

New Creation

by John Nelson Darby

The new creation is a new creation in Christ Jesus, created unto good works, and it is a totally new thing, the last Adam, and not the first.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:17, Colossians 2:12

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

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes that believers are made new creations in Christ, highlighting the transformative power of being united with Him in His death and resurrection. He explains that while Christians often recognize their forgiveness, they must also understand their new identity and position in Christ, which grants them a place in the heavenly realm. Darby warns against the distractions of the world that can lead to spiritual instability and urges believers to live in the reality of their new creation status, rooted in Christ's love and grace. He encourages the congregation to embrace their identity as new creatures, created for good works and to reflect God's nature, while remaining aware of the old man's tendencies. Ultimately, he calls for a life that seeks the things above, where Christ is seated, as the true sphere of the new creation.

Transcript

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Christ is all in all to the believer. The soul first gets life in Him, and then it gets the object into which the life grows, its sphere, which is all the scene into which Christ has entered, just as a child grows up to realise all that is around it. There is a great deal more in it, of course, but we get in this passage I have read, first, that He is life in us, and then that He is all to us.

All Christians are conscious of the way in which He has met their need as sinners. But the Christian himself may be looked at in two ways: both as a saved sinner, and also as one who stands in the system and purpose of God's counsels. There are many, very devoted Christians too, who never get to any understanding of the latter. Christ does not merely give us forgiveness of sins; He also gives us a place with Himself, and we have to grow up into the knowledge of this, which was always in the mind of God for us, our portion, as looked at in the Second man. God has dealt with us in grace, according to the salvation that is in Christ, but beyond all that is the place that He has given us in Him.

In this chapter we are seen as "circumcised with the circumcision made without hands; in putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." I leave "of the sins" out, for it is not there. "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Here I get myself connected with Christ, coming so far into the new place. He has been in our stead down into death, and the judgment due to sin, and by His work on the cross has cleansed us and justified us. And then I get the second part in the next verse: "And you, being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses."

Wherever he speaks of quickened in this Epistle it is not merely the fact that we have been born again, but it begins with us as dead. It begins with Christ dead, and we are "buried with him," and quickened together with him. It takes us up at the starting point; we begin dead - dead to spiritual life, I mean; and then the whole thing is over. It is not God dealing with a responsible being, but picking up and quickening a dead one. It is another aspect of the results of the work of Christ. When I look at myself as a sinner I say, I have died with Christ. Death had to come in in that condition in which I was as a sinner if I was to be delivered out of it. He looks at the sinner there, and says, Now the whole thing is a new creation.

There are two things connected with this truth, and the apostle does not get much further than the first in Colossians. The first is, that it is a new creation; the other, the sphere in which this new creation has its life, heaven. It is one thing that I am saved, and an immense thing; it is another that I have the place with the Father that Christ His Son has: "My Father and your Father;" "As is the heavenly such are they also that are heavenly." Of course we come into this at the first, that is, as guilty sinners; for there is no real appropriation of truth unless my conscience is reached, unless the truth has got hold of me, both as to what I have done and what I am; but it is not only that there is "no condemnation," but there is a scene where Christ is to which I now belong, though I have the treasure in a poor earthen vessel.

This, then, is the point I desire your hearts to be drawn to: saved sinners, whom Christ is not ashamed to call brethren, but who are also new creatures in Christ. In Colossians it does not go any further than this new creature; but it has a sphere in which all its affections are unfolded and developed. Colossians does not get up into it; still it says: "Their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding to the full knowledge of the mystery of God; in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge." You do not want the wisdom of the world, for you have the wisdom of God. God leaves us in this world, passing through the trials of it, so that we may learn what is in our hearts; all that is quite true; but still there is this sphere into which we are brought by God, and which we are able to enjoy. "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." The apostle wants them to walk as they have received Christ; as they have received Christ so their minds are to live there. He would have their hearts get out of things here and rise to this sphere which belongs to the new man, this sphere of which Christ is the centre; "rooted and built up in him."

