the sermon calls for a heart fully surrendered to God, fostering peace and fellowship with Him.

Transcript

{Christian Friend 1888, pages 197-201.}

The Christian cannot be in a difficulty for which Christ is not sufficient, nor on a long, dark road where he cannot find Him enough. God's rest is where he can find perfect rest. Do you think God could find rest in this world? Have you ever found rest in it? Though He was perfect love above all the evil, yet He could not rest. When the Jews charged the Lord Jesus with breaking the Sabbath, He says that sweet and lovely word: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Could love rest in the midst of woe? When all the saints are perfectly conformed to Christ in glory, when, as is expressed in Zephaniah (and we may apply it to ourselves), "God will rest in His love," He will see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. There will be nothing that hinders the enjoyment of the love and glory of God. Oh, the blessed future that is before us! The full result of redemption will be accomplished, and God will rest, because His love has no more to do to satisfy Himself.

God wants, as a present thing, our hearts to be in tune with His in our everyday life. He wants that. Therefore we find here: "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart," &c. Now, God says, "Your heart and Mine want to have a little talk together. I am going to show you what is in your

heart, and to show you that I know it." He has brought you to Himself; and do you think that, if all that is in your heart is not brought out to Him, it will be all right between you? Do you think a father likes to have his heart all different to his child's heart? He likes that the whole spirit, soul, and mind of his child be suited to his mind. God passes us through the wilderness that we may learn this. You often see a true Christian not knowing where he is at his death-bed, because he has not had everything out with God day by day.

"Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men." The exercise of Paul was whether his heart was in everything attuned to God's heart. Christ's heart was. He could always say, "I do always those things which please Him." Enoch walked with God, and he had this testimony, that he pleased God. He was walking in God's presence, and the effect of it was he pleased God. You could not walk with God without having everything out with Him. If you have something on your conscience you will not be happy. Every step we take we see Him better, the light gets clearer, and we find things to judge that we had not known must be judged before - according to that which you know of the glory of God. Are your hearts up to it? And supposing they are not, what is the effect of God's presence? Why it has to set my conscience to work in order to bring me into communion. "My son, give Me thine heart." Now come, are your hearts given to God out and out?

"He humbled thee." (v. 3.) He brings us to our bearings. He causes us to live by faith. "Fed thee with manna." Do not our souls sometimes loathe the light food? Is it not often true that Christ does not satisfy our hearts? Of course, if our hearts are cleaving to something else, Christ will not satisfy us. "Man doth not live by bread only." Christ quoted this to the devil in the wilderness. He had no word from God for the stones to be made bread, and He had taken on Himself the form of a servant. His will was motionless until it had God's will to make it act. The word of the Lord abides for ever; that is the dependence of faith. Mark another thing, that while God kept His people in dependence on His word to guide them, He did not allow their raiment to wax old, neither their feet to swell all the forty years. He thought of everything for them, for "He withdraws not His eyes from the righteous" - not for a moment does He cease to think of them.

Then comes another character of His dealings. "As a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee." (v. 5.) First of all, God passes us through circumstances which exercise us (feeding us and taking care of us all the time), and then there is the positive discipline for the breaking of the will. Every day one sees God doing it; and we often don't know where we are, and get questioning the love that did it. Look at Romans 5. God loves us as He loved Christ, and we are rejoicing in hope of the glory where Christ is. And not only so (when he has gone through the whole thing, that is not all), I am not only rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, but I am rejoicing in tribulations also, because God is not withdrawing His eyes from me in them. The hope is so much the brighter; for, oh, I say my rest is not here - that's a clear thing! And the hope makes not ashamed, because I have the key to it all in the love of God shed abroad in our hearts. It is God's ways and work to make us know ourselves. There can be no question of the love because He has given us the key to it all.

How, then, has He proved it? Why it goes on to state that in the next verse: "Christ died for the ungodly." Then he says again, "Not only so." What? "But we also joy in God." I have got to know myself, all my waywardness and forgetfulness of God, that in my flesh there dwelleth no good thing; but in this way of self-judgment I have learnt to joy in God. It is to bring the heart into this tune with God that He has to break it down and humble it. But this being in tune with God is never reached - that settled consciousness of association with God - until, through these ways and words of God, we have got to the bottom of self. It is not that we shall not always have to contend with it; but its back is broken, and I have henceforward no trust in myself. The natural man says, "Whither shall I flee from Thy presence?" But at the end (Ps. 139)

he says, "Search me, O God, and know my heart." Up to the knowledge you have of divine things, is your heart in tune with Him? Could you say, "Search me"? It is a painful process sometimes.

"Lead me in the way everlasting." Beloved friends, there is a way everlasting, and it is in that way everlasting that God comes and searches the heart. Are you content to have every motive searched out? It must be so if our communion with God and joy in Him is to be full and uninterrupted. We get these three things - the proving of our hearts, the chastening, and the conflict with Satan (v. 15) - "to do thee good at thy latter end."

Beloved, if your souls would walk in peace and fellowship with God, you must learn that there is no good in you; but you must also learn to know Him in the perfectness of His love. It is present joy and fellowship with God; and if we go on with it, when death comes, then it is "absent from the body, present with the Lord," and it is the brightest moment in the life. All these exercises of heart are self-knowledge. If you want to walk so as to glorify God in fellowship with the Father and the Son, then you must go through this having the conscience exercised to be "void of offence;" and as to the affections of the heart, having Christ at the bottom, and a walk which no one can blame at the top, but between them are all the thoughts and intents of the heart. You must have the soul practically exercised before God. You must learn the ways of God with you that you may be in tune with Him. The Lord give us to know more of a walk with Him, that we may have the kind of peace Christ had in His walk down here - that peace of heart which the soul knows in fellowship with the Father and the Son. The Lord give you to know what it is to have everything in your heart open before God.

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