

The Perfectness of Christ as Man in Temptation Matt. 26:31-56

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon explores the perfectness of Christ as a man in temptation, emphasizing His humanity, the power of Scripture, and the lessons learned through suffering.

Scripture: Matthew 4:1, Matthew 26:38

Topics: "Temptation", "Christ's Humanity"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the perfectness of Christ as a man in the face of temptation, contrasting the failures of humanity with Christ's unwavering obedience and divine nature. He highlights how Christ fully experienced human emotions, particularly in Gethsemane, while remaining completely aligned with God's will. Darby illustrates that Christ's reliance on Scripture was key to overcoming temptation, demonstrating that true strength comes from being 'in Christ.' He also discusses the significance of understanding our position in Christ, which empowers believers to face spiritual battles. Ultimately, Darby calls for a deeper reflection on Christ's example and the lessons it teaches us about patience and faithfulness amidst trials.

Transcript

The British Herald, 1875, pp. 86-87.

That which is so striking in all this history is the entire contrast between "flesh" and Christ in every sense; not so much the wickedness of man rising up against the Lord, as the entire failure of everything around except Christ Himself.

It is not divine power, as in John, where they all go backward and fall to the ground (John 18:6); but here it is entirely a man, the wonderful divine perfectness in a man. What I see in the Lord is, that His Spirit enters into it all thoroughly, as it was from God. I get two things: I see Him completely before God; and, on the other hand, He feels all that a man feels as a man. He goes through it all so entirely with God, so from God, that in dealing with men there is not a trace of it in His spirit, quiet and gracious. It is a wonderful thing, the perfectness, thorough sincerity and truth, in Him!

There is another thing that strikes me here as very peculiar, that the blessed Lord comes out with all His feelings in the garden of Gethsemane. When He was going about, working the works of God, it was not

the case: there was the Divine person; they could not enter into it. But here He tells them everything, -- "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death."

Another thing is beautiful, -- the confidingness of His heart in His disciples, even when they were so miserable and wretched. He could not do it when He was going about in the world. Wonderful, the divine working in a man! The Lord has it all in His mind, and yet speaks to them as if nothing was happening. "After I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee." There He is telling them as quietly as possible. You do not get ascension in Matthew, it is Galilee.

What is so striking in Matthew, and especially here, is the place that the Scriptures hold. The moment He takes His place in the difficulties of man, He takes the Word of God and appeals to it (Matt. 4). We have to overcome the wiles of Satan; but when it is resisting, he flies. It is in resisting we feel it. I do not feel the wiles; when they come, I am not aware it is the devil. The Lord, of course, was perfect in obedience. He had just been owned Son of God by the Father, and the devil takes that up, -- "If Thou be the Son of God," etc. It was all over simply by quoting a text. The way in which for Christ, the Son of God, a text was sufficient, was because it came out of the mouth of God. The weapon by which He overcame was simply by quoting texts. I am led to take God's Word, and the devil can do nothing.

We have the historical order in this Gospel, the spiritual order in Luke.

We require "all the armour of God" for the wiles of the devil; not for his strength, because "resist the devil, and he will flee from you." When he comes openly and says, "Worship me and take the world," then He says, "Get thee hence, Satan."

In meeting him as man, He shows us how to meet him; only we meet him as a beaten enemy. Before this question of Satan comes in, He gets His place (Matt 3, 4).

Bunyan is all wrong here, because he did not see redemption clearly; he gives experience without starting with being "in Christ," "strong in the Lord." You do not get a person in his "Pilgrim's Progress" quietly at peace saying, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" We have to go through the world, but we are "in Christ," a real place -- a new position we have got into; you never get that in Bunyan. I get in him the pence but not the pounds in the account.

You always get the Person of Christ safe; that is what is so beautiful in Scripture. He came to obey, not to command. When I say I am "in Christ," redemption according to God's counsels has put me "in Christ," and the Holy Ghost is given me to know it too; but that is no journey -- it has nothing to do with my overcoming. The moment Christ took His place, the conflict and storm comes on. There is no conflict with Satan until we are saved: difficulties doubtless there are, but no conflict. Till you have crossed Jordan, you will never have conflict with Satan; then "as captain of the Lord's host am I now come."

You never get armour in Romans, for there, I am a justified man on earth; but the moment you get into Ephesians, you are in "heavenly places," and you want the armour there. I believe there are very few consciously in Canaan: you must cross the Jordan in order to be there.

What characterized the wilderness was God testing man. We are brought into the wilderness by redemption; but it is not Canaan; it is the part of the Christian life in which we are walking down here through the world. In Egypt a man is in slavery. In the wilderness he is redeemed, but still in the world (as to circumstances of trial, difficulty, danger), and that is Romans.

