

Forgiveness and Salvation

by John Nelson Darby

John Nelson Darby's sermon emphasizes the distinction between being lost and saved, highlighting the transformative power of Christ in the believer's life.

Scripture: John 3:16, Romans 8:1, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 2:6, Colossians 3:1

Topics: "Forgiveness", "New Creation in Christ"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the distinction between being lost and having sins, arguing that many do not recognize their lost state or their salvation. He explains that while forgiveness addresses our sins, true salvation involves being made a new creation in Christ, separate from the first Adam. Darby stresses that the moral history of man ended with Christ's sacrifice, and believers are now seated in heavenly places with Him, free from the law of sin and death. He urges Christians to understand their identity in Christ and to live out their faith, recognizing that they are no longer in the flesh but in the Spirit. The sermon calls for a deeper understanding of salvation as a transformative experience rather than mere forgiveness.

Transcript

People do not really believe that they are lost; they believe that they have sins; but that does not touch the question of being lost. Your sins make you guilty, but your state by nature is that you are lost. It is quite another thing to seeing that I have sins, the consciousness that I am lost now. In my natural condition, they go together, but they are distinct; guilt looks forward to judgment; lost is my present state. If I get clear hold of that, then I get Christ dealing with it, and the consciousness that I am saved now. But people neither know that they are lost, nor that they are saved. But, in the Christian, God has brought in a new thing - he is a new creation; and thus my place is either in the first man or in the second. And, to get hold of what this new creation is, is of immense moment in this day.

All the ordinances and religion that are going on in the world are for man in the flesh. Do you think we shall have such things in heaven? The first man, though the flesh be in us, is done with for faith; God takes me entirely out of my condition by nature - though my poor body is here yet of course - has separated me entirely from the world, though still in it. "Now once in the end of the world," we read, "hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

Do you believe that the world has morally come to an end? God's dealings with the first man were then thoroughly, perfectly closed. Man may get up an imitation of the Jewish ritual, but it is all over. The religiousness that is going on around us all hangs upon this question: Am I alive in this world, looked at in

my relationship with God, or not? I am not! - Where does the believer get his life from? From heaven. Christ could say: "The Son of man which is in heaven." We, as united to Him, live of the life which is in Him who is on high. Will you occupy yourself in the improvement of the first Adam? Will you get good out of him? You never will. God has tried, but He could get nothing. The flesh that is in me has had Christ presented to it, and has rejected Him. It does so still. It cannot crucify Him now, but it rejects Him just as much. Lawless, if left to itself, it is not subject to the law of God when under it, neither indeed can be, and, if Christ be presented to it, prefers everything in the world to Him.

Whenever God set up anything good, the first thing man did was to spoil it. Take the history in order as it comes. What is the first thing? Man himself - in the garden. And what did he do? - Then after the flood; you would say if ever anything could have mended man's manners, surely that would. But no, it is all ruined; the first thing Noah does is to get drunk. Abram is called out of it by grace. But the law is then given. The first thing Israel did was to make the golden calf. The priesthood was set up; but Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire on the very first day. The son of David is established; but Solomon loved many strange women, and the kingdom is ruined. Nebuchadnezzar, set up as the head of gold, sets up an idol. And the church is in ruins. "All," we read in the apostle's time, "seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." Who says that? The apostle; while he was yet alive that was the state of things. "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God." Have you not got that nature? Speaking of us as men, have we not got that nature, which is - what? Enmity against God! And are you going to educate it? to cultivate it? Cultivate enmity against God?

This is what I mean when I say that men do not know that they are lost. When Christ came into the world and went about doing good because God was with Him, men did not like Him. Why? Because God was manifested in Him! - It is natural that infidels should try to get what good they can out of the old tree; but I am speaking of Christians. It is the first question with the soul, and must be, if I want to get glory - this truth that I am lost already; you will never get hold of what it is to be saved already until you see that.

