

The Path of Faith Titus 2:11-13

by John Nelson Darby

The path of faith requires us to trust in God's promises and declarations, even when we don't understand the circumstances, and to renew our strength by going back to the true annihilation of self in the Lord's presence.

Scripture: Titus 2:11

Topics: "Spiritual Discernment", "Faithfulness of God"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the importance of understanding our current position and condition before God, as well as the implications of His grace in our lives. He draws parallels between the historical failures of Israel and the present state of the Church, highlighting that while God's faithfulness remains unchanged, human responsibility often leads to corruption and judgment. Darby urges believers to discern their spiritual state and to rely on the Word of God for guidance, especially in the face of growing evil and apostasy. He reassures that despite the Church's failures, the power of God through the Holy Spirit is still available to those who walk in faith. Ultimately, he calls for a return to the foundational truths of Scripture to navigate the challenges of the last days.

Transcript

This is a verbatim report of a lecture given at Edinburgh, by J. N. Darby, in October, 1873. The reader will at once perceive its special importance and application. [ED.]

It is a great thing for us to know where we are, beloved - our place and condition in the sight of God; and then to know what God has declared concerning us, not only as to our condition at the present moment, but as to our whole past in the place wherein we find ourselves. It is not enough to know that God has visited us in grace, but also what is the actual result of the grace that has thus visited us; and while called upon to hold fast the great principles connected with the ground on which God at first set us, we may not be able to apply those principles to our present circumstances. Where the original ground has been departed from they are not applicable; still to the path of faith they have their application. We find this exemplified in the history of Israel. In Hezekiah's time, when Jerusalem was threatened with destruction, the Lord said of the king of Assyria, "He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there . . . for I will defend it;" whereas afterward, with the certainty of judgment coming upon the city, the man that would save his life must go out of it. In the one case it was the place of safety. God was not dealing in judgment at the time. In the other there is wonderful difference, not that the relation and mind of God toward His people had altered in any way, or ever will alter - "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance;" but

the condition of the people was entirely different. What I want you to notice is, that the conduct of the faithful was exactly opposite. They abode in Jerusalem in Hezekiah's time. To have done so when the Lord had given it up would have been certain judgment.

We have to know where we are so as to see what the bearing of the word of God is to us in the position we hold. Now suppose we take the beginning of the Acts, and read what is there said about the Church, we find the Lord adding to the assembly daily - the multitude of believers of one heart and soul - all things common, and so on. They went about in the power of the Holy Ghost, and when they came together the place was shaken where they were assembled. Do we find such a state of things now? If I take all the denominations of professing Christians - the Roman Catholic as well - I find none to correspond to it; all are mixed up with evil. Still God has His Church, and knows His Church; but we need spiritual discernment to see where we are, and to perceive the ways and will of God in the circumstances.

Another thing we have to take into account is, that wherever God sets up anything with which the responsibility of man is associated the first thing man does is to spoil it. Take, for instance, Adam in Eden. There we have man created innocent, and put under the test of obedience. He falls, and is driven out: that, in a moral sense, is a total end of him, though not of God's dealing in patience with him. Take again Noah after the flood. What is the first thing he does? The world had been put into his care, under his government, as we say, and one of the first things he did was to get drunk. Instead of influencing others for good he makes himself a disgrace, and brings a curse upon his children, upon Canaan and his posterity. Take again Israel in the wilderness. There I get the law - another of God's dealings with man in responsibility - and Moses coming down from the mount to find the people already sunk in idolatry! But enough has been said to show that the whole merit upon man's side is gone. The establishment of monarchy but confirmed this. When the house of David reigned, strange women took away their hearts; when Nebuchadnezzar reigned, the golden image was set up, the kingdom was taken from him, and the beast's heart was given to him. So that while we find God uniform in faithfulness, in patient mercy sustaining His people in trial, we find also the constant, uniform way of man is to upset that which God has set up.

