

Deliverance and Holiness

by John Nelson Darby

John Nelson Darby's sermon emphasizes the experiential understanding of deliverance and the distinction between holiness and justification in the Christian life.

Scripture: John 10:10, John 20:22, Acts 1:8, Romans 7:14, Romans 8:2, 2 Corinthians 4:10-12, Galatians 2:19-20, Ephesians 1:7, Hebrews 12:14, 1 John 4:17

Topics: "Deliverance", "Holiness"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the distinction between deliverance and the realization of holiness, arguing that true deliverance comes from experiencing the weight of sin rather than mere intellectual understanding. He explains that while justification is essential for holiness, many confuse the two, seeking justification through their own efforts rather than resting in Christ's work. Darby highlights the importance of recognizing one's incapacity to do good and the necessity of being dead to sin in order to live in Christ. He encourages believers to understand their identity in Christ and to pursue practical holiness through the power of the Holy Spirit. Ultimately, he calls for a deeper realization of being dead to the law and alive in Christ, urging Christians to live out this truth in their daily lives.

Transcript

The Bible Herald, 1879, pp. 29-34.

There is a difference between liberty, or deliverance, and the realization of it. Since deliverance is not a matter of intelligence, but experimental, you cannot be delivered without having first felt the yoke of sin. It is possible to have the pardon of sins, without having been much exercised in your own conscience. The love of God may be seen in pardoning our sins, but without having the consciousness of what we are, without feeling sin.

When we judge things according to our state, we are always under the law, in one way or another. The law gives the duties of our relations, but when it says, "Thou shalt not covet"; then it touches the root, the seat of evil in the heart. Nevertheless, the law does not say that man is lost; only the result is, that we cannot fulfil it. Some people quote James 1:14,15, and pretend that "concupiscence" is not "sin," unless the will consent to it; but in this passage sin is outward sin; whilst, instead, in Rom. 7:8, it is sin which works "concupiscence" and here sin is the cause and the root.

When I discover what I am; it is not only knowledge, but an experience which I make of myself. I have indeed the will to do good: but I find that I am incapable of doing it.

In Rom. 7:14, "We know" is the intelligence, but "I" is individual experience. I cannot have the understanding of deliverance without its being in an experimental way: I cannot die simply by the intelligence of it; there must be the reality, the practical experience. When one dies, there is "no strength"; then one cries out -- "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" And when I perceive that I cannot do good, I find that I am dead in Christ. If I can really say that I am dead, (not only that I am pardoned, which is another thing), then it is something in me.

The seventh chapter is not death to sin; but that I cannot get the victory. You get to deliverance by experience: and then I am convinced that I can do nothing; that truly there is "no good" in me. If I am not brought to the experimental knowledge of my incapacity, this seventh chapter of Romans will be a long experience. But are we contented to discover what we are? Do you realize practically that which you have learned?

This seventh chapter, then, is not the Christian state; for in this chapter one is only thinking of oneself; instead of which we ought to be thinking of Christ, and of what we are in Christ before God.

There is much confusion made between holiness, and justification. Not a few stop at those words, "follow holiness without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). But in seeking this holiness, they do not perceive that they are seeking justification; since, if a person is not at rest before God, it is justification that one would need: but holiness is the judgment of the evil.

When we are justified, we hate evil; that is exactly holiness. Holiness makes me say, That is an evil thing, detestable! The question therefore of justification must first be settled, before there can be holiness. You confuse the two things till you are delivered. It is not possible that there should be true holiness until justification is well established. My acceptance with God in the negative sense consists in this, that my sins are annulled; and in the positive sense that I am "accepted in the Beloved."

The Father loves me as He loves His Son Jesus, not only because He is love, but because He is just in virtue of the perfect work of Christ. If I were accepted by my own holiness, then it would be through something that I am, and not through Christ; but I am "accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:7).

