

The Son Pleading John 17

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon emphasizes Jesus' profound love and intercession for His disciples, highlighting the importance of humility and communion with the Father in the face of worldly challenges.

Scripture: John 17:1

Topics: "Unity in Christ", "Intercession"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the profound moment in John 17 when Jesus, having completed His work, pleads with the Father for His disciples, recognizing their vulnerabilities and the challenges they will face in a world filled with sin. He highlights that Jesus, as the perfect man, fully understood the weight of sin and the need for divine support, and He intercedes for His followers, ensuring they are kept in unity and holiness. Darby points out that the glory Jesus seeks is rooted in His humility and obedience, which allows believers to share in that glory. The sermon underscores the importance of recognizing our position as children of God and the need for communion with the Father to navigate the trials of the world. Ultimately, it is through Christ's sacrifice and intercession that believers can find rest and assurance in their relationship with God.

Transcript

It is very natural that Jesus should have deeply felt, before leaving this world, all the circumstances in which His disciples were about to find themselves. At the moment when the Son had accomplished His work, and completely glorified the Father in the midst of all the difficulties and all the malice of Satan (a moment which has not had, and which will not have, its equal, whether in time or in eternity), it was natural, I say, that He should put all before the Father.

Not only has Jesus perfectly glorified the Father, but there is no one who, like Himself, has felt all the effects, all the consequences of sin. He realised all, and has placed us in the same circumstances as Himself. He felt and expressed all the weak position of His disciples, according to all their need, and according to all the resources which He knew to be in the Father.

He said these things in the world, where He had been the Man of sorrows, and where He had suffered much. In virtue of the work He accomplished, He can enjoy all the privileges of His work; but He takes this into consideration, that His disciples are left in the world.

The natural heart does not feel the privileges of the child of God. The natural heart does not feel its wants. Pride does not see difficulties; hence it "goeth before destruction." The natural heart escapes many things which are a weight to the child of God. We see that in Jesus. He does not hide from Himself His position. "I have," He says, "a baptism to be baptised with," etc. He did not hide from Himself the state to which sin had reduced men, and the consequences of sin. Love overcame the weight which He had always on His soul, as we see in Gethsemane; yet He remained calm, because He committed all to the Father. We see Him entirely, alone, but calm, full of love, and always capable of acting in love.

At the time then that one does not feel grace, one has not the same wants. The thoughts of being brought low, manifested in this chapter, do not find any sympathy in the natural heart. Christian men are too disposed to avoid knowing this state of abasement; but therefore they do not know the immense resources which are in God. Such is the folly of our hearts!

162 In verse 10 we have the position where Jesus places His own in their privileges. In presenting to them their resources, He then speaks to the Father. It is the expression of the Son's heart. "The hour is come" - an hour more memorable than that of the creation - an hour during which evil and its effects were conquered.

The glory which He claims is not that which flows from the will of the Father, and which He possessed, as Son, before coming into the world: it is another thing. It is because He had humbled Himself, not to do His own will, but to do that of the Father, because He had been obedient unto death, and had taken upon Himself the consequences of sin, that He could be glorified in saving His church.

The abandoning of His own will shews itself in the answer which He made to two of His disciples, who asked to be placed, the one on His right hand and the other on His left, in His kingdom. That is not in My power, answered Jesus; but in my Father's. This giving up of His own will to us is of infinite value; it is thus that we can have a share in His glory; for, if He placed Himself under the power of Satan, it was because He was capable of doing it. He must needs be the Son of God to accomplish this work, and He would do it in grace: otherwise we should have no share in it. He has taken the glory as man that we might possess it; for we could not have that of the Son.

He was, in death, under the power of Satan, but He could not be held by it; and it was so in order that we might have a share in this glory. He puts Himself in the lowest place in order to be able to say, Father, glorify Me; and not, I am glorified. Mark well, that though He was humbled, it was perfection, in order that the heart of the Father should be satisfied in glorifying Him.

What power of Satan was not destroyed when the Prince of Life underwent death! Thus God has been fully glorified, and Jesus also, because as man He has fully this glory. Why did the Son need to be glorified? It was for us. He had placed Himself as low as our sins had put us. Now He glorifies the Father in His own (v. 4). We see that power has been given Him "in heaven and in earth." This power was given Him because He humbled Himself. This is very precious: for it is because He was man that it could be given Him; because it was His as Son. It was in order that He might give life to all those whom the Father gave Him, and that He might claim His right for them, and against those who do not recognise Him. He does not speak much of the latter in this chapter, because His heart was full of His disciples.

163 He is the Head of creation: "The firstborn of every creature: for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by

him all things consist," Col. 1:15-17.

All that glorifies our Head ought to be precious to us. It was needful He should reconcile all things, according to what is said in the same chapter: "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. For in him all the fulness was pleased to dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven," v. 18-20.

