

Christ Dealing With Conscience and Heart

Mark 7

by John Nelson Darby

God's grace and truth have come together, revealing our sinful condition and offering us perfect love and forgiveness.

Scripture: John 1:17, John 14:6, Romans 3:23, Ephesians 2:8

Topics: "Christian Identity", "Truth and Grace"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the duality of truth and grace in Christ's revelation of God, illustrating how light exposes the sinful condition of man while simultaneously offering the comfort of God's love. He explains that without grace, the harsh truth of our sinfulness would be unbearable, but with grace, we find hope and redemption. Darby highlights the importance of recognizing our true state before God, as seen in biblical examples like the prodigal son and the woman caught in sin, who both encountered God's love through their acknowledgment of sin. He asserts that true Christian living involves understanding our identity in Christ and reflecting His love and righteousness in the world. Ultimately, Darby calls believers to embrace their responsibility as representatives of Christ, living out the truth and love they have received.

Transcript

It is said that the Lord is the truth, "I am the way, the truth, and the life"; and He does bring out everything in a remarkable way. He shews out what God is in Himself, and what man is; and God's grace has come with Him: "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

In this chapter we find truth first, truth as to man's condition; but there is also the grace of God's heart. It is a great thing to have the two together. If truth had come without grace, we could not have borne it a moment. Man is a sinner utterly unfit for heaven; but it is immense comfort that grace and truth have come together. God's two essential names are Love and Light. If we had not love with light, it would have condemned us; but we have perfect light in presence of perfect love. Our comfort is that light does come and reveal everything. Being in God's very nature, we cannot separate the two things, light and love. Just the same things appear in the details of the Christian's life.

In many instances in Scripture we see how light penetrates: but there is an attractive power along with it. There is never real working in man's soul without attractive power. The Christian stands "accepted in the beloved"; but the light of God comes in on all his ways. Take the prodigal: the light shines in and shews

that he is a lost sinner, but there is attractive power too. "I will arise and go to my father." Take the woman that was a sinner. There was a sense of sinfulness because light comes in; but the measure in which light shone into her soul cannot be separated from the love that came with it. Take Peter, falling at Jesus' knees, and saying at the same time, "Depart from me." Wherever the blessed God reveals Himself to our souls, nothing is left in the dark. If anything is not completely revealed it may come out in the day of judgment; but all is revealed. We have a perfect revelation of God as light and as love; and both are working in the soul.

If you have an idea of God's love without the conscience being reached, it may pass away as the morning dew. It is a blessed thing that we are brought to God, and that everything is fully out. The blessed Lord bore our sin; there was full light and full love at the cross. There are two parts in the gospel; one is the revelation of God; the other is the work done by the Lord standing as Man for us on the cross. First we find the revelation of God Himself, then the work of the Lord.

80 In the chapter I have read it is rather the character of the Lord as thus revealing God than the work which He has done. Here you see first, religious, very religious, man; the authority of the elders, the cleansing of the outside. It is much easier to wash one's hands than to wash one's heart. Man hides the state of his heart by all these outward things. The Lord comes in, searching and judging all the religion of man. Where the heart has not been purified, where the soul is not right with God, religion only hardens. Cain was just the expression of this; he was just as religious as Abel, and his religion cost him more than Abel's.

"Ought" is not the question now; there is another: what we have done and what we are. The question is not whether the law is right, but whether I am right. Abel recognised that he was wrong, a sinner out of paradise and without hope, unless God would save the lost. Cain's offering was nothing but perfect hardness of heart. If the light of God shines into my soul and finds nothing but sin and impurity, my conviction is that I cannot go to God in myself, unless He has found and given a blessed way. The real question for people's souls is, not what they ought to do, but what they have done and what they are. Think of the audacity of people coming to God as they are! Man is doing all he can; his thought is trying a way to satisfy God and purify himself outwardly - he feels he cannot inwardly. Here it is not professed religiousness, but the heart of man detected. The Lord goes right through this veil that is over the heart of man to the heart itself, and He tells what proceeds from it. What about the good? He says nothing of it whatever. In us dwells "no good thing." Man is a judged creature. He will set up man in a thousand ways; but God has judged him. There are the natural faculties of man - all true; but what has that to do with the soul? "When his breath goeth forth, all his thoughts perish."