The sanctification in the Epistle to the Hebrews is different from that which is found in Peter and elsewhere. The Spirit sanctifies by the work of Christ; then comes practical sanctification. It is said "As he is" (not as He was) "so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17). Christ in heaven is the practical measure of what ought to be; and in this sense it is always progressive. At every step I make in this life, I always discover more of the glory of Christ. In the Old Testament (Lev. 14), for the purification of the leper the blood was put on the tip of the right ear, on the thumb of the right hand, and on the great toe of the right foot; which signified that in my conduct I ought to do nothing in disaccord with the blood of Christ.

According to the Epistle to the Rom. 6:11, etc. I am already become a dead man, and living the life of Christ. According to 2 Cor. 1:8-10, the apostle esteemed himself as a dead man; and such he was before persecution. The apostle always bore about the "dying of Jesus," so that there was only "the life of Jesus" that worked in him. If death is necessary for us, it is a sign that there is always evil in us. If you compare 2 Cor. 4:10, 11, with 1:8-10, you will see that when death was there present to Paul, he was already dead.

"Life in you" (2 Cor. 4:12), means that his life was in relation with the Corinthians. Christianity was a reality for Paul; Christ, being rejected, all his relations were in heaven (2 Cor. 4:18). That does not mean that he never failed. For the cultivation of practical holiness there are means, such as prayer, watchfulness, the study of the Word, etc. But the principal thing is to get thoroughly hold of the measure of it.

Have you, who hear the name of the Lord, made your reckoning that you are dead? Many Christians have not commenced their course as being dead. Let us seek to realize that. We often suffer, not because we are faithful, but because we need to be mortified; "If in this life only we have hope in Christ we are of all men most miserable" (1 Cor. 15:19). The Lausanne translation has badly translated this passage, for it lets it be supposed that Christ does not suffice. In general this translation wants spiritual intelligence. Certainly if this life only were in question Paul was the most miserable man in the world; beaten, persecuted, with death always before him. Do we want anything else? Money, position, honour, or something else? Then, as a fact, we do not desire death. To "always bear about in the body the death" is as much as to say that Christ is our all. We all fail, it is true: but let us study, at least, to realize these things. Do we find that we are dead? and do we conduct ourselves as risen men?

In Gal. 2:19-20, "By the law I am dead to the law." The law had put Paul to death, but Christ had taken His condemnation. Paul had taken death, but not condemnation. Then comes the positive part, "Christ lives in me," etc. We must have Christ before us in order to live with this object and to have a course to run. There is action, and reaction having death in order to live, we ought to live in order to realize death. The level of christianity has been lowered by bad teachings.

It is asked what is the difference between the anointing and the sealing. It is the same thing. Christ was anointed, and also sealed. The leper (Lev. 14) was first washed with water, then sprinkled with blood, and finally anointed. It is not possible for any one to believe fully in the value of the blood of Christ and not be sealed. They may hope, but do not know the position that the blood of Christ gives us before God. I have said to Christians who told me that they were not sure that they were children of God; then why do you call God your Father, if you are not sure of being his children? then don't call Him Father. There are thus souls who joy in God as Father and in their relative position without being able to explain it; but the important thing is that they possess the thing itself.

In Christendom, the presence of the Holy Ghost is not believed in; His operations are confounded with His presence. There were always believers before Pentecost, but they had not yet received the Spirit as it is spoken of in Eph. 1:13. God seals faith. As the Son of God was sent, and came down here, so the Spirit was sent, and is come. It is certain that all that ever was done or created, was always by the operation of the Spirit, but His indwelling is another thing. When the Lord breathed on His disciples in John 20:22 saying "receive ye the Holy Ghost" after His resurrection, it was not the promise of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, because Christ was not yet glorified. It was a breath of the life of resurrection, "life more abundantly" as it is said in John 10:10. That is a reference to the breathing of God upon Adam. The work of Christ was already accepted when He breathed on the disciples; but He was not yet in the glory. You see in Acts 1:8, "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." In Rom. 8, life and the Holy Ghost go together. That He is the spirit of life is true in v. 2, but He is also the Spirit of God in v. 9, and also the Spirit of Christ; and it is like "Christ" the spring and its stream, you can't separate them. People, who only take one view of truths when they learn or teach in the things of God, change their nature.

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