

Unselfishness

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon emphasizes the contrast between Christ's unselfish nature and the self-serving principles of the world, urging Christians to embody Christ's motives in their lives.

Scripture: Psalm 49:18, Matthew 20:28, Mark 6:3, Philippians 2:3

Topics: "Christ-like Love", "Unselfishness"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the profound unselfishness of Christ, noting that every action of Jesus was directed towards serving others rather than Himself. He contrasts this with the world's principle of self-seeking, where individuals pursue their own interests and pleasures, often at the expense of true moral motives. Darby argues that even those who appear moral or philanthropic are often driven by selfish motives, lacking the genuine love and compassion that characterized Christ's life. He challenges Christians to embody the selfless nature of Christ, who tirelessly served others despite His own needs and hardships. Ultimately, Darby warns that if one's life does not reflect the unselfishness of Christ, they are not truly following Him.

Transcript

One thing impressed my mind most peculiarly when the Lord was first opening my eyes - I never found Christ doing a single thing for Himself. Here is an immense principle. There was not one act in all Christ's life done to serve or please Himself. An unbroken stream of blessed, perfect, unfailing love flowed from Him, no matter what the contradiction of sinners - one amazing and unwavering testimony of love, and sympathy, and help; but it was ever others, and not Himself, that were comforted, and nothing could weary it, nothing turn it aside. Now the world's whole principle is self, doing well for itself. (Psalm 49:18.) Men know that it is upon the energy of selfishness they have to depend. Every one that knows anything of the world knows this. Without it the world could not go on. What is the world's honour? Self. What its wealth? Self. What is advancement in the world? Self. They are but so many forms of the same thing; the principle that animates the individual man in each is the spirit of self-seeking. The business of the world is the seeking of self, and the pleasures of the world are selfish pleasures. They are troublesome pleasures too; for we cannot escape from a world where God has said, "In the sweat of thy face shall thou eat bread till thou return to the ground," etc. Toil for self is irksome; but suppose a man finds out at length that the busy seeking of self is trouble and weariness, and having procured the means of living without it, gives it up, what then? He just adopts another form of the same spirit of self and turns to selfish ease.

I am not now speaking of vice and gross sin (of course every one will allow that to be opposite to the spirit of Christ), but of the whole course of the world. Take the world's decent, moral man, and is he an "epistle of Christ"! Is there in him a single motive like Christ's? He may do the same things; he may be a carpenter as Christ was said to be (Mark 6:3); but he has not one thought in common with Christ.

As to the outside, the world goes on with its religion and its philanthropy. It does good, builds its hospitals, feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, and the like; but its inward springs of action are not Christ's. Every motive that governed Christ all the way along is not that which governs men; and the motives which keep the world agoing are not those which were found in Christ at all.

The infidel owns Christ's moral beauty, and selfishness can take pleasure in unselfishness; but the Christian is to "put on Christ." He went about doing good all the day long; there was not a moment but He was ready as the servant in grace of the need of others. And do not let us suppose that this cost Him nothing. He had not where to lay His head; He hungered and was wearied; and when He sat down, where was it? Under the scorching sun at the well's mouth, whilst His disciples went into the city to buy bread. And what then? He was as ready for the poor, vile sinner who came to Him as if He had not hungered, neither was faint and weary. He was never at ease. He was in all the trials and troubles that man is in as the consequences of sin, and see how He walked! He made bread for others; but He would not touch a stone to turn it into bread for Himself. As to the moral motives of the soul, the man of the world has no one principle in common with Christ. If then the worldling is to read in the Christian the character of Christ, it is evident the world cannot read it in him; he is not a Christian; he is not in the road to heaven at all, and every step he takes only conducts him farther and farther from the object in view. When a man is in a wrong road, the farther he goes in it the more he is astray. J. N. D.

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