Christ was Head of the creation, and Head of all men; they are given to Christ, and He refers all to His Father. It is God who gives. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

Power was given Him, and He should give eternal life to as many as are given Him. This life is to know God the Father. "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Jesus begins to speak of the work which He accomplished on the earth. "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." "I have glorified thee on the earth." What is it, that the first Adam had done? He had owned neither the power nor the goodness of God; he had denied all that God was towards him. The last Adam, on the contrary, had felt all that which pride prevents us from feeling. He felt the forsaking of God as to His soul; and He could say, "I have glorified thee." The more evil there was done here, the more the Father was glorified. Never did irritation enter into Him; no contradiction ever prevented his having the same heart for man and for God. What is precious is, that it is man who has perfectly glorified God: He would do it, and He has accomplished it. It was in man that it was needed to be done, for it is in man that God was dishonoured; it is there that Satan reigns and governs; it is there that the image of God is marred; it is there that God has been dishonoured before the angels; but it is there also that He has been glorified in Jesus - man - not by avoiding the evil but by placing Himself in the midst of all this evil. The more evil there had been, the more the Father had been glorified.

164 As man Jesus accomplished the work that the Father gave Him - the work of grace; it has been perfectly accomplished. Hence the Father can rest in His Son, having been fully satisfied. He could say, "This is my Son, in whom I am well pleased." And hence God can pour out His heart into the heart of a sinner.

God could give outward blessings, as the sun and the rain in their season, but He could not be in communion with man. His heart can speak of Jesus - man; He could not keep from saying, "This is my beloved Son"; no more than John the Baptist, when seeing Jesus, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God."

The heart of the Father wanted to save. He committed this work to the Son, and this work was perfect. Hence Jesus could say, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me." There is nothing more to be done. What rest for the soul! There is nothing but glory to receive. All the rest is done. This word "now" shews that God had found in Jesus that which perfectly responded to His heart.

There is rest. There is perfect equality. Jesus can say, with a boldness which shews who He is, "Father, glorify thou me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." And we, by the Holy Spirit, are admitted to these conversations between the Father and the Son. Already, by the Holy Spirit, we, in our measure, understand what a place the Lord has given us.

The holiness and righteousness of God could find nowhere to rest, like the dove out of the ark. But in Jesus He has found perfect rest. God sought morally as we seek a friend; He has found it in Christ; He

cannot seek elsewhere.

From verse 6 Jesus speaks of what He has done for His disciples: "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word." "I have manifested thy name unto them" - the name of Father. For Christ there were certain relationships, which He could not know save as man. and as man of sorrows; but He knew the Father and committed Himself to the Father. "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me." He was placing their hearts before the Father, where He was Himself. As He knew the Father, so He makes Him known to them.

165 If any one has been very kind to me, how would I speak of him to a person to whom I wish to make him known? Whilst He was down here, He spoke of the Father in telling them all that He knew of Him. He tells them that He is His Father and their Father.

God can seek nothing in us, but He can give us all, finding all in Christ. Oh! may we realise what Christ has revealed to us, namely, that the Father is for us. Is this the habit of our souls?

We become the objects of the communications between the Father and the Son. The greater things are, the more magnificent and intimate, the more are they worthy of God, and by infinite grace we are the objects of them. I do things which I should not do if I knew the Father better; and I should also do things which I do not. It is a question not only of not doing what is forbidden; but also of being in the relationship of father and child.

The soul is elevated. The Holy Spirit makes us feel the love of the Father. He brings us into liberty by shewing us, not that we are little, but how great God is. When we are altogether pre-occupied with Him, this liberty produces a holiness which has immovable foundations. God and Christ were occupied with us, when Christ was still in the world and in our position; He has put us where He is.

That produces effects of holiness, because it always brings us nearer to the Father, who is light and holiness. When I see the fruits of the Spirit, I say, God is there, for He is God. It is not only this that God works in me, but also that I partake of His nature by the Holy Ghost which is given me.

Jesus, having manifested the Father's name to His own, comes now to speak to Him of their position in the world, while separated from Him. He introduces that by saying that the disciples had received Him not only as Messiah, but above all that they had understood this revelation of the Father, that they were no longer of this world, and that they had understood that all came from God

"They have known," says Jesus, "that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee." They saw the relationship of unity with the Father, relationship until then unknown, and which has been made manifest in the humiliation of Jesus. The Son has been manifested, not only as a Jew, but as man, and man in the lowest place: in that position He received all from the Father. The Father sends the Son, and the Son says, "They have believed that thou didst send me."

166 When the Lord speaks to His disciples, He speaks to them according to the position of grace which He made for them, and not according to the realisation which they had of it. God always speaks to us as to children who know that they are children: it is their own fault if they forget it, or if they do not know it. Jesus says, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know," John 14:4. Philip says, "Shew us the Father." Well, it is the same thing with regard to the action of the Holy Ghost.