But if you know anything of yourself, you know that your great snare is double-mindedness; there is a constant tendency to it, for we are surrounded with that which solicits the old man. You find a man who is not insincere, and yet his heart is like a highway, everything in the world passing through it, and, of course, there is no spiritual power there. This is an extreme case, but take another. Here is one in whom that which determines the conduct of a Christian is not there, so he is unstable. He desires to walk after Christ, and to follow Him, but his feet are not in the straight and narrow way; there is that which distracts his mind and heart, and saps the spiritual strength of his soul; the manna becomes light food to him, it is no longer sweet to his taste; there is instability in all his ways. Here is the danger of this "philosophy and vain deceit,

after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." This is where the turning point comes. The world has its rudiments, its principles; it has its philosophy and vain deceit; all these distractions of the soul belong to the world. This is the snare. People get occupied with these things, get thrown into what is around them, into the ordinary conversation of the world, I do not mean anything wicked, but they come out from it with the consciousness that their souls are enfeebled. And, when a heart is in that state, it looks back to the leeks and onions of Egypt, as Israel did; but when they were wishing for these they forgot all about the bricks and the hard bondage. So it is "Beware lest any man spoil you," through "the rudiments of the world." The world will not have Christ. We do not remember this sufficiently.

We are told in Ephesians that Christ dwells in our hearts by faith, that we; "being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that we might be filled with all the fulness of God." This wonderful central blessedness has been embodied in a Man - all the fulness of the Godhead. How little our hearts reach it! The apostle prays that we may be able to comprehend it; that is what he looks for. There it is for us and in us, for Christ is dwelling in our hearts. Here I have got in a Man the Father's delight, and I have Him to feed on. It is this that is so wonderful in the blessed Lord: I see the fulness of the Godhead in Him in this world, "The Father dwelleth in me," and I also see Him one who [was here in weakness] close to me as a servant. And now it is to this One that we are united by the Spirit in glory, "Full of grace and truth; and of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."

When people have got settled in the truth of the Epistles they go back to feed on the Gospels; Christ becomes the food of their souls and the object of them. He who is sufficient to be the object of the Father's delight is the object of mine. "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," yet He was a real, true man, sinless, perfect man. See His tender, gracious ways with the woman of Samaria. It is the blessedness of what the Lord is that is so precious. And He never gives up that place; He never ceases to be a man; only, instead of coming down in patient humble grace where we are, He takes us up where He is, He takes us up into His own blessedness.

All this must be by faith. If we saw these things we could not go on with the world at all, and that is not God's intention; yet it is equally true that we are to live in them by faith.

But if the completeness of the Godhead is revealed to us in Christ, so also we are complete before God in Him. I use the word completeness instead of fulness, not that I like it better, but because it makes the connection with the following verse plainer: "Ye are complete in him." All the completeness of the Godhead comes down to us in Christ, and in Him we are complete before God. It shows out what a wonderful place we are set in. What is the measure of the completeness of it? God looked down upon earth, and found in Christ all that His heart could desire in every sense, righteousness, obedience, and everything else; and we are complete in this Christ. All that satisfies God's delight and spiritual judgment, if we may use such a word, He brings us into. We are "complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power." Above all these things that He has created, whether heavenly or down upon the earth, He is far above them all. He was always God's delight, "rejoicing always before him, rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and his delights were with the sons of men." Therefore He became a man, and then, by grace, becoming our life He takes us into His own place before God. He satisfies all God's thoughts: He is the satisfying object of them, and all that we are brought into. We are in Him, "complete in him." What a place that is! That we should get thus the fulness of the Godhead brought down to us in perfect grace, and that we should be made complete in Him! There is growth, of course: "To him that hath shall be given;" but we have the fulness of the Godhead in Him, and we are complete in Him before God. And complete

according to what? God has no measure but His own, and that is Christ. When we talk of our responsibility to God the law is the measure of it; that is what man ought to have been; but this is where all God's thoughts are satisfied, and that not in the first man but in the second.