It was just at this point, when Pharisaic flesh made its most of religion, that Christ came into the world. He came in and found a magnificent temple; and that is what people want now. If I go into a church I take my hat off. I do not mean I, of course, when I say this, because I would not go into one, but that is what people do. And they take it off to what? There was a time when God had such a thing - a temple - priests - everything, to try what man in the flesh could do. And now man will go back to it, and says: Oh, you must have music, temple, vestments, to influence people. Influence what? Their flesh! But I am "not in the flesh."

"Once in the end of the world." There ended man's history morally. They said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him;" and there was an end of the world as to the judgment of God, not executed indeed, but pronounced. But then there was the beginning of God, and where was that? In the grave of Christ, as come in the flesh - the cross, if you please, but it was death - in the grave. He accomplished the work in perfectness of love to God and perfect obedience in a man - One who was God, of course, but as man dying on the cross, closing all association with man in the flesh, fully tested by grace as well as law, and God set the Man who had done it at His own right hand. The first man's wickedness was proved in the death of Christ, and the second Man was taken out of the world; it is convicted of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Of sin, in rejecting Him; of righteousness in that He is gone to the Father, and the world sees Him no more as so come in grace, and the prince of this world proved to be Satan; but there is the Man in heaven; and Christianity is founded upon that. The end is made of the first man in death, and a totally new place is taken in the second Man, in which man innocent had no more place than man guilty,

and till I know that I shall not know what salvation is.

Forgiveness applies to what I have done as the first man. I may sin now, surely, as a Christian, but, if I do, that is the first man - the flesh. Salvation is connected with my condition as a child of Adam. When I speak of sins, I do not say I am saved; I say I am forgiven. People think that their guilt, as children of Adam, is cleared away, and so it is; but that is only forgiveness; it does not in itself take me out of the position that I am in. But God has judged man; the prince of this world is cast out; and I am now in Christ at the right hand of God. "If any man be in Christ it is a new creation." Of course, as to my body, I have not got into the new scene yet, but am left here to have my senses exercised to discern good and evil, and to walk by faith and not by sight. He is not talking of the sight of things down here, but he means you have not yet got a sight of heavenly things. But I can go through the things down here, they do not affect me. I have to live down here - perfectly true; but that has nothing to do with the moral question of the object that leads us: "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." And then what does he say? Why, I am groaning in this tabernacle meanwhile, desiring to be clothed upon with my house which is from heaven, for He that hath wrought me for the self-same thing is God. God has wrought me. It is not only a prepared place there, but he has wrought me for it - for that place where is the glory of Christ. The world may come and tempt me, but it is the things that are inside the veil that are mine, and I belong to that scene; and that is what is salvation.

A man in the seventh of Romans is a renewed man, but he has not salvation; he is a renewed man under the law. The law was God's rule for a child of Adam. Well, but what are you? - I am a child of God. The law deals with a man in the flesh; I am "not in the flesh, but in the Spirit." I get salvation when I get into a place where I am not in the flesh at all. "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." The law is a very useful thing to kill me. The law says: Death and the curse are your portion. I say: Yes; but I died on the cross when the curse was born. If a guilty man fall into the law's hands and die there, what can it do with him? Give him up to be buried!

So a Christian is not in the flesh before God; my place - my standing - is not there at all. You say: Where is it then? - Why it is in Christ. I find that "when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly;" and what we learn in Romans 7 is, not guilt, but that we have no power to get out of the condition in which we are. Christ has come and taken me out of the condition in which I was, and put me into His own; by the power which God "wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places," He has "quickened us together with Christ, and raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ." Well, if I am sitting in heavenly places in Christ, am I saved, or am I not?

What salvation has done is not the merely forgiving me my sins; forgiveness, cleansing, justifying, applies to my responsible and guilty condition in the first Adam; but salvation applies to my state in the second Man. It is a new creation. What would you do if you wanted to make something of a crab tree? Not nurture, and prune, and dig about, and dung it. That God has done with his fig tree. If you know anything about it, you will cut it down and graft it. Until you find out that the old man is utterly bad, and that there is no mending it, you will not give it up. If you cultivate the old crab tree you will have fair flowers but only bigger crabs.