Many Christians have not understood that they are one with Christ and they have to be reproached with this: for Jesus said, Ye shall know I am in you, when the Spirit shall be given unto you. He speaks not according to what is realised, but according to His love and the privileges which He has given us. He has made us partakers, not of His divinity, but of all that the Father gave Him as man. He has such confidence in His disciples, that He gives them the words which the Father gave Him. "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me: for they are thine." I pray for those who have received thy words.

The Lord acts as apostle for the world, but as priest for His elect, for those who are manifested. Those who are not yet manifested are doubtless known of God; but they do not receive all the care which is necessary to Christians in order to be kept in this world. Those who are not manifested are not thus responsible; but as to Christians, all that makes them feel their responsibility is very precious; for they are placed here below as representatives of Christ.

Jesus says, "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." And where is the one who, understanding that he is sent as Christ, does not also feel that he needs grace in order to represent Him? It is then most important to understand the position of the elect who are entrusted with representing Christ before the world (not however that this touches salvation) Jesus says, "I am glorified in them"; and those who are not manifested do not glorify Him. It is therefore only for those that are manifested that He prays; and it is they who become the subject of the communications between the Father and the Son.

167 That which is dear to the Father is dear to the Son; if the Son loves the Father, He must pray for us; if the Father loves the Son, He must glorify His Son in us. It is a wonderful position which the Lord has made known to us. These are the two motives which, His work being accomplished, Christ presents to the Father. If Christ had been the Messiah owned by the Jews, He could have remained in the world: but as priest, He could not remain there; and, as to us, we are exposed to all the evil without having the presence of Christ, and we need something sure to rest upon. This leads to a much deeper sounding of the heart.

There was no such need of a clean heart, when Jesus was upon the earth. His disciples could go and ask Him what the will of the Father was; but now we must have, by the Holy Ghost, the intention of Christ; and this takes place when we realise the communion of the Father. It is a position still more blessed than that which the disciples had. On the other hand, the Christian who is not in that communion may go astray. All intelligence depends upon the state of the soul. It is not with us as with a servant to whom it is said, Do this. It is the presence of the Holy Ghost which makes us know the intention of the Father: only we must walk in Him.

We cannot walk in the world with blessing if we are not in communion with the Lord, and then we are only like servants. The Christian has forgotten that, and thence it is there is so much darkness. Christ is no longer in the world; but as yet, we are in the world, and we have to manifest things which are outside the world, which are in heaven. Hence it is impossible to discern the things of God with the flesh, even for a Christian who is not faithful, for he loses all discernment, and he lowers himself to the level of all that surrounds him, if he does not seek exclusively the approbation of the Father.

Jesus says, "Holy Father, keep" them; that is, for His disciples. He is "Holy Father" for the disciples, and "righteous Father" for the world. "O righteous Father," He says, "the world hath not known thee." The world and I can no longer walk together; and the Father had to choose between the Son and the world.

"Keep them," not with respect to the things of this world, but as Thy children, for glory; not to spare them suffering, but for eternity.

168 He cherishes us as a Father, who does not permit a single hair of His children to fall without His permission. Those things which appear paltry and little are of some interest to a father and mother. Now God loves us with a perfect love. He takes cognisance of all that relates to His children, and of all that concerns them in whatever degree it may be; and all that does not lead us into the glory He takes cognisance of. This is why He chastens us, for He is the "Holy Father." He keeps us from evil by the warnings of His grace, by His word, by reproof, by the joys of the family of God (a great means which the Holy Ghost employs), and by the chastisements which He allows to fall upon man outwardly, so that the inward man be kept.

The flesh always pens itself in, because it is selfish. When we are in the Spirit, there is always unity. Three things especially compose the joy of Christ. Being the object of the Father's joy, His heart enjoyed His communion, and this also belongs to us. Obedience was His food, His meat, the joy of His soul. It is the same with us. As we are the objects of the exercise of this love of the Father, there is a joy for us in the exercise of that love. He makes us partakers of that joy. If there is a conversion by our means, the joy of Christ is in us. It is the Spirit which acted in Christ. He could be a fountain of love, although His heart was "withered" through all that was in the world. Wonderful position! a position of responsibility, it is true; but the joy of Christ who is for us, not only the joy which we shall have in heaven, but which we have already in this world.

The world hates as soon as there is a manifestation of Christ. It cannot be otherwise. We must reckon upon this, that, if we hold forth the light, we shall be hated, even amongst Christians. They do not find that lovely; but the gospel will never be lovely for those who will not receive it. All that is lovely in nature is not the offence of the cross.

If I weaken my Christianity by Judaising, I shall be received; for man will consent to give to God, provided he also be a little glorified. But, if there is nothing but the cross, man hates; whereas the moment one recognises ever so little of the world, we are not hated. It is needful we should count the cost, whether with the forces which we have, we can fight, or whether Satan is stronger than we are; and this will not be the case, if we keep ourselves in communion with the Father.

169 It is true that it is not agreeable to be hated. All that leads us to be agreeable to the world, and to the customs of men takes away the offence of the cross, and renders us agreeable to the world, but puts us at a distance from Christ.

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