The apostle now applies this to details. He shows how God takes us up as poor sinners and brings in redemption. How this was accomplished is first spoken of: "In whom also ye are circumcised." It takes us up where we were, in the lowest possible condition, "dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh." And then he shows out what God has brought us into, "The circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." Now here I get "putting off." This is not purpose. Of course it must be done or we cannot be in glory, but "sins" are the acts of the flesh, and the word is not literally here at all; it is not the putting off of the sins of the flesh, but the putting off of the whole thing, the flesh itself, before God. And because this is so comes the practical discovery of what the flesh is. There is this old tree, the old stock, which is enmity against God, and that has to be put off by dying with Christ, dying to what we are in the old Adam. God is dealing with us in grace now; the law could have killed us, but now we are crucified with Christ, and we have met its penalty in His death.

But now I find the flesh lusts against the desires of the new man, and the only remedy for this is death. I must reckon myself dead, and "alive unto God," not in the old man, but "in Jesus Christ our Lord." I get the figure of this in circumcision. If I try to keep the flesh down without knowing its death in Christ, it will be a wretched endeavour, in which I shall never succeed. That I am guilty is the first thing that I discover, only I cannot go back to this now; but I then find that the flesh in me "was not subject to the law of God," and then God, "sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." He did not forgive it; it was an evil thing, and God condemned it in the cross. The first thing is to get my sins blotted out as guilty, but then when I wish to walk holily I find there is this thing hindering. And then I find that God has "condemned sin in the flesh," in the cross of Christ, and that I am "not in the flesh but in the Spirit;" and I say, This is not I, it is only sin: "It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."

All this deals with the old man; it is the necessity of my condition, but it is not the purpose of God. Many souls have not learned it. They may have learned that their old sins are forgiven, but they do not see that they have died out of their old condition entirely, that Christ has borne the condemnation due to the flesh, and that they are clear. They see that the fruit that the tree has borne is got rid of, but there is the tree that produced them, and that is still there. So I get "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, which makes me free from the law of sin and death." I am "buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Here I get this death to sin; life, too, resurrection, new life, but it is rather the old thing that I am dealing with, or that God is dealing with. I have died to it: "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." I am cleared altogether of the old thing.

Then when I come to the new thing I can look at it in a new way. In Ephesians it is looked at more in its nature; in Colossians it is more what it is thinking of, what are its tastes and feelings. In Ephesians it is God's nature reproduced; God's own blessed nature, righteousness and truth, and we are created in that. It is "the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and holiness of truth." In Colossians it says, it is "renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." I know what love is, I know what holiness is, and what divine righteousness, for Christ has died. And this new man is created after God. I am brought into all this in Ephesians; but in Colossians, I press it, we are "renewed in knowledge." He has brought into our souls the knowledge of what pleases God. This new man is associated with God in its very principles and nature, and death to the old man belongs to us in Christ, and is to be realised by

faith.

But now another thing. I was dead in sins; I was in a condition of total alienation from God. Man had nothing to do with God, and when there was One who perfectly answered to the heart of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, that was just the One man would not have at all. But we have got into another ground now. When Christ was dead for our sins God raised Him up, and set Him at His own light hand up there, and finding me dead in my sins, raised me up with Christ, and made me sit in heavenly places in Him. When I was gone totally away from God, when I was lying dead in my sins, I get this. Christ came down to the cross, went into death for me there, and then I get Him, not as the quickening One but as the quickened One, and this is where the new creation takes its start. I learn by grace that I have died with Christ, and that I am quickened together with Him. I am on another ground altogether. I was totally dead; not a movement of my heart towards God, nothing could get a movement out of it for Him; as He said, "They have both seen and hated both me and my Father." Then I get that Christ has died for me, or I could not get out of this condition, of course, and that I am quickened with Him. Christ is now the only life that I have. The old man was dead already in these things; Christ came down to where I was lying dead, and has taken me spiritually out of them, not in my body yet, of course, but He took me out of them, and set me up there where He is Himself. God has put me into Christ. We are "created in Christ Jesus." So it says in 2 Cor., "If any man be in Christ he is a new creation." There he looks at it as a whole; it is new creation. Are the lusts that are in my heart, if I do not keep them down, are they of God? Of course not! As to our bodies we are not yet in this new creation, but in Christ we are in it. By this new creation of God He makes me partaker of His own nature. I was dead in sins, but now I have this new creation, and the Second man is my life and not the old man at all. What does the old man belong to? To this poor, sinful, fallen world, though it may be very respectable; to a scene where all that goes on is on the principles, on the rudiments, of the world. I cannot expect the world to go on on my principles, but there is a path that the vulture's eye has not seen; for those who are His, Christ has traced a path through it, for it is not the world the new man belongs to.

