

How Are We Saved? Romans 1-8

by John Nelson Darby

The gospel in Romans 1-8 reveals the righteousness of God and provides the means by which we can be justified and reconciled to God.

Scripture: Romans 1:16

Topics: "Identity in Christ", "Justification"

Description

John Nelson Darby explores the profound question of salvation through the lens of Romans 1-8, emphasizing that justification is essential for sinners seeking to be right with God. He delineates two aspects of justification: being cleared from sins and being placed in a new standing before God, highlighting that true righteousness comes through faith in Christ's sacrifice. Darby contrasts the teachings of Romans with those of Ephesians, noting that while Romans addresses the need for justification, Ephesians speaks to the privileges of the new creation. He underscores the importance of understanding one's identity in Christ, stating that believers are no longer condemned but are now children of God, called to live in the light of His grace. The sermon culminates in the assurance of peace and hope that comes from being justified and reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.

Transcript

I should like to go a little into the question, How are we saved? In the first eight chapters of Romans we get the gospel fully brought out. It is just the answer to the question, How can a man be just with God? This is the great question of the whole epistle. We do not get resurrection with Christ in this epistle, nor is there union. It is death with Christ, and life through Him. When you get resurrection with Christ, you are associated with Him in life; and when union is taught, you never find justification; for a new creation clearly does not want justifying. This is the teaching of Ephesians, where you get nothing about justification, but all the privileges and duties of the new creation. In Romans we get sinners, and they want justification. In Ephesians we are looked at as "dead in trespasses and sins."

There are two parts of justification - "from sins," and "of life"; the first, the clearing me of my old state; and the second, the putting me into a new place before God. These two parts, are treated of distinctly in chapters I to 8 of this epistle, dividing them into two parts, the first part ending at chapter 5:11. In chapter 1 we see the ground that called for justification - "The wrath of God revealed against all ungodliness." It is not governmental wrath, but wrath against the sinner; and "all have sinned, and come short" - of what we ought to be? of the law? All this is simple, but the word says, "short of the glory of God." The whole

dealings of Christianity are on the ground of that. You must either walk in the light, or have nothing to do with God. It is not God hidden behind a veil, and setting up a law as to what you ought to be; but you are to walk in the light, as He is in the light. So we are taught in that verse of Colossians 1, "Giving thanks to the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." A man's being born again does not make him meet, his being quickened makes him feel the need of it; there is another thing needed that fits you for glory, and that is Christ's work in grace. The first thing we get about the gospel is, that it is "concerning his Son Jesus Christ," not about ourselves first. People have lost sight of the claims of Christ. He is become the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him.

194 There are two things found here (chap. 1:2-4) in the Person of Christ. First, He is in connection with the promises. People rest on promises. But the promises are fulfilled by Him and in Him: Christ is Himself the accomplishment of the promises. "For all the promises of God in him are Yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." This was by means of His incarnation, and sufferings, and death: "come of the seed of David according to flesh. He fulfilled the promises; but I do not mean to deny that we have precious promises to help us on the way. But there is another thing shewn us in verse 17: "Therein," in the gospel, "is the righteousness of God revealed." Faith receives God's righteousness in contrast with the law which claimed righteousness from man. Then he goes on to lay the ground why there must be a righteousness of God, because there is none in man. "Holiness" is connected with the nature of God. The reason I am so bold about the gospel is because it is the righteousness of God.

In chapter 1 the fact is first stated that the righteousness of God is revealed; in chapter 2, the proof of this and the condition of man. In chapter 3 the apostle gives us first the privileges of the Jew; then he says, the very thing you boast of is that which condemns you: "Now we know that what things soever the law saith," etc. Then all are brought under sin. Then he turns (v. 21) to the question of righteousness. What is wanted is fitness to stand in God's presence, and not come short of His glory. It was "witnessed by the law and the prophets." The Lord our righteousness was witnessed in the prophets, but manifested now. Now it is without law. Though he speaks of righteousness, he does not go beyond faith in His blood; and then he takes up the Old Testament saints.

