

Deliverance

by John Nelson Darby

Deliverance in Christianity is the knowledge of being dead to sin and Christ being our life, where we are perfectly free before God.

Scripture: John 12:24, Romans 5:2, Romans 6:11, Romans 8:1, Ephesians 2:6, Colossians 3:1

Topics: "Identity in Christ", "Deliverance"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes that deliverance is distinct from the pardon of sins, highlighting the believer's new position in Christ through His resurrection and glory. He explains that true deliverance involves recognizing our deadness to sin and the flesh, and being empowered by the Holy Spirit to live in this new reality. Darby outlines the three stages of this experience: being dead to sin, being risen with Christ, and being seated in heavenly places. He warns against conflating deliverance with mere forgiveness, stressing that understanding our identity in Christ is crucial for true freedom. Ultimately, he calls believers to live in the light of their new position, fully relying on Christ as their deliverer.

Transcript

The Bible Herald, 1879, pp. 11-18.

Deliverance has been much confused with the pardon of sins. Two things are united as to the Christian position -- the resurrection, and the position of the Lord in the glory where He is. He is a man beyond death, beyond judgment, beyond sin, and beyond the power of Satan. In Him risen, we have life and an entirely new position. In the person of Christ there is the new man. Thus the man is not only accepted and ascended, but has the glory. "We rejoice in hope of the glory" (Rom. 5:2). As soon as Christ was glorified, the Holy Ghost came down. Here Christianity begins. We already have divine life, but not yet the glory; nevertheless, the Holy Ghost comes down as a testimony to that glory of the Son of Man; and we await it to be glorified with Him. It is the possession of the Holy Ghost which constitutes the Christian position.

Many want to make out that Christ united Himself to us in incarnation; but this is false, destroys Christianity, and begets many other errors. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24). Christ did not unite Himself to fallen humanity.

Others want to make out that there is a divine nature in the natural man. But man in his natural state is condemned; and the other man, the Second, is well pleasing to God; and the proof of it was that He raised Him again from the dead. The gospel commences with a glorified Christ; and with the Holy Ghost in us.

His coming in flesh is indeed a good piece of news. But, properly the gospel does not begin till all His work on earth was completed, so that the gospel is no longer a promise of something; but a testimony to the completed work of Christ. The Holy Ghost is come down; and He enlightens the believer with respect to that perfect work, and with respect to his position by means of it; and He is also the earnest of glory.

There is besides the work of the Spirit in us, not only by us, which is a distinct thing. Subjectively, as to us, the Holy Ghost works to convince us of sin, shows us in the first place our sins, and makes us see that by the blood of Christ we have pardon and justification of the sins which we have committed. But up to this point there is no deliverance; the joy of pardon is not deliverance. And it is an error to consider it as such.

There is another thing: discovery is made of what we are in the flesh. It is discovered that the tree is bad; that not only are we sinners, but that in the flesh it is impossible to please God. When we know that the flesh is bad --irremediable, and we find out by experience that we are without strength, then comes the knowledge of the truth (Rom. 4) that we are dead with Christ (not only that He died for us -- that is pardon); and then we are delivered (Rom. 8). We are in the new creation; and we hold ourselves dead -- "dead indeed to sin"; and "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." The consequence is, that we are "not in the flesh but in the Spirit," the Spirit of God being in us, -- sons of God and heirs with Christ; that we are bound up with Him in the new position; and the Holy Ghost, dwelling in us, makes us who are still in the mortal body groan with this groaning creation, making us feel in what a miserable world we are.

This last part of the truth of the gospel of our salvation is a matter of experience; not so the first part. The pardon of sins is found in the first part of the Epistle to the Romans (up to ch. 5:11); and death to the old man, to sin, is found in the second part of the Epistle (up to ch. 8). This experimental knowledge is divided into three parts.

1st. We are dead to sin, to that bad nature: the old man having been crucified, we are dead in [with?] Christ, and alive unto God in Christ Jesus. That goes together.

2nd. We have the consciousness of being risen with Christ, and this is the effect of His resurrection. But it is a second step more in advance. Since I am dead and risen, I have finished with the world although still in the world (Col. 2:3).

3rd. We are seated in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 2). This last experience is founded upon a more deep and spiritual knowledge of the preceding bad state, and our deliverance from it. We were found dead, not living, in our trespasses and sins; but now we are quickened together with Christ, raised up together with Him, and we are a new creation. The pardon of sins is an experience of what has been completed.

These three points are scattered in the Epistles. In the Romans we are dead with Christ; that is deliverance. In the Colossians we are also dead with Christ, but besides, we are risen with Him. In the Ephesians the subject goes further, because we are seated in heavenly places in Christ, saved and sealed with the Holy Ghost. The Epistle to the Colossians does not speak to us of the Holy Ghost, but of Christ as our life. Also, the exhortations of these Epistles are in accordance with their respective doctrines. In the Romans, being dead we are exhorted to give ourselves to Him, as living sacrifices. In the Colossians, being risen we are exhorted to seek heavenly things, things above where Christ sits, and not earthly things. In the Ephesians, being seated in the heavens (in Spirit [spirit?] of course) we are exhorted to go out, so to speak, from the presence of God, to manifest His character in the world (Eph. 5:1-2). It is

an entirely different class of exhortations from those of Romans. In the first part of the exposition of the gospel by Paul, liabilities are met and discharged; that is not entirely a matter of experience, although it produces contentment and peace; but if I say to any one, You are dead, it is another thing, it is a matter of experience. It is my subjective state in Rom. 6, not my judicial clearance. That is the second part. "We are crucified with Christ." We must not confound the pardon of sins with the state of deliverance from sins. In this transition state you experience three things --

1st. That in me no good thing dwells -- not that I have done evil, but that the flesh is bad and will not submit itself to God -- is enmity against God.

