

Confusion and Order

by John Gifford Bellett

The sermon explores the theme of confusion in society and the promise of divine order through Jesus and the Spirit of God.

Scripture: Genesis 18:1, Exodus 18:1, Isaiah 11:6, Matthew 22:21, Luke 24:13, John 4:1, John 13:1, Philippians 2:3, Revelation 21:1

Topics: "Christian Living", "Gods Sovereignty"

Description

John Gifford Bellett preaches about the various confusion and challenges that Jesus faced in His earthly ministry, dealing with political and religious authorities, His disciples, and the different regions of Galilee, Judea, and Samaria. Despite the chaos, Jesus' path shone brightly, untouched by darkness, showcasing His ability to answer every challenge with wisdom and grace. Bellett emphasizes that like Jesus, we too must navigate through the confusion and challenges of our daily lives, knowing that order will eventually prevail in God's perfect timing, as seen in various biblical examples.

Transcript

The Lord found a state of sad and humbling and various confusion in the land that He walked through day by day. But it only gave occasion to His path to shine the brighter -- for it was light and only light undimmed by the darkness, and unbroken by the confusion, that was all around.

The state of politics and of religion in that day exhibited this confusion. The authority of the Roman was there where Jehovah should have been supreme; Caesar's image was circulating in Immanuel's land. And he had to do with Herodians, Sadducees, and Pharisees, with His own kinsfolk according to the flesh in their ignorance, with doctors and scribes in their pride and pretensions, with the multitudes in their self-seeking and fickleness, and with the low condition of His own disciples.

He had to walk through such regions as Galilee, Judea, and Samaria -- diverse, I mean, not in place or situation, but in character. For Samaria was the defiled, Galilee the rational, Judea the religious. This we see in John 4, 5.

Galilee would receive Him, because they had seen the miracles which He had wrought; but without signs and wonders they would not believe. Like Christendom, and her walk every day, Galilee gave Him historical faith and acceptance. They believed on competent testimony; but there was no exercise of soul, nor awakening of conscience.

Judea or Jerusalem was occupied with its temple and its sabbath. Religion, or the observance of ordinances, the maintenance of what honoured themselves in their own place as the house or centre of the nation's worship, was chief with them, and prevailed to blind them to the doings of the Son of God.*

*A great multitude of impotent folk were lingering over Bethesda, though the Son of God was going about healing all manner of diseases, doing the work of Bethesda in a far better way than Bethesda.

Samaria was unclean. It had no character to maintain, no religious honour to vindicate and uphold. But there, the conscience was stirred. No miracle had been witnessed there, but no miracle was sought for. Jesus was received there, because his words had reached their souls.

This was Galilee, and this was Judea, and this Samaria; Galilee the rational, Judea the religious, and Samaria the defiled. But all such various confusion only glorified the path of Him who knew how to answer every man. Herodians and Sadducees and Pharisees, His kinsfolk and His disciples, the doctors, the scribes, and the multitudes, Galilee, Judea, and Samaria, all in their way and season got their answer from Him. He would not resist, but yet He would escape the snare. His voice should not be heard in the streets, and yet He would leave them unable to answer Him a word. He did not cure the confusion, but He passed through it, only glorifying God the more by reason of it.

And it is our comfort to see this. It tells us that the scenes in which we find ourselves involved day by day are nothing new, and need not be a surprise to us. They may exercise us, and we may fail under them, and to our humbling, but they need neither amaze nor dishearten us. We need not hope to cure it; but, like the Master, we have to pass through it. Judgment will do its work in its season, and confusion shall cease. But the time of judgment is not yet fully come. Jesus was ever judging the sinner's enemy, but never His own. He contended for us against Satan, but never for His own rights against either the Roman or the Jew. Such was the combination of weakness and strength in Him; ever passing by His own wrongs, but judging all the power of the sinner's enemy, destroying the works of the devil.

And order shall succeed judgment, as judgment succeeds long-suffering. In its time, this shall surely be, as now confusion surely is. His hand will form and mould a scene of order in the days of the coming kingdom. And of this order He has already, by His Spirit, again and again, in the progress of His grace and wisdom, given pledges and samples. And as we look at this for a little, we shall have to say, How beautifully things take their, proper place, when the Spirit of God comes to regulate them! And this is done, as I may say, noiselessly - as creation of old assumed all its order under the same Spirit.

We see a sample of this in Gen. 18. The Lord had taken counsel with Himself, that He would reveal a matter to Abraham. Upon that, the two angels who had attended Him to Mamre, pass on, while Abraham, on the other hand, draws near. How simple, and yet how beautiful that was! The scene, as without noise or effort, takes its due form. The objects which fill it fall into their right places -- the angels leaving the place in the possession of those who had a secret between them, while they themselves, left alone, draw nearer to each other.

