

# Letter: 30e 59 Mrs Darnell, Yverdon, March 25th, 1843

by John Nelson Darby

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*True peace comes from a humble and lowly sense of sin and the infinite goodness of Christ.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 103:12, Isaiah 53:5, John 3:16, Romans 8:28, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Ephesians 2:8-9, Philippians 4:7, Hebrews 10:14, 1 Peter 2:3, 1 John 1:9

**Topics:** "Assurance of Salvation", "Grace"

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## Description

John Nelson Darby addresses Mrs. Darnell, encouraging her to rely on God's goodness as revealed in Christ, despite her feelings of distress and doubt. He emphasizes that our emotions should not dictate our understanding of God's character, and that the work of the Holy Spirit is essential in discerning our spiritual state. Darby reassures her that feelings of guilt and despair can be part of God's process to bring us to a deeper understanding of grace and our need for Christ. He reminds her that Christ's sacrifice is sufficient for salvation, regardless of personal feelings or past neglect. Ultimately, peace comes from recognizing our nothingness and Christ's all-sufficiency.

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## Transcript

p59 Dear Mrs. Darnell, - You must not be surprised at the seeming long delay in answering your letter, as it has followed me to Lausanne and Geneva. Perhaps the good Lord has given you peace already - at least, before you receive this; but in case it be not so, I answer according to the light God has given me. In the first place, I beseech you to count on the goodness of God, of our God as He has revealed Himself in Christ, and that notwithstanding feelings which may arise. Indeed, I see that He has already given you to do it in a measure. I know it is difficult, impossible to us, not to judge of God by what we feel in ourselves, but it is evident it is not the truth. Our feelings are not the measure of what He is towards us, but to us they often are (when in the state your mind is in).

In the next place I admit freely, that when the conscience is powerfully wrought upon, it is quite possible that many physical and nervous sentiments may accompany them, which to the world, and perhaps to doctors, appears the whole matter, while they are really (while I quite admit the possibility of their existence) but the mere indices of deeper and much more important feelings: and it is of these that I desire to speak. It is sad indeed to smother up our feelings towards God which concern our eternal interests, because they produce certain passing painful effects.

And here I will say a word as to - : I feel thankful that you are fallen into the hands of one who recognises as he does the word of God. There is a measure of truth in what he says; it is true that we have to rest on the written word; there he is quite right, but he does not, for I know well the system in which his mind has been taught, recognise the effects and working of the Spirit of God in the soul, as the revelation of God [teaches] and requires that we should; so that though he be quite right in exhorting you to rest on the written record, he could not rightly interpret what passes in your soul, nor make sufficient allowance for the work of the Holy Ghost. Nor could you perhaps distinguish now quite between what was a physical effect and the real inward work. Praying God to give you peace and calm as to this even outward physical part, I will apply myself to that which is of God.

It is not surprising when the Spirit of God takes a soul in hand to convince it of sin, to change its whole course and object, to give it a life it had not before, and judge thereon every thought which has had a place in it previously - it is not surprising that in such a case there should be wonderful upsetting and havoc. It is astonishing when one comes to know what is really done, that so many are brought peacefully to know themselves, the Lord, and His grace. And here suffer me to add, dear -, not as a reproach, but on the contrary, as confirming the hope that it is the Lord's own work in your soul, that called as you had been long before, and that call dropped as it were for so long a season, that when the Lord re-visits a soul and takes up His work which has been neglected (I will not say slighted), it is generally with much more painful convictions - with a hand that acts in love, but as forced to make the soul feel the urgency of the case, and that it must pay attention to God's hand and call. And when the Lord acts thus in grace - is forced by our folly thus to act - Satan would seek the occasion to tell us it is too late, that the Lord is hard and acts harshly, just because we have forced Him to act in a manner to make us feel the position we are in and our need.

But be of good cheer; the Lord makes all work together for good to them that love Him. Your case is not extraordinary. Often souls are attracted by the grace of Jesus, or some religious impression, but the conscience slightly touched; a season of neglect ensues, and then the passages which speak of turning back are strongly applied to the conscience, instead of those which speak of ordinary evil, as in the case when the conscience is reached at the beginning. The enemy always seeks to profit by these convictions, when he can no longer hold the soul in bondage by carelessness, and would drive it to despair and hard thoughts of God. The Lord does not hinder this, for it adds to the seriousness of the convictions, but He is faithful in the end to bring us out of it. If our imagination or feelings are at work, our joys and distress will be more apparent and acute, for the flesh mingles with this also, though the ground work be real. When you know Christ and yourself better, you will be better able to discern between what is accessory merely, and real; but it is of little importance to you now, and God is faithful, though you know that when Peter denied Christ with execrations, Christ had prayed for him that his faith might not fail. It was permitted, because Peter had need of this sad lesson as to himself, and this painfully acquired knowledge of himself was the means of his being able to strengthen even his brethren, for all that humbles us is good; but I desire to remark in the case of Peter, that behind all this scene there was the intercession of Christ which secured the recovery of Peter and the maintenance of his faith, his confidence, and reliance on the goodness of God, instead of falling into despair as Judas; as he says afterwards, "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious."