"Through faith in his blood." Propitiation meets God as a righteous, holy Judge. When a person has offended or wronged another, he requires a propitiation. God provides the propitiation, and sets Christ forth as such. He had forborne with the Old Testament saints. Here His righteousness in doing so is declared. God's righteousness is now not only revealed, but also imputed, to the believer. Then he takes up Abraham and David, and shews that they both concur in this testimony: justification or righteousness does not go farther than forgiveness here (chap. 4:3-5). There is a great deal more in justification, but we are not come to that yet. The accounting righteous in this part of the epistle is the same as forgiveness. What is a propitiation for? Is it not for sin? God sitting as a Judge, and man brought before Him guilty? The death of Christ glorifies God Himself It is of immense importance to see the way God takes to put away the sins of the old man; there can be no peace without it. It is another thing to see how God makes a new man.

195 We get two distinct characters of blessedness in these chapters: the first, chapter 5:1-11; the second, chapter 8. In chapter 5 I get higher things about God than I do in chapter 8. In chapter 5 I find what God is to the sinner; in chapter 8 it is what He is to the new man in Christ Jesus. God is more fully revealed in the absolute goodness of His character in chapter 5, because it is there His dealings with the sinner, as guilty before Him, and having come short of His glory. But the saint is in a higher place in chapter 8 - there God is for me. In the first place (chap. 5), God is known as the Justifier; in the second (chap. 8), as Abba,

Father. Part one ends at chapter 5:11; that is the way God deals with a sinner about his sins. Now we come to part two. Part one has nothing to do with experience; there I get my debts paid; this may produce very happy feelings, as we see in chapter 5. Part two has everything to do with experience. "No condemnation" - then it is not sinners. In chapter 4, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." A man in that sense is faultless before God. Christ has made an atonement, and if you believe in Him, no sin will be imputed to you. Quickening is not introduced in part one; man's nature is not there treated of; it has to do with sins and the remedy - Christ dying for our sins. In part two it is sin and the remedy, my dying with Christ. The whole work was settled on the cross, but it is presented in resurrection. We must have resurrection to make it complete. It must be complete to be presented. "Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and present us with you," 2 Cor. 5:14. Sanctification comes before justification when they are spoken of together. "Ye are washed, sanctified, justified."

It is the fruit, and not the tree, that is judged in part one. The tree itself is judged in part two. In chapter 3 we get faith in the blood of Christ. In chapter 4 it is faith in the God of resurrection - "if we believe in him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead." I find the sinner in his sins, Christ dying, and the sins not imputed to him. Here is a man who has done this, that, and the other, and Christ died for him. God has raised up Christ, and I believe in Him, and am justified. It is ratified. Justification was not completed on the cross, the work by which we are justified was; but I do not get the assurance of it until I see Christ in resurrection. "If Christ is not risen, ye are yet in your sins." If my surety is not out of prison, I cannot say I am justified. Supposing me in prison for E.'s debt, my acquittance is his justification, not my paying the debt. There are the two things necessary, not only the mortgage paid, but also the deed signed. The work on the cross is that by which I am justified, He was raised again in order to our justifying. He was delivered, our offences being before His mind. He was raised, our justifying being before His mind.

196 Then chapter 5 begins, "Having been justified, we have peace." Here we get the whole past, present, and future: justified as to the past; having peace with God, and standing in the favour of God, as to the present; and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, as to the future. Peace, favour, glory, what more can you want? We may get all sorts of troubles here, but what a mercy God sees me righteous! He never withdraws His eyes from the righteous. I am a righteous man; now I can glory in tribulation, etc. I have the key to all this. I have learnt by all this process not only what I am, but what He is. I have the Holy Ghost in me, as a consequence of justification, shedding abroad the love of God in my heart. I can joy, too, in God Himself (before whom, in chapter 3, I was guilty, and my mouth stopped), not only that I know myself, but I know God too - God in His own absolute goodness. Peace is a fuller deeper thing than joy; when I know that all is settled, and that I am reconciled, then I have peace. A person may have joy, and not yet know himself reconciled. The prodigal may have had a measure of joy in leaving the far country, but he has not peace till he has met the Father, and learns what is the Father's heart toward him. This is all individual. I have got my sins, my peace, my joy, etc. You have got yours.