Nor, when we come to the Church, do we find it otherwise. Before the canon of Scripture closes the working of this principle is manifest. It is well to mark this. Without doing so it is impossible to walk with any knowledge of our position. The Church had already failed. Nevertheless God has gone on with it in faithfulness and long-suffering ever since. Just as with Israel. In the days of Isaiah we read, "The heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing," and so on; yet the predicted judgment was not fulfilled for eight hundred years. The Lord forbore with them, and even when there was no remedy He still went on with various testimonies to them by the prophets. The faithfulness of God is infallible; but if we apply this truth to existing circumstances, so as to sanction the evil man has brought in, the whole principle is gone, and we find ourselves exactly in the position of those who in Jeremiah's time were found crying, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these." They were counting upon the infallible faithfulness of God at the very moment He was dealing in judgment with them, and the end of it was ruin, just as it will be with us if we leave out the sense of our responsibility. Again, in Isaiah, the remnant were told to "look to the rock from whence they were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from whence they were digged" - thus reminded that Abraham was alone when God called him, and gave him the promise that his seed should be "as the stars of heaven for multitude." So now, although they were alone, God was faithful, and, as He had blessed Abraham, would bless them; but in Ezekiel, when seeking to apply this principle, "Abraham was one," they said, "and he inherited the land: but we are many; the land is given us for

inheritance," they misapprehended the condition in which God regarded them. If we leave out the sense and apprehension of our condition we utterly want spiritual intelligence.

Now I think we are in the "last days." And I sometimes question if people weigh the full force of that. I could show you from Scripture that the Church, as a responsible system, was - even from the very outset - that which had got into the condition of judgment. A mistake that thousands are now slipping into is, that the Church judges, teaches, does this, does that; but if we take the word of God, we find that God has judged the Church. Yet His long-suffering and patience have borne with it as with Israel.

What we have to look in the face is this. Man in responsibility is a uniform failure, and the Church has not escaped the effect of that principle. God, in His sovereign mercy, allowed evil to come up; so that before the closing of the Word He might give us His judgment upon it. Look at the epistle of Jude: "Beloved, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." There is the faith in danger already.

They were to contend for that which was slipping from them. "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." Then, verse 14, "Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these" - that is, those persons he speaks of - "saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment upon all," etc.; thus showing, that those "certain men," who had then come in, were the persons God had spoken of executing judgment upon, and showing too, that, at the very starting-point of the Church's history, sufficient evil was evinced to call for the revelation that the ground of judgment was already there.

Take the first epistle of John, and you get further: "Little children, it is the last time; and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now there are many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time." Notice, that it is not the coming of Christ, but antichrist, and departure from the truth, that characterizes the last time. The Church of God hardly acknowledges that. In the following verses we read, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not of us.

But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." It is as if he would say, "Do not let these things discourage you; you have got that which enables you to be for God even in such circumstances." And what was the practical state of the Church as we find it elsewhere in the Word? Paul, in the epistle to the Philippians, says, "I have no man likeminded who will naturally care for your state; for all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." That is what the apostle says of the Church of God at the time he wrote; a sad testimony indeed.

And again, in the second epistle to Timothy, "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me. I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge." And Peter, in his first epistle, says, "The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God."

I have quoted these passages to show that even then - what was quite true at the beginning, but more manifest at that time - the Spirit of God could, and did, discern and testify of that which was the ground of final judgment, and testify, too, that the Church was already in the place of judgment. Nothing shows this so exceeding strongly as the epistles to the seven churches in the Revelation. There we get the Church in its entire history. I do not refer to that now; but I wish to call your attention to the ever-recurring injunction, "He that bath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." There is one thing - to my mind