But there is a deeper work than all these feelings; not so acute perhaps, but which judges sin in the light of God's grace. Further, until the mind gets based upon the truth that all is grace, and that thus it is by the obedience of One that many are made righteous, the soul which is sincere is necessarily under the law,

and occupied with itself - thinks as you, that it is unworthy to follow Him, and the like. Surely you are unworthy to follow Him, and the Lord is pleased to lead you to make the discovery of this humbling truth. Seeing that we are lost (and you will be tormented till you are completely convinced of that) we think that there is no hope, when it is exactly then that the gospel begins, for the Son of man came to seek and to save those that are lost, and He has done the whole work that saves them.

You must not attach too much importance to your joy, though it were real, for it never reached the height of its object; nor to your distress, though it may have been an effect of the operation of the Spirit convincing you of sin, which after all you cannot measure more than the joy; nor to your indifference, more painful in some sort than the distress, and by which the enemy often tempts us. God has weighed all that joy shall be for us; He has weighed all that sin is, all your thoughts seen beforehand, all your indifference - miserable as all this proves us to be; and knowing beforehand all that we are and all our sin, He has given Christ for us, who has charged Himself with all, and us such as we are, and has accomplished without us all that was needed by the justice and love of God. It is absolutely accomplished; you can add nothing by joy or sorrow to the perfect work of Christ. All these exercises of soul may be very useful to bring us to the point of acknowledging our own nothingness, so that Christ may have His first place in our minds by faith, but they can add nothing to Him. Your peace will come from a calm and holy conviction that you are nothing, and that He is all, and that the Lord knew all that you were, and because you were all this, took your place in responsibility and suffered for you.

You will say, but I have neglected Christ after being awakened. It is possible, and it is very sad; nay, more, as I have said, this gives a handle to the enemy to torment us, but does not change the efficacy of the blood and work of Christ in God's eyes, and that is what gives peace. It is not what you think of Christ's work, but what God thinks of it, that saves. Your knowledge of what God thinks of it, by faith, gives peace. God says to Israel in Egypt, not when you see the blood, I will pass over, but "when I see the blood." He it is that has been offended, He it is that judges, and He it is that has accepted the ransom in justice as He gave it in love. He is faithful and just to forgive us.

As we may confound sometimes the acuteness of our feelings with the spiritual judgment of sin, almost always at the outset we confound the work of the Spirit and the work of Christ. Each has its place in the saved, but they must not be confounded. The Spirit of God may humble, convict us, reprove within and thus distress us, or give us joy, and often we set about to judge of all this in order to know our acceptance with God. But these things, though they have their place in the mind of the redeemed, are not the ground of his peace. Christ has made peace by the blood of the cross. Christ has done all, and has left us nothing but thanksgiving and praise. If some one has paid my debts, my sorrow at the folly that contracted them, or my joy at their being discharged, adds nothing whatever to the payment of the debt, though both be natural and just. It is sometimes hard to esteem all our feelings as nothing, but it is only a remains of self; but only think what it cost the Son of God in undergoing the wrath of God, and we shall feel on one hand the perfect security of our justification, and the nothingness of all our feelings compared with what our sin really was in the sight of God; but He remembers it no more, as He has said. If Christ had not completely discharged and effaced it, He could not be in heaven, for He could not sit at the right hand of God charged with our sins, though He was charged with them on the cross.

If your heart demands, But how do I know that I have part in all this? I answer, with the word of the Lord which abides for ever, that whoso believeth in Him. That all might be grace, God has willed that it should be by faith, and though faith produces immense effects, it adds nothing to the thing it believes. Christ and the efficacy of His work must be, and be before God, all that I am called to believe them to be, before I

believe it. The feelings and distress through which we pass are very important, but only in order to bring us to this, and peace and joy are found in a humble and lowly sense of sin, and of the infinite - [copy defective.]

Yverdun, March 25th, 1843.

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