But when you come to chapter 5:12, we get all in a lump. All ruined in one man. We have had a man's actions first; now we come to man's condition. Adam ruined us all. It is the state of the race, and not of the individual. I get entirely away from God, and I have a nature away from God. If this be known without any knowledge of the grace of God, it must drive a man to despair, but God never allows it to be so quite. Grace has put away your sin. Another thing God says - "You have died"; but then, if I look at my experience, it contradicts that. I say, "How can I have died when I find the nature there? I have got in a passion."

197 In chapter 5:12 we come to the nature, and I get more troubled about sin in me than by my past sins. But here we find the remedy too; not that Christ has died for my sins, but that I died with Christ to sin. The doctrine is, "By one man's obedience," and "by one man's disobedience." Oh! then, if by the obedience of one I am made righteous, I can live on as I like? No; the apostle says, "You have died." How can I live on if I am dead? This is justification of life here. We have now the positive side of justification: "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." As we see, in the first eleven verses of chapter 5, the blessedness of the believer as the result of what the apostle had been bringing out in the previous part of the epistle, Christ dying for our sins, so in chapter 8 we have the blessedness which is the result of what the apostle had brought out from chapter 5:12 to the end of chapter 7.

In part one we had what the sinner has done, put away; in part two it is a question of what he is: acceptance would be connected with part two. Righteousness imputed is not the same thing as reckoning a person righteous. If I pay E.'s debts, he is reckoned righteous; but the character of imputed righteousness is something to go on with. "Sin is not imputed when there is no law," v. 13. It is as plain as A B C. How can a man break a law when he has not got it? You cannot say to the Gentile, "You have transgressed the fifth commandment," because the law was never given to him. In Hosea 6 we read, "They, like Adam, have transgressed the covenant." Adam received a commandment, and lived so long as he obeyed it. And under Moses Israel received the law, by keeping which they should live; but from Adam to Moses there was no commandment, yet death reigned over those who had transgressed no given law. We find no forgiveness here. Sin is never forgiven. but condemned. "God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and by a sacrifice for sin, condemned sin, in the flesh," chap. 8:3. Sin is got rid of by death. If a man dies, there is an end.

198 Chapter 5:15. We see that the grace must have an aspect as large as the sin. The presentation of grace is to the whole world, but its application is only to those who receive the gift. Verse 18: "As by one offence towards all unto condemnation, so by one righteousness towards all unto justification of life." The one righteousness, as God's gift, is unto all, but it is only upon all them that believe; chap. 3:22. The contrast here (v. 18) is not between the persons, but the one offence and the one righteousness. The gift of righteousness is unto all: just as the sin of Adam addresses itself to the whole race, so does the one righteousness. "Justification of life?" Here I get justification connected with life (not only from my sins), but I have got life; v. 20. "The law" comes in by the bye. The law required man to make out a righteousness. "The law entered that the offence might abound." It is not that sin might abound, but "the offence." God never made sin abound. Sin abounded over the whole race, and there grace much more abounds. The law not only made sin more manifest, but also aggravated its character. The authority of God has been brought in, and despised. A child might do wrong without knowing it; but when the father gives him a command about it, it becomes disobedience. In chapter 2:12, what is translated sinned "without law," is the same word as in 1 John 3:4 (sin is the "transgression of the law"), which should be, "sin is lawlessness."

What is the meaning of Hebrews 9:26, "Christ put away sin by the sacrifice of himself?" I believe it extends to the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. So also "the Lamb of God which beareth away the sin of the world." The work that accomplishes it is done, but the power is not yet put forth; 1 John 2:2. "Propitiation for the whole world." That is, atonement has been made, and the blood is on the mercy-seat, so that all hindrance is removed. In Hebrews 9:26, 28 we get the two things, to put away sin," and "sins borne"; just as we get the sin-offering and the scape-goat on the day of atonement. The blood of the sin-offering was first sprinkled on and before the mercy-seat, then the sins of Israel were

confessed over the head of the scape-goat; Lev. 16. The blood on the mercy-seat now is the ground of invitation to the sinner. I say now to the sinner, Christ has died, and the blood is on the mercy-seat, and you will be received if you come. If he accepts the invitation, I can tell him more.