When God was not dealing in a special way with man, he became so bad that God had to bring in the flood. Then, when He did deal in a special way, the golden calf was made as soon as the law was given. Last of all He sent His Son. We are now living in a world where man has rejected God in grace.

81 The first thing we read of man was that he departed from God; that was Adam. We see the same in Noah before, in Solomon after, as in the Israelites when they made the golden calf. When the priesthood was instituted, Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire. There was the patience of God going on saving souls all the time: I do not deny this. Man was lawless when he had no law; he broke the law when he got the law: he was God-hating when the Lord Jesus came into the world. It is better that the light should come in and shew me what I am.

God has since set out a meeting-place with man - the one way, the altar of the tabernacle. This is God's one meeting-point with man. If you do not come as a sinner, you do not come in truth, you do not come for grace. Having ripped up the veil with which man tries to cover himself, the Lord shewed what the heart of man is - a terrible picture, and terrible because true. He whose love spoke it, comes as light into the world. When light comes, I do not say, man is a sinner, but I am a sinner; "And we indeed justly." There is truth. So far we have it told, but grace had come to tell it. Then all dispensations are set aside, and God comes out as sovereign. There are two things in the gospel: God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, and Christ made sin by God. Here it is God coming into a world of sinners.

People know there is a judgment coming, and they hope to get into some kind of preparation for that judgment. In contrast with this thought we have, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." Those who are Christians ought to judge everything by the judgment-seat of Christ. It is very fruitful to the Christian, but is not in itself Christianity. The grace of the gospel is the very opposite to judgment. God comes into a world of sinners not imputing their sins. The gospel is this blessed truth, that God is dealing with men above all their sins. He comes into this world to shew holiness itself - a holiness that never could be contaminated, and to bear love into a world of sinners. The Syrophenician had no title to promises. Being of a doomed race, as to dispensation, she had only curses, the very opposite to promises. The Lord first deals with her on this ground: "It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs." He brings her to her true place as He always does. You may try and spare the soul, but it must be in truth before it learns grace. Would you all say, "Yes, Lord, but the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table?" She had not a word to say for herself; but she had a word to say for God. The publicans and harlots justified Him, and He justified them. So it always is where He works in grace and truth. I believe there is overflowing goodness for the children; but there is something for the dogs too. Could Jesus say there was not? It was real knowledge of God and herself.

82 The heart must be brought to this, "I have no righteousness, I have no promises, but I have God come into the world to us as sinners, and because we are sinners." He never said "Come to me" till He had first come Himself. There was perfect light to convict, but the convicted sinner finds himself in the presence of perfect love. Have you ever said "Yes, Lord," owning that you had no righteousness and no promises; only that you trust the perfect love that brought Christ into the world? Then the thought of what God is towards you takes the place of what you are towards God. Here I am, just as I am, in the presence of perfect love - love that cannot deny itself. The sinner finds he has a title in God's heart when he can find none in his own. The woman that was a sinner loved much because much was forgiven her. It was a broken heart that met the heart of God, and the heart of God met a broken heart. It is wonderful when the heart of man really meets the heart of God. The moment I am brought through grace into full distinct consciousness that there is no good in me, I find this; I find the perfect blessed love of God which has met me where I am in His presence.

At the cross you see sin meeting God, Christ being made sin for us, and the nature of God glorified - far more than merely sin being put away. While the Lord puts away sin, He prepares the way to the accomplishment of all the counsels of God. At the cross I find man made sin in the presence of God - a divine Person too, of course; and this not to screen but to sustain Him. There is love that has met me in my sins, and now there is righteousness in the presence of God, our Forerunner being there. The truth is there; but there is also the perfect love of God to put away sin. The heart is then free to trust the love unhinderedly.

83 Remember this, beloved friends: I am not my own at all now; I am in a new place altogether - a place into which I have been brought in perfect love, in divine righteousness, in the presence of God Himself. We have power now - the power of the Holy Ghost. The Christian is in this world to shew what Christ is. If you call yourselves Christians, you are the epistle of Christ: it is not merely said you ought to be, but you are. He sends you back to the world to witness what God is. You have responsibility as a Christian now, not as a man. All responsibility flows from the place we are in. If Christian responsibility is measured, as a child of God, nothing that does not suit the blood of Christ suits you. Is Christ the motive of everything you do, and this in things of every-day life? For you are not to be heroes and heroines. Is Christ all and in all? "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children." Walk as children of the Father.

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