

The Exercises and End of Grace John 20

by John Nelson Darby

Christ isolates us through different circumstances to bring us into a deeper relationship with Him, and to bring us into the presence of God through the atonement.

Scripture: John 20:11

Topics: "Relationship with God", "Grace"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the profound ways God displays His grace and the loneliness that often accompanies spiritual growth. He reflects on the experiences of Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, illustrating how their devotion to Christ transcended earthly concerns and led them to a deeper understanding of His love and purpose. Darby highlights that true comfort and fulfillment come from Christ alone, especially in moments of isolation and despair. He explains that through Christ's resurrection, believers are invited into a new relationship with God, where they are called His brethren and share in His divine blessings. Ultimately, Darby encourages a life where Christ is central, urging believers to seek Him above all else.

Transcript

It is remarkable the instruments God uses to display His grace towards man, and the different exercises of heart persons go through, which prepare them for the service on which they are to be sent. There is a loneliness which may even be occasioned by a man's own folly, in which he finds himself without a single thing to get comfort in, that he may prove that to be in the Lord which he would not know in any other way.

God cannot associate Himself with evil. There must be death upon nature altogether. The corn of wheat would have remained alone without death. Christ was alone as to Himself; comforters He had none. "I looked for some to take pity, but none." "They gave me gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." These are expressions of this loneliness. He was walking in undeviating devotedness with His Father all the way through; but there were none to enter into it, though, speaking of His disciples, He graciously says, "Ye are they that have continued with me in my temptations." Could He have said more if they had been faithful in sympathy all the time? Our poor hearts have to learn the way the Lord meets the soul that waits on Him.

We see, in the case of Mary Magdalene here, and in the other Mary too who broke the box of ointment on Him, there was something that made them lonely. What made Lazarus' sister Mary lonely? She had found something that took her clean out of the world. Martha was careful about the supper; but with Mary it was

not the supper but Himself. His object was not to come for earthly refreshment, but to pour into His people's hearts the revelation of the Father. Martha was not wrong in preparing the supper, but in trying to get Mary away from the Lord. If she had been right, she would have been glad to do it all herself. There was not the joy and delight in her heart that there ought to have been. Mary had found one thing that isolated her heart in the most blessed way. Her affections were alive to all the evil that was coming (not as a prophetess, but her spirit was in the thing), and at the right moment she went and spent the ointment on Him. He says of her, "She hath done it for my burial."

173 In this Mary (the Magdalene) we get yet another thing. Seven devils had been cast out of her, that is to say, the expression of complete diabolical possession, indicating the extreme of wickedness. That isolates a person, who is separated from nature, as it were, by the extent of wretchedness. When the spirit is touched, she is separated from the evil. The effect of finding Christ in such circumstances is that He becomes everything to her. (There is not the same intelligence in her as in the other Mary; we do not find her, as the Magdalene, at the tomb.) She could not leave in the same way. When she lost Christ after the flesh, she had nothing. She was terribly broken to pieces by evil, and Christ was gone. There was something human connected with her affection; there was also culpable ignorance in what she did; but the Lord had compassion on her; and more, He manifested Himself first to her.

The disciples saw, and believed. They perceived He was gone, but understood not the Scriptures. Mary had no home, and when she found not the body of Christ, what had she? The disciples were not isolated in the same way; they go away to their own homes. She, in her ignorance, but withal in her love, says, "I will come and take him away." This last is very precious. It is a great thing, when Christ has such a place with us as to be everything. In one sense this is the door by which all must pass through; at death, if not before, nature must decay and vanish. What is more nothing than death? All here is gone. We may learn this spiritually, or by circumstances, or at the moment of death itself; but learn it we must. We must find everything but Christ nothing.

Christ calls her by name. When He comes and calls His sheep by name, it is all right. She had now got Him back after death. Nature had, as it were, passed through death, as Isaac. Nature had mixed itself up with her affections, but now she has got beyond that; all is given up to God. The promises made to Abraham were all surrendered up by him when Isaac was to be taken. Mary Magdalene thought she had Christ back when she had not. She thought of Him corporeally, but she must have Him in another way. It will be so with the remnant of Israel by-and-by. They will have Him corporeally then, but now He says, "Touch me not," etc. I am going to another place. I am taking your hopes or your promises in another way, and not in flesh. If He was to take it, it would be when the just shine in the kingdom of the Father. He says, "Go tell my brethren, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God." I am giving you something entirely new - not My presence yet - not power yet; but where He was going Himself He would take us.

174 He does isolate us: He does pass us through different circumstances; but whether gradually or suddenly, His object is to break down everything of nature, and this in grace to us. Here for the first time He says, "my brethren." He never called them "brethren" definitely until now. He had been heard from the horns of the unicorns; Psalm 22. During His life He had declared the Father's name. Now He declares that the love wherewith He is loved is that with which we are loved. He could not say that during His life. During His ministry He was making known the Father, walking with the Father, speaking to the Father. Now He takes them into the same relationship. Why? Because the redemption was accomplished.

Christ never addressed His Father as God - never less than as Father. During His life as given in the Gospels, all His life through, it was always, "Father." When on the cross it was, "My God, my God," until all was finished, when He said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." In making the atonement, what was not against Him? There was one thing that could not be against any, and that was love; but there could be none as to the feeling and manifestation of it then. He was forsaken; and the more the love was known, the more terrible it was. He was dealt with according to the majesty of God, the righteousness of God, the truth of God, the holiness of God. All that God is was made good against Him. God was thus putting away sin, and Christ was glorifying God about the sin.

But now, being dead and risen, He comes up to put His disciples into the place of full blessing. The work is done, and there is no sin left. Everything that God is is now brought out in blessing, and all the sin is put out of the way. He is declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. He goes up to God, and takes us too. I am going to My God, and He is your God too. He is going into all that is blessed. I am not going to be present with you corporeally, so that you can "touch" me; but I am going to My God and your God, My Father and your Father. Such is the word to this poor desolate woman. She was a fit messenger, by her very nothingness, to witness of Christ and His work and fulness.

175 "I go," and faith goes too, entering into that within the veil. It enters into all that which God is. Where we live is within the veil. Sense may come in and hide God's presence; but the atonement has brought us into it, and into the very same relationship which Christ has as risen. We sometimes enjoy peace, we enjoy scripture, a hymn, or prayer, without realising the presence of God; and then there is not the same power, or the same exercise of heart in it. I can own the blessing, and rejoice in the blessing, without having my heart searched out; but if in these I have the sense of Him, my state is very different. It is very important, not only to have a right thought, but to have it with Him. If you search your own heart, you will find that you may sing without realising Jesus Himself. Then the heart is never probed, the evil is not detected, and the power of grace is not the same. By the atonement sin is put out, and God is brought in. God exercises our hearts about good and evil by first giving us the good. There must be the possession of perfect good, and then there is holiness, and not merely the exercise of dread and fear. Our hearts must follow Him where He is gone. We cannot "touch" Him.

May the Lord give us to live a life in which He is everything!

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