The Red Sea is Christ's death and resurrection, by which I am delivered. The Jordan is still death and resurrection, but my dying with Christ, and I am risen with Christ which I never get in the Romans. Till I am dead, I cannot take the place of being risen and gone up. In Ephesians man is treated not as dying to sin, but as "dead in sins," and therefore it is a new creation -- "Created in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:10). When we are dead in our sins, Christ comes down into the same place, and then takes us all up together. The same power that put Christ there has put you into Christ. He gives us the Holy Ghost; and I know thereby that I am "in Christ." Scripture never talks of our dying to sin, it speaks of our being dead (and of our reckoning ourselves so, Rom. 6). You never get anything about justification in Ephesians, for you are a new creature, and this needs no justifying.

From the Red Sea to Sinai there was nothing to do with their responsibility as under law. It is all absolute grace, and then at Sinai they get the law and start entirely afresh. Before Sinai God glorifies Himself before the people in blessing them in spite of their naughtiness; after Sinai He kills 20,000 of them.

When you get the manna -- really to us Christ -- you get the Sabbath, that is, rest in Christ. When you get to Rephidim, you get Amalek. When you get the Holy Ghost you get the fighting of flesh and spirit -- victory through priesthood, Aaron. They spent a whole year at Sinai; they start afresh, and get tested, how far their obedience lasted. You get in the whole history as far as Sinai, from redemption up to the millennium: bitter water -- you must drink death; the refreshing palm-trees and wells of water. Amalek was harassing, to prevent their getting into the land. A little anticipative picture: Amalek is Satan acting.

The flesh is tried with God, thirty-eight years going through all this process instead of eleven days. Brought through the Red Sea out of Egypt to God, but then there was all the wilderness to go through. "Thou shalt bring them in"; they were brought to God. The manna is Christ meeting us in our wants, as in the wilderness; whilst "the old corn" of the land is a heavenly Christ. If I say I am dead, where is the flesh? God is just as holy in all the conflicts as in the path we have to tread. To Joshua and Moses, He says "loose thy shoe from off thy feet."

The hidden manna -- when we get to heaven we shall know what Christ was down here. All those promises, if we are spiritual, we may anticipate what they are. We cannot use the word as a sword till we are in Canaan; and we must have all the defensive armour before we can use the sword at all properly. I must have passed over Jordan before I can get that at all. Then comes supplication, dependence.

The having conflict, in my mind, is to bring me to the confession that I cannot succeed against myself. When you say, "I cannot," then God takes you out.

What I learn there is, that I have died with Christ. Supposing I was always faithful there, how can Satan tempt a dead man? I go through death by faith in Christ. The moment I say, "I am in Christ," I am "perfect" before God: "as Christ is, so are we in this world." I look up to God and find Christ there, and it would be impossible for God to impute sin to me. As long as I am looking to find it done in myself, it is not done. Where it was condemned, it died. Then I say, "Thank God." I have the experience short of that in Rom. 7; after that, in Rom. 8. We are in Christ, and we know it: that is the thing. I am in Christ before God, loved as Jesus is loved.

In the beginning Satan tempts Christ with all that is alluring. He meets him with Scripture. But, then after the spoiling of the strong man's goods, something more terrible comes: -- God in goodness and man in enmity. "The prince of this world cometh"; he is come back again after departing for a season. In this solemn moment He says, "Oh, the Scriptures have said it, and must be fulfilled." He meets Satan now with

the power of death; much more, besides the cup. Everybody is at His command, except the disciples, and they run away. He meets it all alone with God, and is so much a man that He asks His disciples to watch with Him, and they sleep. He is thinking of "the cup" with God and according to God, but as a man. You get in Him a man; but no thought in the man but what came from God. It is a wonderful picture, a wonderful fact He goes through the whole thing, in absolute calmness with His Father; and it ought to find us with God, in our little sufferings. Everything goes wrong with man, even with disciples, sleeping when he ought to have been watching, fighting when Christ was being led as a lamb to the slaughter. To do right and get horribly wronged, and take it patiently (1 Peter 2), this is what God likes -- a hard lesson for us all.

You do not get the healing here of the servant's ear (v. 52); it is simple patience, Christ brought out in contrast to man; "I, the leader of all, am suffering and bowing." Oh, how blessed it is! What lessons He teaches us besides saving us!

The "flesh" listens to the devil instead of resisting him. If you do honestly resist him, he runs away. Pride dominates instead of passion, unless Christ is there. It just shows what poor creatures we are without looking at Him. "Sleep on now and take your rest," etc., the time for watching is over, the time for suffering is come! He might have walked away in the dark, but He did not. The Lord give us to think of Himself!

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