199 Not only has the Lord Jesus put away sin, but He has borne all your sins, and confessed them as if they were His own; and they are all gone. It is never said Christ died for the sins of the world. In Romans 6 and 7, I am dead and justified from sin. Now I can reckon myself dead. It is not I; I have had enough of "I." Now Christ is I. If I am alive through Christ, I died through Christ. "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." A young man has had debts, but his father has paid them and made him a partner in his own business. Now he speaks not of my business, my concerns, etc., but our business, our concerns. But here, in Romans, he is keeping up the individuality; so we do not get union, or such words as "risen with Christ." In Romans, Colossians, and Ephesians we see three stages of advance: in Romans, dead with Christ and alive in Christ; in Colossians, dead with Him and risen with Him; in Ephesians, dead in trespasses and sins, now quickened together, raised up together, made to sit together in Him in heavenly places. In Romans the individual is cleared from what he was as a child of Adam, and gets the privileges of a child of God.

Chapter 6:16. Now you are perfectly free: what are you going to do with yourself? You were a slave to sin: now yield yourself to God. In chapter 7 we have the same principle applied to law. Verse 4, having died to the law by the body of Christ, now I am connected with Christ - Him who is raised from the dead. The deduction is, you cannot have both the law and Christ. Verse 6 should be, "having died in that wherein we were held." It is not the law that is dead, but I am dead. The law is the jailer, I am the prisoner. The mistake people are making is that they are killing the jailer instead of the thief. The jailer is not dead, the thief is. Now, if you look back, you will see the condition of a man under law. It is the experience of a quickened soul under law. Experience comes in here, and not in the first part of the epistle. If a man is not absolutely lawless, conscience puts him under law. He says, I ought to do this, and I ought to do that.

The regular Hyper-Calvinists put a man in Romans 7, and keep him there. They put him in the seventh before he gets to the third. In chapters 2 and 3 it is what a man has done. In chapter 7 it is what he is in himself. It is not that I have done bad things, but "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." This must be learnt experimentally, and not merely known as a doctrine. The soul here learns three things; first, that in himself, that is, in his flesh, dwells no good thing; secondly, he sees that the flesh is not himself, for he hates It; thirdly, that it is too strong for him, and he cries out for deliverance. It is God bringing a man to the full knowledge of himself; then he says, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver?" etc., when Christ comes in, and we have the full deliverance of chapter 8.

200 "When I was in the flesh," chap. 7:5. Many Christians would not know what that means at all. It is the state of the past. This chapter is experimental, and the truth must be learned, not merely as a theory, but experimentally. To say my sins are forgiven is not experience; but if you tell me something about myself, my experience answers to it, or it does not. We never give up the flesh till we have learned how thoroughly bad it is. I must learn to say, "It is not I," though not to say it lightly, because as a child of Adam responsible, it is I; but I have found out another I. As to the flesh, there is no question of forgiveness. I do not forgive an offending power, I want deliverance from it. In Romans, my being alive in Christ is stated as a fact, but the doctrine is not brought out as in Ephesians. The more spiritual we are, the more we shall see the infinite value of the cross. "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus," etc. (2 Cor. 4) - always keeping it before my faith - holding the cross to the flesh, because I am not in the flesh (otherwise I could not do it).

People talk of whether future sins are forgiven. All my sins were future when Christ died for them. But I ought not to talk of future sins; there is grace enough to keep me from them, and I must not excuse them. Souls have to learn what sin is. Christ, having met the consequences of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, becomes the tree of life to me; and then I learn.

Romans 5:1-11 is what God was in love to the sinner. Chapter 8 is the condition of the believer with God. Would you not like to feel better in yourself? That is I.

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