

# The Spirit's Presence in the Church

by John Nelson Darby

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*John Nelson Darby's sermon explores the vital presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church and the call for believers to recognize and respond to this divine reality.*

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 3:16

**Topics:** "Holy Spirit", "Divine Presence"

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## Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the significance of the Holy Spirit's presence in the Church, likening it to the ark as a symbol of God's abiding presence on earth. He urges believers to recognize the divine presence among them, which empowers them to live holy lives and fosters unity within the body of Christ. Darby highlights the importance of faith in experiencing the Holy Spirit's work, reminding the congregation that the Spirit is a gift from Christ, sent to comfort and guide them. He calls for a deep appreciation of the Holy Spirit's role in the Church, encouraging believers to walk in faith and obedience to God's will. The sermon concludes with a reminder of the holiness of God and the need for reverence in His presence.

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## Transcript

The ark, the symbol of God's presence, is the great thing here - the symbol of the Spirit's presence in the Church, not in heaven but on earth. The grand argument of the apostle in urging us to cleanse ourselves, etc., is the divine presence in our midst (1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 2 Cor. 6:16, 2 Cor. 7:1). The Holy Ghost down here is the fruit of the solicitude of Christ for His people. He had a deep sense of the high and holy ground on which His disciples were placed, one on which they cannot stand but by the power of the Holy Ghost. No sin, no coldness, can wear out His perseverance. He abides with them for ever (John 14:16). Have you learned the mystery of oneness, the unity of Christ's members with Himself? "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou ME?" (Acts 9:4). "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye" (Zech. 2:8).

Anxieties must be in the heart in order to faith and trust, to which they give place. Looking into the future, Jesus committed His mother to the care of John. "When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother" (John 19:26, 27). He anticipated all her anxieties (comp. Phil. 4:19). Transcendentalism, so much in fashion now, is not faith, it is not of God. We have to walk by faith, not through sublime illusions of the imagination, but amid the solid realities of the scene and circumstances we are in, and we need what is of God, real and immovable, to lean upon. The Holy Ghost descended in consequence of the going up of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is that other Comforter who shall abide with us

for ever; the witness and the expression of the sympathy of His heart toward the weakness of His people. Before the interests, so dear to the Lord's heart, for His people were met, He went about among them forty days. He then went up, and for ten days God, personally, was not on the earth. No wonder they shut the door! (John 20:19 and 26: Acts 1:13). His fortunes were left to them, and to us, too; we are His representatives, though so very weak. The world would hate them as they had hated Him, and they should be put out of the synagogues (John 15:18; John 16:2). Nevertheless they had this, they loved Him, and were loved of Him. He spake peace to them; He had also promised to send the Holy Ghost; they waited in expectation, and He came, in answer to the name of Jesus Christ, and to give Him glory. Where does He abide? Where does He act? Do you really believe in the Third Person of the Trinity as actually here on the earth? If you do, you will walk carefully, and look to hear Him speak in your midst (1 Cor. 12, 14; 1 Peter 4:11).

The second chapter I read, calls us up to the exceeding high place He has set us in; calling forth emotions toward the object of love; for the acts of God's love, taken hold of and appreciated by the soul, become creative, and by the power of the Holy Ghost produce the feeling that responds.

Do you believe in a Divine inhabitor of the church, and that for the name of Jesus Christ nothing can drive Him away? And do you hold this truth dearer than any, save the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ?

The coming of the Holy Ghost was in answer to the purpose of the Father, and the prayer of the Son. True, but it was also connected with the prayers of His people. All the promises of God are the awakers of prayer and expectation in the souls of those to whom the promise belongs, before it is realised. The actings of God's grace are in answer to faith. Faith does not stagger at truth, yet I am free to say, that no one knows what faith is who has not staggered. True faith removes the staggering, but if a soul has not staggered at the immensity of the thing revealed, it is because he has narrowed it up into some little object that human thought can reach. What! He a worm and no man, yet God! Some object to the expression "blood of God."\* What else? Was He not as truly God as man? All the actings of divine love and grace become true only to faith. The grace of God must needs be invincible, and irresistible, too, or we should come badly off.

{\*This expression, which is nowhere found in Scripture, is derived by inference from Acts 20:28. But verses 22 to 27 inclusive, are a parenthesis, and by reading the passage in that way the antecedent to "He" in verse 28, will be found to be "our Lord Jesus Christ" in verse 21. Tr. (See also New Trans. by J. N. D., Acts 20:28, and the note. Ed.)}

The multitude in the upper room were believers, they were in the Father and in the Son, yet they waited for another. The Holy Ghost was an object of faith, "whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him, but ye know him" (John 14:17). He is the object of knowledge, too, not merely the power of knowledge. He recalls the sorrows of the Lord Jesus Christ, and unfolds His glories. He is not less the object of faith since He has come, than He was before. His actings are in the name of Jesus Christ. He is here to repeat Jesus Christ, and so emphatically fulfils the word "I will come to you" (John 14:18). The Lord Jesus Christ was the unsolicited gift of the Father's love (John 3:16). Who could ever have imagined such a gift? Faith and the Lord attract each other. The leper came to Him, He went to the house of Jairus. The woman's touch (Mark 5:28) became the pulse of life between them. This is found repeatedly in the Gospels. Never let us help one another to unbelief. I know that God is the Creator of faith, but He uses human hearts and human lips, therefore let us encourage one another. "Smite," - "smite" (2 Kings 13:18, 19).

The Lord when on earth surrendered Himself to faith, and acted according to the measure of it, when it was great, "As thou hast believed, so be it unto thee" (Matt. 8:13). "O, woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee, even as thou wilt" (Matt. 15:28). When faith was small, He acted according to Himself, see Matt. 8:26, where the disciples' "little faith," was answered by a "a great calm."

Faith is not a human virtue, suspicion and distrust naturally grow with our growth. We are all liars (Rom. 3:13), and because we are so, we think all men liars, and believe no one. But faith is the gift of God, faith in Him (Eph. 2:8). The Holy Ghost is here, but how we use Him is another thing. My consciousness of His presence depends upon His acting, not upon the fact only of His divine presence. If I don't believe it, I lose the blessing. His presence does not depend upon our behaviour, but our perception and enjoyment of it do.

Love never cavils, never reasons, never argues, but runs to obey, and would have nothing to do with what is not according to the will of its object; it delights in the words of Him it loves. Jesus Christ must reign supreme, love says so. He would not be one among many gods, as the heathen would have placed Him, nor would we consent to such a thing.

The church was never crucified for me, and though very dear, I'll not put her in His place. Love seeks to dwell in its own place. Oh, how grievous, that when He makes such a promise as "there am I in the midst of them," we don't esteem it more. He who is present in love is holy, and we may not trifle with His holiness. What is the table? What but the highest communication of a living love, "Do this in remembrance of me?" The holiness of God is never overlaid by grace. The character of the grace of God is, that it makes a way to lift you up to be partakers of His holiness. Remember all the actings of the Holy Ghost are in answer to the name of Jesus Christ. Would you have that divine person to be less holy? Rather would you not have your hearts lifted up to understand that divine presence in all its holiness. The incarnation is for life and worship, not for reasoning about.

The temple, exceedingly magnificent, was left desolate (Matt. 23:38). Though the priests were very busy, all was hollow, the substance was gone; but in the upper room (Acts 2:2) the Spirit was the glory. A wretched place comparatively, but the scene of the divine presence. The dove had its home there.

{The Notes are very fragmentary, but the truth is precious, and calculated to help souls. Though the sentences want finish, they are sufficiently clear and very suggestive. Ed.}

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