

Funeral of Augustus James Clarke, a 13 Year Old Boy

by John Nelson Darby

Death cannot sever spiritual ties formed through grace, but rather removes hindrances to their full enjoyment, and our hope and joy are secured in the presence of the Lord Jesus at His coming.

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 2:7

Topics: "Hope in Christ", "Spiritual Relationships"

Description

John Nelson Darby reflects on the funeral of Augustus James Clarke, emphasizing that while death severs natural ties, it cannot touch the spiritual relationships formed in Christ. He draws parallels with the Apostle Paul's relationship with the Thessalonians, illustrating how new affections and ties in Christ remain unbroken despite physical separation. Darby reassures the mourners that death, while painful, ultimately leads to a fuller expression of these divine affections in the presence of the Lord. He encourages the congregation to find hope in the resurrection and the coming of Christ, where all relationships will be perfected. The message highlights the enduring nature of spiritual bonds and the hope of glory that awaits believers.

Transcript

{Notes of a message given by J. N. D. at the funeral of Augustus James Clarke, a 13 year old boy, whose parents were absent (probably in India), May 9th., 1845.

Extracted from the book by J. G. Deck entitled 'Joy of Departing', pages 110-3.}

1 Thess. 2

That while sin and death had entered into this world, and must sever every natural tie however blessed originally, however true and proper in its place, grace had formed new ties, new affections, new relationships, which death could not touch; because they had their source in that new life which God has given to us in Christ, and flowed from Him who is beyond death.

Paul had come to Thessalonica a perfect stranger to those whom he now addresses; he had not 'known them after the flesh.' He preached the gospel to them; they received his testimony, and were born of God. New affections at once existed between them, - new ties which death could not sever. How beautifully we

see the exercise of them developed here! Before their conversion, 'he was willing to have imparted unto them not only the gospel, but also his own soul, because they were dear to him,' (ver. 8.) When they were in the weakness of new-born babes, he was 'gentle among them, as a nurse cherisheth her children,' (ver. 7); after that he had 'exhorted them, and charged every one of them, as a father doth his children, (for he had begotten them in the gospel,) to walk worthy of God, who had called them to His kingdom and glory.' (Ver. 11, 12.)

Circumstances, such as bodily separation, the power of Satan, death itself, may hinder the full enjoyment of these divine affections, but they cannot destroy them. Such was the case here; Paul was taken from them in presence, but not in heart; 'he had endeavoured to see them once and again, but Satan hindered him;' but these very circumstances only caused him to look beyond this scene to that day when these new affections will have all their full blessedness. 'What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of the Lord Jesus at His coming? For ye are our glory and our joy.' (Ver 19, 20.)

It was thus with our beloved young brother. All that was merely natural in relationship between him and us was gone; death was the end of all that. But death could not touch one spiritual tie or affection. So far from that, it only removed the hindrances to the fullest enjoyment of them; for it destroyed the energy of the flesh and natural will, which is wholly opposed to the life of God. Another step was gained; a painful and an humbling one, it was true, but a needful one. Death had removed the flesh with all its workings. There was nothing on his part to hinder now.

More even than that. The very body lying here was one step nearer to glory. That very body would become, by and by, the more efficient servant of those new affections, which it had hitherto been able so feebly to express. These new, divine feelings and affections were now ripening in their native clime above; and this body was preparing to give them, in their maturity, an unhindered development, 'in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at His coming.'

The coming of that day is the spring and power of our hope; for it will be the consummation of everything which even these renewed affections can desire, whether it be, as in this case, the Father in Christ's affection for His children, or the brotherly affection which unites all the members of the family of God.

In the mean time, there is 'the patience of hope.' It is an unworthy object for which we cannot bear to wait. What is that love worth which cannot bear a trial? The present ability to bear separation, 'taken from you in presence, not in heart,' proves its reality and power. How blessed, then, amidst all these circumstances of sin and sorrow, to have these new joys and affections, which death itself cannot touch; the full maturity of which will be known, 'in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, at His coming!'

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-nelson-darby/funeral-of-augustus-james-clarke-a-13-year-old-boy/>

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