2nd. I experience that I have not strength to do better. I am "without strength" to do the things the quickened soul approves of.

3rd. That it is not I who do the evil, but sin that dwells in me.

Up to this point, there is not deliverance, although I may be relieved by the discovery that it is "not I, but sin." This last is rather light than deliverance; but the evil is stronger than I. I am a man bound and the slave of another, and I cannot do good though I will it. Then, when I experience this, I find that I am dead, give up in despair, and I find Christ as my deliverer -- "I thank God through Jesus Christ."

Now I pass to Rom. 8. It is a new position: "there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." Now I am not only pardoned, but sin in me -- my bad nature -- was condemned at the cross. Condemnation is passed; and death is come: now I am delivered. The law could not accomplish this object.

In the first part of the Epistle, men have done such and such things; but here in the second part (Rom. 5:18) we have -- "By the disobedience of one, the many have been constituted sinners." Individually, we have each our sins, besides this we have in common, sin. Some want to jump over this experience, but then they are ignorant of what we are.

In Deut. 16 we have instructive types on these subjects.

In the Passover (vv 1-8), we do not find either joy or communion: Christ is dead for us; we are not condemned.

In the feast of weeks (vv. 9-12), they were to "offer free will offerings of thine hand, and give thanks before Jehovah with all those of the household," and vigilance is enjoined; "observe and do these statutes."

Then at the feast of tabernacles (vv. 13-15), which will be the repose of the millennium, Israel is wholly blessed in all his increase, in all the work of his hands, and wholly joyful.

Deliverance is neither conversion, nor pardon; but it is when the flesh is held dead, and when Christ is our life; and we know it in our own consciousness when we are sealed with the Holy Ghost.

It is not a question of what we have done, but of what we are: Christ is dead, and I am dead. We must get to know ourselves from the bottom of the heart to be delivered. This is the death with Christ to sin. It is the passage out of Egypt and bondage. We must distrust ourselves. Moses went in his own strength to kill the Egyptian; but by so doing he effected no deliverance, but fled himself from Pharaoh. The flesh is worthless; but he required forty years alone with God in Midian to find out that it was good for nothing, and

to know that God would be his mouth and power for deliverance from the Egyptian. He had to learn God's way of deliverance; not by fighting with him, but death to him. The flesh is little known.

The starting point of Christianity is that Christ is risen and glorified. Paul began here (Acts 9). Christ is substituted for man in the flesh. There are two characters of this deliverance: that is, when we are perfectly free before God. When I speak of justification, I think of God [as] just, but I have peace in my soul. Then you come to the knowledge of the love of God, which in one sense is deliverance, but not entirely so. The great men of the Reformation of the 16th century saw the believer justified before God; they saw justice satisfied, but they did not understand the other fact that it is God in His love who gave His only begotten Son. In Egypt (Ex. 12) God had the character of a judge. But at the Red Sea God presented Himself as a Deliverer -- "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." If these subjects are put out of place, then you lose sight of the two sides that are found in John 3; the righteousness of God in v. 14, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up," and the love of God in v. 16, "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son," etc.

In the religious movement that is at present taking place in Sweden, they are going to the opposite extreme from that of the reformers; they take the love of God, and lose sight of righteousness and propitiation. In this case they have not thoroughly the sense of sin. If I am delivered, sin will no more have dominion over me. I am no more under that yoke, I am under grace, and I know the love. If I live with God, I do not sin, and I have no need to accept that doctrine of perfection, by which you are supposed by an act of faith to jump out of the experience of the 7th chapter to enter that of the 8th.

To become Christians, we must pass through Rom. 7. In that chapter there is certainly life, but the question is to know which is the husband -- the law, or Christ -- for the renewed soul. Now in this chapter you are still under the first husband, like the prodigal son (Luke 15), who was already converted in the far country; but he was not yet fitted to enter into the father's house, he was so to speak, in the 7th of Romans. The state in which we ought to be, is that God should be all to us, we thinking only of Him. When once the prodigal is with the father, it is only a question of the father's joy. The father is on his neck and kisses him while he is yet in his rags, but in that state he does not bring him in. He must be stripped and reclothed. "As He is, so are we in this world." This is boldness, full security for the day of judgment (1 John 4:17, 18).

In order to be happy, we must know that God has made us the righteousness of God in Christ. It is necessary to have the consciousness of this state towards God; then we have the secret of God with us. The practical state of the soul must be in this condition. He who labours for the Lord ought to keep himself nearer to the Lord than to men, and to the work. There are three steps in the practical state of the Christian.

1st. Rom. 6 and Col. 2:20, and 3:1-3. Here you see things as God sees them: you are dead, you are crucified with Christ, and living with Him.

2nd. Faith takes that as a starting point to consider oneself dead (Rom. 6:11). And

3rd. 2 Cor. 4:10,11, which gives us the realization, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." If I do not bear about in my body the dying of Jesus, the life of Christ cannot be seen in me.

Our aim is Christ glorified; therefore, we shall never arrive at perfection on the earth: we always get nearer to it, but we shall never have it but in the glory. Christ is dead, therefore I am dead also; Christ is risen, I also am risen. In Acts 2:33, we see that we cannot be sealed until after Christ has taken His place at the right hand of God.

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