a very solemn thing - here. It is this. Christ is not looked at as the Head of the body. (That He is so is nevertheless true. It is His own blessed place for ever and ever, thank God.) But it is not in that character He is here seen; neither is it as the Father and the Son made known to us by the Holy Ghost, as in the epistles; nor yet in the character of a servant, as when "He took a towel and girded Himself, and began to wash His disciples' feet." But He is here seen walking in the midst of the candlesticks, judging their state, finding something to approve of and much to disapprove of; and consequently we get that condition of the Church brought out which makes it subject to the judgment. Then our ear is called to listen to what He has said; that is, as an individual I have to consider the state of things in which I find myself, and judge of it according to Christ's word. A very serious thing it is to find that, even at that time, the beautiful plant that God had just planted was impaired by man. Not that the blessings had been withdrawn; but the condition of the Church was not what it had been when the blessings were put into the hands of men. Now that they had got the blessings, they were responsible for the use they made of them. Look at Thessalonians. There you get their "work of faith, labour of love, and patience of hope;" whereas here you get, "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience." Where was their faith, their love, their hope? "Ah!" he says, "you have left your first love;" that is, the condition in which they were when He put them into this responsibility. He deals with them in view of the blessings He had given them. "You have left your first love," He says; "now, if you do not repent, I will come and take your candlestick away;" so executing the judgment which Peter said must begin at the house of God. In this the apostle alluded to Ezekiel: "Slay utterly old and young, and begin at my sanctuary." It was only the beginning of judgment; for - not the Church merely, but - the whole world has been judged.

The Church of God was set to be the epistle of Christ in the world, and as such utterly failed. Not but that individuals may be found in the path of faith, and walking blessedly, like Elijah. In his day the whole land was given to idolatry; nevertheless God could find seven thousand in Israel whose knees had not bowed unto Baal, and whose mouths had not kissed him. It is not that individuals are not to be found walking in obedience; but that the state of things in which they walk is totally depraved. Such was the state of things in which Elijah found himself. And God sustained him, and greatly blessed him; and we think of him as one of those two who were taken up to heaven without dying. And such is the state of things in which we find ourselves. Surely, beloved, our hearts ought to be thoroughly bowed with the thought that what was so blessed, so beautiful, so perfect, should have been so marred at the very outset. How much more when we see what it has all come to And why such failure? The strength of God was there, but they did not count upon it, and they constantly gave way; just like the ten spies, when they saw the walled cities and the children of Anak. But it is very important for us to know that, although the Church has utterly failed, the strength of God does not fail. Christ is quite as sufficient as at first; and though the first condition of the Church be lost, all the strength, all the blessing, is as sure to the grasp of faith as ever.

Now mark another thing - a most striking principle in the ways of God - that is, power in the midst of evil. Earth is its sphere of action, not heaven. In heaven there will be no evil, but all will be blessedness and brightness; nothing to overcome, nothing to watch against, nothing to do with evil. But it is now that we have the power of the Spirit, when evil and darkness are on every hand. Take the Acts again. Read the whole beginning of the Church. See how every difficulty brings out the power of the Spirit, as it brings out the need of the saints.

They suffered persecution, and had power to endure it. "And all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (Notice that it is not said, "Every Christian shall suffer," but, "All that will live godly.") There we get also the power of the Spirit in miracles, as we have it in the person of Christ before His

death. He had power in Himself, doubtless; but, as the dependent One, He received power for His walk. We are told that "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him."

A display of God like this could not fail to draw out the hostility of the carnal mind. As He said, "They have both seen and hated both me and my Father." And the end was - they crucified Him. When He comes again it will be the coming of good in power - power to overcome the evil, to confine Satan. Then "they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree." But now we have good in the midst of evil; and so long as Satan is the prince of this world, if the two things get mixed up, the evil swamps the good.

You see this in the parable of the virgins. The wise and the foolish go together, and the consequence is, they all sleep; and the moment they awake, and trim their lamps, they go together again. Still linked with evil, they fall under the power of evil. Yet the apostle says, "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." For an illustration of this, take Israel in the time of Joshua. Joshua's time is a time of power. Jericho is taken; but evil is allowed to come in, and before Ai they fail.

Then, going back to Gilgal, they get fresh power. Their enemies are subdued; the walled cities, the children of Anak, are as nothing before them - they overcome all. There we have good in the midst of evil, with power carrying on the good, and putting down the evil. In Judges it is the converse. They are still God's people; but the power is on the side of the evil. How was this? They had gone up from Gilgal (i.e. "Rolling away") to Bochim (i.e. "Weeping"). Formerly Joshua and all Israel had gone back to the death of the flesh; for that is what we have in figure in Gilgal.