God has gone through the moral history of man's probation up to the cross, and a little supplementary trial too, if you like, through Christ's intercession on it for Israel, and He has come to the end of it. I get the whole thing. God's grace in seeking man in the condition he was in, giving His Son to die for him, and then

Christ rising into a totally new place as man, what man as Adam was not at all, and has brought me there in Him - of course I am not physically there - and then gives me His Spirit that I may walk in the place He has set me in. In the death of Christ the whole thing on man's part has closed, and then God begins with His own work. A Man, the Lord of glory, goes down, takes this dreadful cup, goes on the cross into death for us, into the judgment, into the curse alone with God, settles that question with God, and has so settled it for God's glory that God has set a Man at His own right hand in glory. All the thoughts and the counsels of God came out consequently on that.

One passage we may refer to on this is 2 Tim. 1:9. "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest." I am not saved according to my responsibility; "our works;" saving and calling does not come to me upon this ground. I am saved by the cross. Well, I say, and what part had you in the cross? - If you are saved by the cross the only part you had in it was your sins; your enmity too, if you like, in putting Him there. But I find in the cross a death which on the one hand clears away my sins, and on the other hand brings me salvation. The whole of it is God's work. All alone between Him and God was that work; the darkness was the outward testimony that He was alone with God; His divine power not saving Him from the cup, but enabling Him to drink it. And then He goes to His Father, and the world sees Him, in grace, never any more, till He comes to it in judgment.

"It is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ." And again in the beginning of Titus: "Eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began, but hath in due times manifested." For this purpose of God, to bring us into the second Man, the ground was not laid until the cross.

But when He came it was not only this; He had also in His person the promises for Israel; recollect this. And it is well we should recollect, that there is no promise to the flesh. It was said, in passing sentence on the serpent, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head; it was not said to Adam. Was Adam the seed of the woman? He was the only man who was not. The promise was to the seed of the woman - to Christ. God had had purposes of grace before the world existed, but He began His dealings with Adam - the responsible man - and tried him. And, having proved what he was, then I get God's work; God wrought. If I get what man wrought it was sin and condemnation. But God has raised His Son from the dead, and my place with God being in Christ after His death - after the power of Satan being broken - after my sins being put away, judged in Him - I am a new creation, I am in the second Man, I am not in the flesh. You will never know what salvation is until you know that you are in Christ; then "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Sin in the flesh is condemned, not forgiven, but condemned where Christ was a sacrifice for sin, and, where the condemnation was, death was; so that there is no condemnation for me now, but I am dead to sin.

I will not say any more, but I am anxious this should dwell upon your minds; it is of great moment now. We have come back to the Father, kissed, robed, the ring on our finger, and the fatted calf killed. We have come back. But was it the fruit of what the prodigal did? He was perishing; if he stay where he is he will perish. But he sets out on his way to God. And what is the effect of that? The effect that is on the minds of many: it is - "Make me one of thy hired servants." But his reasoning thus only proved he had not yet met Him. And after all what does his experience bring him to? To the Father in his rags! I may say I am running too slow, perhaps stumble in the way, though seeking to go right; but I am always in my rags till I come to

my Father. It is the Father who says, " Bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and be merry." It is He who had the best robe brought forth; till then the prodigal son was not fit to enter into the house, though he had been going right, and his father's love shown to him.

Of course then we must bring forth good fruit. If I have got the life of Christ in me, I must bring it out in everything: "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." I say, Are you doing everything in the name of the Lord Jesus? If not, you have in that case given Him up for some foolish thing or other. "If ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living (alive) in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?" I am dead to flesh - to sin: "The body is dead, because of sin; but the spirit is life, because of righteousness." I am crucified to the world, and dead to the law by the body of Christ. The fact then is this, that I do not belong to the world any more than a dead and buried man does - of course I mean in the moral sense of it. If I take my privileges, I say I am seated in heavenly places. If I take my position in the world, I have nothing to do but to go through it as He did.

The Lord give us clearly to see what salvation is: that it is the taking me out of the first Adam and putting me into the second Man. "He hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-nelson-darby/forgiveness-and-salvation/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net