

Eternal Life John 6

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith in receiving eternal life through the Word of God, which is the ground of faith and the source of eternal life.

Scripture: John 6:53

Topics: "Eternal Life", "Faith in Christ"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the profound connection between eternal life and Jesus Christ, illustrating how He brings believers into fellowship with the Father through His death and resurrection. He explains that true faith is rooted in the Word of God, which reveals Christ as the source of eternal life, and that without this revelation, one cannot truly know Him. Darby highlights the necessity of recognizing our need for Christ, as seen in Peter's declaration of faith, and the importance of receiving His words to experience genuine transformation. He warns against relying on mere knowledge or tradition without a personal revelation of Christ, urging believers to seek a deeper relationship with Him. Ultimately, Darby calls for a heart that desires Christ above all else, recognizing Him as the sustainer of life amidst the trials of the world.

Transcript

It is remarkable the way in which the Lord here shows the source and power of eternal life, and how closely they are connected with Himself. How entirely He takes us in the power of eternal life out of the place of nature, and brings us into fellowship with the Father and with the Son. The Word of God holds this remarkable place, as the instrument by the Holy Ghost, of bringing us thus to God, on the ground of redemption.

The Lord had come down from heaven and associated Himself with man upon earth, walking in and out amongst men, and He took the hearts and thoughts of His disciples entirely out of the world. Grace had brought Him down into it, yet there was no connection with man, or man with Him but on the footing of death; as we read, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you;" and, "I will raise him up (who does so) at the last day;" I will give him another state of life altogether.

The Lord is the Word of life - the eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested to us in the Son (1 John 1:2). He comes and speaks words to us (ver. 63). And it is upon the word of His testimony that all depends. Grace must work in our hearts that we may receive His words; but "he that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true." Thus we get everything by faith. We see who Christ is

by faith. He was the carpenter's son - seen outside of faith (ver. 43). He had no condition in the world, no authority, nothing that would enable you to see, that in that person the Eternal Son of God was in the world, but positive faith. Suppose that even prophecies were brought to bear and miracles laid hold of your mind, they would leave you just where you were. I could not see the person of the Son of God, except God had given the eye of faith.

In the second chapter we find - "For he knew what was in man;" that is, there was no work of God in their souls - nothing but man. He might have honest and sincere convictions, but still no new nature. The people who followed Him were the same who cried "Away with him" afterwards. It is not insincerity, but only what is in man. There was no personal perception that the Son of God had come into this world. The eye was opened if there was any perception of this, and it connected itself with the desires and need of the soul.

We must first have this desire of the heart, and need in the conscience; the sense, too, that we cannot do without Him! Whether there is one or the other, both are connected with that, and for both we find we cannot do without Him.

Suppose I believed all that the Church has taught for eighteen hundred years, before I had this new life, there would be no more of eternal life in me than in that table! It would not bring me nearer to Him, because Christ has not been revealed to my inward soul. It would not be what Paul writes, "When it pleased God to reveal his Son in me."

You get this desire of conscience here in Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" (ver. 68). When the sifting comes, nothing else could replace Christ; there is nothing else that can; there was the consciousness that if they had not Christ there was nothing left. The heart and the conscience want Him, and that is eternal life. I might have every thought right as to truth without this. There is no true work where this is not done in the conscience. The heart is drawn to Jesus because the soul sees who He is. Like Peter in Luke 5 - "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord;" but there is power to keep him, he cannot go away.

The prodigal illustrates the same thing; he says, "There is blessing there." His heart was formed by the grace he knew was there. His heart was drawn to Christ, but his conscience told him he was not fit to be there; still the heart could not keep away. Then there comes a word from Christ which satisfies the soul. To Peter it was, "Fear not." To the poor woman of the city who was a sinner it was, "Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace," and all was done. She had Christ's word for it, and this was everything. He had the words of eternal life, as Peter had said, "Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe, and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." This is the only thing that is the ground of faith. Faith is the effect of the Word of God directly from God to the soul, without the intervention of any. Faith cannot rest upon any authority but that of God Himself.

What I press is the Word. Christ is the Living Word; so it is the Word of God that has come from God, and has come into this world, and by which all and every operation of God is effected. Where that is not the case, there is no real result. Miracles were proofs of His mission, but they were not life in the soul. If faith rested on the evidence of miracles alone, the Lord would not trust man. Where the Word is received, the soul is begotten of God.

Suppose I believed every truth which I now believe before I was begotten of God through His Word, it would have no link between God and my soul; there would have been no revelation of God by it to me - nothing that brought God into my soul by it - no drawing of the Father to make Christ needful and precious.

