

The Perfect Man

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding Christ's humanity and perfect obedience as a means to spiritually nourish and strengthen believers in their trials.

Scripture: Matthew 4:4, Matthew 26:39, Matthew 27:46, Luke 6:12, Luke 9:28, Luke 22:40, Luke 23:43, Luke 24:39, John 6:56, Philippians 2:8-9

Topics: "The Humanity of Christ", "Feeding on Christ"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the significance of Christ as the perfect man, highlighting how He serves as the sustenance for believers while they await His return. He contrasts the portrayals of Jesus in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew, illustrating how Luke presents Jesus as a sinless man who, despite His suffering, remains above the circumstances, demonstrating perfect obedience and dependence on God. Darby encourages believers to feed upon Christ, understanding His humanity and divinity, and to bring their trials to God, following Christ's example of prayer and reliance on the Father. He concludes with a call to meditate on Christ's nature to grow in likeness to Him and experience the fullness of God's love and grace.

Transcript

Our blessed path, beloved brethren, while waiting for God's Son from heaven, is to feed upon Him as the bread that came down from heaven. In the midst of the toil and tossings and buffetings which are the portion of God's people while in this world, He gives us Himself as the food for our hearts. Thus, all that He was as Man while here below becomes most precious to us; but in order to feed upon Him as an incarnate Saviour, we must first know Him as crucified.

In the Gospel of Luke, the Lord Jesus is specially brought before us as the Son of man. It has been often remarked the contrast there is between John's Gospel and Matthew's. In John He is the Son of God - a divine Person; whether in Gethsemane or on the cross, you do not get suffering at all. The same scene is spoken of in both; but in Matthew you get the other side. You find in John, when the soldiers came to take Him, "As soon then as he had said unto them, I am He, they went backward and fell to the ground" (18:6); but He gives Himself freely to them. If not for that, He had only to walk away and leave them lying there; but He gave Himself up for His Father's glory, and shewing His love for His own: "If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way" (18:8) - He puts Himself forward that they may escape. So, on the cross you do not find in John the words given by Matthew - "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He gives up

His own Spirit. "Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar, and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished, and He bowed his head and gave up the ghost." He gave up His own spirit.

In Matthew's Gospel you get the other side. In Gethsemane He "prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me" (26:39); and when on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me." (27:46)

In Luke's Gospel there is what might at first appear a difficulty to the mind, but it brings out Christ in a special way, so I speak of it here. In Luke there is more suffering in Gethsemane than in any other Gospel; and on the cross none at all. Why is this? Because, as man, He is above all that He is passing through. The character of the Lord's sufferings in Luke would lead us to remember, for the precious comfort of our souls, that He was perfect Man - sinless, of course, but a Man. When risen, He says, "Behold my hands and my feet that it is I myself; handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have." (24:39) He would bring home to the soul all the blessed truth of how thoroughly He was Man. Look how that is marked in Gethsemane: "When he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation." (22:40) In Luke you find Him constantly praying as man - perfect man, obedient and dependent. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matt 4:4) In Luke we find Him "all night in prayer to God." (6:12) At another time "He went up into a mountain to pray, and as he prayed the fashion of his countenance was altered," and He was transfigured. (9:28) In Gethsemane, "He kneeled down and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will but thine be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven strengthening him, and being in an agony he prayed more earnestly." There you get the Man again.

Mark how in this Gospel there is more development of His sufferings than in any other. "Being in an agony he prayed more earnestly." The more He felt the depths of that dreadful cup which He was to drink, the more earnestly He prayed. With us, too often, the trouble that fills our minds turns us away from God; but "He prayed more earnestly." The agony brought Him to God; and that is just the right thing. "And his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when He rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, and said unto them, Why sleep ye? Rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him; but Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" There you have in the disciples man in his infirmity; in Judas, man in his hatred and wickedness; and in Christ, man in his perfectness. The poor disciples were sleeping for sorrow while He was praying "more earnestly, being in an agony." When we come to the cross in this Gospel, we find no trace of the agony. He had gone through it in spirit in Gethsemane, and is then above it all.

I am not now speaking of His atoning work, but of His death. "Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice" - without feebleness - "yielded up the Ghost." (Matt 27:50) In Luke I find these words, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." There you have the perfect, blessed, unclouded consciousness of the Man, giving up His spirit in full confidence to His Father. This characterises all that Christ was on the cross. He is above all the circumstances - so completely above them, that His occupation is with others; His first word on the cross is, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." The wretched malice and hatred of men had led to His crucifixion; but the poor Jews knew not what they were doing. They outrage and insult Him; "they parted his raiment and cast lots;" they "derided him saying, He saved others,

let him save himself;" "the soldiers also mocked him" - the very malefactors "railed on him." And what do I find? - that He was above it all! He can turn to the poor thief hanging beside Him with these words, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." There was a blessed work going on in that poor malefactor's heart; in all the agonies of the cross, though believing Him to be the Lord, he seeks no present relief at His hands, but says, "Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom." And the Lord answers him, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." He shall be with Him when He comes in the kingdom, and surely He will so come; but He is now shewing the place He is taking as having put away sin, and says, No, you shall not wait for the kingdom, you shall be with me to-day in paradise.

"And it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth:" all was dark, but He brought light into it. "And when he had cried with a loud voice he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." You may call this faith or confidence in His Father. There is this difference with us, if we have seen Jesus at the right hand of God, we can say, like Stephen, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;" but He could say, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." This blessedness He had as man, though passing through the bitterness of the cup of wrath - going into it to its fullest depths. In Gethsemane the agony was such that "His sweat was as it were great drops of blood." There He passed through it all with His Father, so that when He came to the cross He was above it all. In a certain sense that is our place; if we could only go through every trial beforehand with God, bringing God in spirit into it as He did, we should, when the trial came, have God with us in it. Ours are little trials when compared to His, but they test us and try us - no doubt of it - but the principle is the same. We should follow Him in our path, and if we take the sorrow or trial to God, even if it put us in an agony (as it may, for presenting it to God makes it more acute), we can carry that agony to Him; and we shall find that we can be above the circumstances with men, when we have gone through them perfectly with God.

Christ's obedience was perfect. His human nature, as you see in Hebrews (2:20), was perfectly tried, but always perfect in the trial - all was perfect in Him. It is good for us to study what Christ was - really to meditate upon it, and get the benefit of it to our souls. "Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross: wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." (Phil. 2:8, 9)

We have to feel the need of abiding with God, and God with us. If you want to get the graciousness of Christ - if you want to grow in likeness to Him, you must feed upon Him. "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in him." (John 6:56)

The Lord give us, in the consciousness of all the sin and wretchedness and misery that is in ourselves, so to feed upon Christ, that our hearts may be filled with the blessed sense of what He was: that we may be able the more to understand the love and grace of God.

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