There they received power. It just means this: they had crossed Jordan; had come into Canaan, the place of power; and the reproach of Egypt was rolled away. But in Bochim we get another thing. They were still God's people. His power was there, His angel was there; but it was a time of weakness. There is a lesson for us here, beloved. If we do not go back to the true annihilation of self in the Lord's presence, we cannot come out with power. Take the case of any ministering saint. He will break down, he will fail; he must renew his strength. This indeed is the great secret of the Christian's life. If my intercourse with God be broken, I am utterly empty.

How blessed it is to see that Israel's God did not give them up! They built an altar in Bochim; yet they were constantly tried in judgment. How was this? The people had lost their place. We have to look to that in the consideration of our present condition. The Church has lost its place, and in the same way the Church is under judgment. We read, "All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." Is not that losing their place? And losing their place, they lose their power, and must remain in weakness, or else get to Bochim. What is peculiar about Bochim is, that they had to say to God there. In the Church of God we find a like relationship with God. Israel is a picture of it. In the beginning of the Church we have good, and power on the side of the good. In one day three thousand, and in another five thousand, are added to it. Alongside of this I get the power of evil. Yet God was showing His power in another way; and I doubt not that if we were more faithful, our experience would be more similar. They were filled with the Spirit. When they came together, the place was shaken where they were assembled. As they lived in the Spirit, they also walked in the Spirit, and they went about manifesting the power of the Spirit. All that was going on with the power of evil; and we do not leave this scene till we have the evil brought to light in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. Still the Spirit of power is there. The sin is instantly judged; they are cut off, and the result is that great fear comes upon all the Church. There we have the display of it all - the power of the good in the disciples testifying to Jesus; the power of the evil opposing, and putting them in prison. And

then, before the history closes, "the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God;" that is, the last of all times till Christ comes in glory, when His power puts down the evil.

In the second epistle to Timothy we get a testimony to the growth of the evil where the good ought to be. We find it positively stated that "in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers," and so on. "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." Then follows the exhortation, "From such turn away." But first we have the positive declaration, that they turn back to evil. Then he goes on to say, "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of; knowing of whom thou hast learned them." Notice, that he does not refer him to the Church as a teacher, but to those of whom he had learned these things. Who were they? Paul and Peter and the other apostles. Now, as one who has received the gospel of God's grace, I know from whom I have learned it, and from them I get the declaration that evil had come in, and would wax worse and worse until the perilous times. Then as Timothy is cast upon the certainty of the words of those from whom he had received the truth, in like manner I get the word of God, as that on which my soul is cast when the Church has become a judged thing, "waxing worse and worse," "having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." Nor can it be denied that this is the character of the Church at the present time. It is an astounding fact that we have on every side persons named Christians turning infidels in thousands. There is not, I dare say, one young man in forty free from the rationalistic teaching of the present day. I do not know how you find it here, but it is so in England. Mere formality is turning to open infidelity on the one hand, or to superstition on the other. It is notorious that such is the case. Christendom, even in the sense of outward submission to Christ, is an impossibility. But what we want is Christianity as it is in the word of God.

One very blessed thing through it all is the presence of the Spirit in power, sustaining the Lord's people in the midst of that which is just ripening for judgment. We have something like this in the case of Nicodemus among the children of Israel, and that most blessed testimony in the first two chapters of Luke - Simeon and Anna, and the others who were looking for redemption in Jerusalem. They knew each other, and were found coming together and exhorting one another, just as we ought to be. I felt led to speak thus as to the state of things in which we find ourselves. Whenever we take man's responsibility into account, we find his principle of action is to depart from what God has set up; then growing corruption manifests itself, and goes on till judgment is necessary. This we find in the days of the apostles, but more obviously in the last days. And mark, they were to know that it was the last time, because antichrist was there, not because Christ was come again. Even then the antichristian spirit was evident; but God's patience has gone on with them ever since, as with Israel.