Such knowledge is merely the fire being laid, but no more. The revelation from God, is the revelation of God. Christ was this when He was here; though known as the carpenter's son for many years. What Christ spoke, was an expression of what Christ was. Who could reveal God, but God Himself? And Christ was God, come into a world which had departed from Him, to reveal Himself to souls, and "he that hath received His testimony hath set to his seal that God is true." (John 3:33)

"Lord, to whom shall we go?" There I get the fact that the soul cannot do without Him who had laid hold of their heart. Ah, I say, He has "the words of everlasting life;" I cannot go elsewhere. The soul has got the first link, by the testimony of the Word to it, and it knows Him.

You should ask yourselves whether the voice of the Good Shepherd has reached your souls - has spoken to you so that you know His voice? Take an instance of the thief; he knew Him; he answers for every bit of Christ's life from one end to the other - "This man hath done nothing amiss." God had revealed to him what His Son was, and when every one was against Him, when the authorities of the world had all got rid of this presence of God, one man was there who answered for Christ's spotless humanity.

Why had the Word of God to come down in this way? Why not teach man, and guide man as he was? Why bring the Eternal Son from heaven? People will accept a great deal of truth, but why have a revelation, they say. There must be a revelation, because man has departed from God, and God in mercy to him must reveal something new to him.

If God is not revealed in perfect grace to my soul now, I must have to say to Him in judgment by-and-by; I cannot for ever stay in the dark in my own soul as to God. I must have to do with Him sometime or other. Then I find the grace of a revelation of God. I get in Christ - the Word of God, God Himself come down. Not waiting till I go up for judgment - that would be a terrible story! Then the whole question turns on this, How has He been received? How have I received Him? Why, my heart has turned to every vanity when He has been presented to me! That is the way I have received Him.

He has come down into the world - the "living bread" - to raise people's hearts to God, and to take them out of the world; but we do not like this. He comes amongst men as the lowliest of the lowly, so that the unjealous angels can sing "God's good pleasure in men." Yet in Him we see the only-begotten of the Father. He comes down so that man where he was, and what he was, might have God close to him. My heart is opened to the blessed consciousness that God has found His good pleasure in men.

But you will always find that a revelation of God, is a revelation that says, "You are all ruined and bad." This is too low for the world; it does not suit a person of fair and proper character. There is that which is attractive to the natural man in Christ; there is that which God meant to be attractive to the heart of man. You see the daughters of Jerusalem weeping as they followed Him. They are actuated merely by natural feeling. The pride of this world would not have Him; but the love of God did not stop for that - God will go on with the truth; if the world will not have it, He will go on for those who will.

But if you receive Him, you must do so as a dead Christ - One who has come under the power of death; "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." If you will have an incarnate Christ, you must have a crucified Christ as well. This hurts man's pride. In the present day an incarnate Christ is put in the place of a dead Christ; because an incarnate one exalts man. But a dead Christ shows where man lay, and the need of redemption. An incarnate Christ was presented to man down here; but now it is one who has passed through death and gone on high.

"Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" - I cannot give him a portion in this world, but I can give him a place with me in glory. He can give me thus a part with Himself, but He could not have a part with me here.

"He that eateth me, even he shall live by me." Now I get the blessed side I do not live by Adam; I have to contend with Adam - with the old man; but I live by Christ, and "Christ liveth in me." I live by Him and shall reign with Him, but entirely outside everything here.

In the opening of the chapter He sends the disciples away and He goes up alone to the mount, and there they are toiling, away from Him. It is a picture of what is going on now. Now He says, There is food for souls while I am away - from the beginning to the end I am the sustainer of your life!

The moment we know Christ loved us and gave Himself for us, we are justified. But what I dread is that a person should rest here. He has saved you; but do you not want to abide practically in Him, and He in you? Do you not want to sit under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit be sweet to your taste? Do you not want Him to manifest Himself to you?

I may be going through the billows of this scene, but I am feeding on Christ. I see Him if I trace Him here, and find every footstep blessed. He says He is my food; and by eating Him I shall have the consciousness that He came into a world without God, and brought God into it, and the world would not have Him. Then I find I belong to Him in glory, where He has gone, but I have not the glory yet. Meanwhile I have Him for my whole living portion.

Is that what your hearts are following after, beloved friends, in this evil world? Are your hearts taking as your everyday portion, that One whom the world rejected, or are you taking the world which rejected Him?

The Lord give us to answer this truly in the secret of our hearts, for His name's sake.

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