So Abraham again in Gen. 21. He had just been distinguished by divine favour. He had got Isaac, and his house was established by the Lord. The Gentile comes to seek his friendship. Abraham accords it to him heartily -- but on the occasion he assumes the place of the better, while Abimelech, though a king, and Phichol his chief captain, who accompanied his master, without grudging, took the place of the less.

This was another witness of souls finding their right relationship to each other under the hand or Spirit of God, all between them being in the order and harmony of "a noiseless sphere."

The same is seen, and that, too, in a larger field of vision, in Ex. 18. The ransomed tribes of Israel meet Jethro at the mount of God. Aaron is there, and Moses is there, heads of Israel, priestly and royal heads. But Jethro, nevertheless, takes the place of the better. He was but a stranger, visiting, in company with Moses' Gentile bride, the Israel of God. But he was heavenly -- his person and his place tell us that -- and he assumes at once, without asking leave and yet without wrong, the rights of the heavenly; and Moses and Aaron as instinctively and at once yield the place of the better to him, both in the sanctuary and on the throne.

O, when the Spirit works, what an end of strife, and emulation, and self-seeking there is! and what relief to the heart such an anticipation brings with it!

The interview of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba shows the same. John and Peter, in the presence of the Lord, take their relations to each other in the same spirit in John 13.

Peter in the distance beckons to John, and John at that beckoning, being near, presses the bosom of his Lord afresh; and thus together they get out the secret of that bosom. There is no jealousy, no provoking here. One scarcely knows in which to delight the more, the beckoning of Peter to John, or the pressure of John upon the bosom of Jesus, Peter using his brother, or John using his Lord. It is an exquisite sight -- lovely to behold, happy to anticipate -- to think of communion after such a pattern, when no envyings or provokings will soil the interchanges of heart with heart when "which of them shall be the greatest" will be heard no more, the confusion which passions and tempers bring forth gone for ever.

And to these few instances of the beautiful, regulating power of the Spirit I must add that of our Lord and the two disciples going to Emmaus, in Luke 24.

Jesus, a stranger, had joined Himself to them on the road, and helped their thoughts, and in that way relieved their hearts. The road was common property. But when they reach their home, the stranger will not intrude. He may join them on the King's highway, but their house is their castle. They, however, cannot allow this. They are too much His debtors to let Him pass on so soon, and they constrain Him to enter. But upon this, when faith has its desires towards Him, if not as yet its knowledge of Him, He at once takes His proper place. He becomes the host rather than the guest, the Lord of the feast dispensing its best provisions, while they, in the fulness of their hearts, awakened to know Him, thankful and happy, own His title.

All is in its due order. From the beginning to the end this was so. The scene on the common highway, the scene at the gate of the dwelling, and then the scene inside the house -- all is order.

And surely I may say all these are passing shadows, whether in patriarchal or evangelical days, of happy days to come. when, again, in "a noiseless sphere," harmonies, not unisons, shall strike, and move the joys of thousands of hearts together. For at the end. as at the beginning, in the scene of redemption at last, as in that of creation at first, all shall be in order both in heaven and on. earth, under the power of the Word and Spirit of God. On earth Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the ass and the ox shall plough together. The nations shall delight to own the glories of Zion and minister to her, as best they may, Geba and Sheba, Nebaioth and Kedar. And in the heavens all shall be compacted and joined together, as in the mystery of one body; principalities

and powers, and dominions and thrones may be diverse, but still consistent and harmonious, dignities.

Thus, in the places of the coming kingdom, whether earthly or heavenly, things will be in beauty and order -- moral as well as natural order. The two sticks shall be one. Judah and Israel shall dwell together under the same vine and the same fig-tree, and the nations will take the second place, the place of "the less," and take it joyfully.

"There all the millions of His saints

Shall in one song unite,

And each the bliss of all shall view

With infinite delight."

The Queen of Sheba was too happy at the sight of Solomon's glory to envy him the possession of it. And Peter, on the holy mount, was so satisfied in the power of that place, that he would count it his happy business to serve those who were above him.

What a relief such a prospect gives! It is high time to be wearied and ashamed of all the vanity, the envying, and the strife, which we are sensible of within and around. The Syrophenician breathed the happier spirit of the coming kingdom, when she was so heartily willing to be second to Israel, thankful to receive the portion of dogs under the table where the children were feasted.

"Blessed are the people that are in such a case!" Blessed to anticipate a state of order, moral, holy, gracious order, kept in the power of the presence of God, such order as these Scriptures both pledge and foreshadow. And well it is for us, beloved, if we can, until this age of order come, pass on through the confusion which is now around us, in something of the light and purity of the mind of Christ.

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