What I desire to bring before the conscience of brethren is the direction given as to how we are to walk in the midst of such a state of things - "Continue in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of;" that is, we are referred directly to the word of God. It is quite true we are to use ministry. Such is God's will and His way, as we read, "He gave some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers." But the reference here to the word of God is a very different thing from that.

As an individual I must come directly to it, and let the authority of God determine everything. "Oh, but," someone may say, "I may be mistaken as to the teaching of the Word!" "So much the worse for you," I say; "but that is quite a different thing from denying the operation of the Spirit." Not but that God is pleased to use some as instruments to bring His word to bear on others, as in the case of a mother with a child, where it may be only the activity of nature, or a school teacher with a scholar, or a friend with his friend.

But while knowing that, still we must go to the word of God, and that directly. We have to insist on that in these days. God speaks to us directly in the inspired Word. The mother is not inspired. Those who have the place of teachers in the Church are not inspired in the sense that we are ruled and judged by them, but the word of God is, and we must go directly to the Word, not to the Church. I do not get the Church as teaching at all; I deny it totally. What I find is that the Church is taught, and that it is the province of certain individuals to teach.

When you get the Church of God at first, one of the apostles, or some inspired person, was there to communicate directly to the saints. The saints were taught, but not by the Church; the Pauls and Peters and Johns were their teachers. God's word is the inspired teacher now. "I charge you," the apostle says to the Thessalonians, "that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren." The principle we get there is of all importance. It is no less than God's title to speak to souls directly by His word.

This in no way sets aside the exercise of gift in the body. We cannot say of any member, "We have no need of thee." But all service must be in obedience. Take for illustration a servant who is sent by his master with a letter, and knowing the contents of the letter, instead of delivering it, gives the message verbally. It is the master he is setting aside. What we have to insist upon is God's title to speak to His people in His own way, and so to judge them. I don't talk of providential judgment, but of reproof, correcting, and instructing by His word.

I must bow to the word of God, not sit in judgment upon it. Judgment is to be exercised in other matters; but the moment I get to divine things I must not think of judging them. Judge the word of God! That is what the rationalist claims to do. The natural man thinks he can judge the word of God; but our place is to hear what God has to say, just as we are all here today to hear what God has to say. Far from judging the Word it judges me, in being brought to my heart and conscience.

Judge it and you are all wrong. It is true that God's Spirit is needful to convince me as to what the word of God is; but the moment I know it as the word of God my heart is drawn, and my conscience judged.

Now the Scripture says, "Let that abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning." What is it that we have from the beginning? In the beginning I get that which God has set up to be a witness for Himself on the earth. I get the unity of the body of Christ, and I get the inspired word of God with the doctrines in it which were received from the beginning. Again we read, "If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father." There is an immense principle here. Nobody who knows ecclesiastical history but is aware of the wretchedness and misery that befell the Church in consequence of failure in this respect. I get now, not that which God set up at the beginning, but what man has made of it. At the beginning I get the unity of the body of Christ manifest upon earth; but do I get it so now? Is it not a fact, that instead of unity there is a constant war going on amongst professing Christians? As far as man's exhibition of it is concerned the unity is gone. The apostle says, "As a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon; but let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon;" and elsewhere he speaks of grievous wolves coming in. It is thus put on the footing of man's responsibility and judged accordingly; but where it is viewed as the work of God and His testimony it is a matter of faith. Suppose I find, "Upon this rock I will build my Church" - there I get the thought of the Church, not yet built, but Christ building it. "And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Then Peter says, "To whom coming, as unto a living stone . . . ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house;" and in Ephesians we read of "Jesus Christ the chief corner-stone, in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." Here I get divine workmanship.

On the other hand I get, what I was quoting already, God's building put into the hands of men, and every man warned to take heed how he buildeth. The two things are quite distinct. Why do men confound them, teaching to professed Christianity that which belongs only to the saints, and so adding the wood, hay, and stubble? Simply because they do not give heed to the word of God. We must test everything by the word of God. This is God's own principle. It is quite true that we have the power of the Spirit for our walk; but if I be called upon to hear what the Spirit says unto the churches I must discover where the churches are. And if I am warned not to build with wood, hay, or stubble I must find out what that means, so as to be obedient to the word of God; but I do not dwell upon that. You will perceive that I am dealing with great principles merely. The grand secret of power in these days is faith in the presence of the Spirit of God; and while using the word makes us take notice of the state of things in which we find ourselves, we must see that we are not confounding God's faithfulness with man's responsibility; that is what Israel did. But the great thing is to know that there is a living God, and that that living God is amongst us in the person and power of the Holy Ghost. Not that we lose sight of the cross. It is all founded on the cross surely; but what we have to get hold of is this: the Comforter did come. By Him we are all baptized into one body; and, whether it be in the individual or in the Church, the secret of the power of good in the midst of evil, outside or inside, the Word being our guide, is the presence of God by the Spirit. "Know ye riot," is written to the Corinthians, who were going on badly, "that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?" There they are spoken to as individuals. "Do yon believe your bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost? Then what kind of persons ought you to be?" You get it again in the second epistle to the same Church - "Ye are the temple of the living God." There they are spoken of collectively; but in both cases we learn that the present practical power of living is faith in the presence of the Spirit of God. Alone I can do nothing whatever for blessing.

"Ye are the temple of the living God." I go back a little on this. We do not find God dwelling with man but on the ground of redemption. Not with Adam: He came down and walked in the garden, but did not dwell with him, nor yet with Abraham, although he visited him, and ate with him. But when the Israelites get out of Egypt God comes to dwell among them. Indeed we are told in Exodus 29 that for this the Lord brought them out of Egypt. As soon as they are come out of the Red Sea we find God dwelling in the midst of them. The Red Sea gives the thought of redemption. We find the same thing now, but more fully. "If I go not away," the Lord said to His disciples, "the Comforter will not come unto you." Christ was here, but He was alone; like the corn of wheat - except it fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone. At His baptism the Holy Ghost came down and abode upon Him; still He was alone. It was not until redemption was accomplished, and He had ascended, a Man in the glory, that the Holy Ghost came down to dwell in us, that we might be the expression of what He is down here. "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God;" and, "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit." When we speak of redemption it does not mean merely that a man is quickened, or that he has got life, but that he is washed, and that the Holy Ghost dwells in him, that he is a new man. I only ask you, beloved, if you believe all this. Then what subjection of spirit there ought to be! what manner of persons ought ye to be! what carefulness not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption!

There is one word in 1 Cor. 2. In these days it is well to give heed to it. In verse 9 we read, "It is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." The things of the world are always put in contrast with the things of God; but that is not the special teaching here. Nor is it that the things which are the subject of revelation,

when put in contrast with our present state, are so great that we cannot conceive them. "For God hath revealed them to us by His Spirit." But the apostle is contrasting the state of the Old Testament saints with that of the saints in the present dispensation. In the time of Isaiah their hearts could not enter into the things that God had prepared for them that love Him; but we are in a different condition. In verse 13 he says: "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." This is commonly called inspiration. When the Spirit of God teaches, the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit, because they are spiritually discerned. There are what may be called three steps in the process of inspiration. First there is the revelation of the things; then there is the word the Spirit teaches; and then the condition of mind in which it is received. We have the living power of the Spirit of God on the one hand, and the word of God on the other, to keep and guide us in our path here. If I take the word of God by itself, and say I can judge of it, and understand its teaching, I am a rationalist. I would be entirely wrong in thinking man's mind capable of judging God's revelation. But when I seek to judge it spiritually, I am right at once. And having the Spirit of God in me to discern it, I have God's own guidance in everything. That is how we are to walk in our present circumstances. And while God has set forth the ruin of the church, as connected with man's responsibility, He has shown us that there is, for the path of faith, just as much wisdom and power as at first. J. N. Darby.

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