As to the old man I have got entirely away from God. Do we not know it? Take the most respectable, decent man in the world, and the things of Christ have no possible attraction for him. They may be amiable people, clever people, modest people, but there is nothing of Christ in their hearts. The whole thing, the entire condition of man, is that he is dead in sins. He may not be reprobate, nor wicked, nor criminal, that is not the question; it is that he is dead. Supposing you take a dead man, has he any movement, any thought as to any possible thing? Of course not! You may galvanise him, and produce movement for a moment, just as a soul may have a momentary interest in Christianity, but it will not last. Man is dead.

Now Christ, of course, could not be holden of death, because there was life in Him, but He actually came down into death, and when God speaks of quickening Christ, and raising Him up to His own right hand, Christ is looked at as a dead man. I was thoroughly dead before God, but now I am made a new creation in Christ Jesus, created "unto good works," and so on. It is a totally new thing; the last Adam, and not the first. I have got now a man who belongs to God's new creation, because he is a new creation. When he was dead in his sins God created him in Christ Jesus: "The Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them;" I am looked at as dead, am always looked at as dead before God, and I never thoroughly know my position until I know this, and that God has made me a new creation. This is true Christianity. Alas, many are not there! They just know that their sins are forgiven, but they do not know that they are dead and risen with Christ, that they are absolutely and totally raised up into another world. God has a world of His own; it is not developed, of course, yet. Christ is sitting as much alone on His Father's throne yet as He

was alone in this world, but this new creation has its sphere there where He is sitting, and there is a path for it through this world traced by Himself. Nothing but spiritual-mindedness can see its way through the world.

This new man is created "after God," and oh, what a thought it is of blessing! The life that I have now, God has created it to satisfy Himself, and all that He is. The first man was turned into sin and wretchedness through listening to Satan, but the new man was the purpose of God's heart ere ever the world existed. Its sphere is "where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." I do not enlarge upon that scene; I suppose I might not do it properly even if I tried, but there is what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man. It is in heaven, another sphere that we belong to altogether. We are left down here to go through this world, as the Lord says, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil," but this is not the place He has prepared for us; He has gone to prepare a place for us there, and we are new creatures in Him, that is the new man is, of course. We are "created in Christ Jesus," not in Adam; it is just the contrast to Adam. The blessed Son of God became a man on purpose to die; He came down into our death and sins, on the cross He bore the judgment due to us, and now He is gone up to the right hand of God, to be the beginning and head of this new creation. In the Epistle to the church of Laodicea He is called "the beginning of the creation of God." This world, the old creation, is all ruined and spoiled; He passed through it and has gone up to be the head of the new creation; and as the beginning of that new creation He is our life; we are new creatures. The believer's body belongs to the old creation, his spirit to the new; he is created in Christ Jesus, and belongs to another world altogether, and our everyday trial is how far we are living in this new creation and how far in the old. It is "after God created in righteousness and truthful holiness."

And where will that new creation find what will satisfy it? Only in that scene where it can be filled to all the fulness of God." All that can satisfy it is revealed to us in Christ, and the Holy Ghost who is down here brings these things before us. But, while every Christian has this nature, or he could not be a Christian, we each of us have to see how far we not only overcome the evil and lusts of our hearts, the old man, which we have to do, of course, but also how far we are living in the elevation that is the sphere of this new creation; how far we keep clear of the things that distract and drag us down in our daily path; how far our hearts are now seeking those things which are above, where He is sitting. By His dreadful death, dreadful to Him, He has delivered us from the death we were in; how far are we living up to the things that He has died to put us into? There are other things that I do not go into, the things that are against us, Satan's power and so on; but, having been dead in sin, God has created us in Christ Jesus, and we have now a place, a portion, there where Christ is gone as man. He unfolds to us in Scripture what that place is. We have got the life, we are thus a new creation as to life, and now how far are we living in the sphere and condition that that life belongs to? It is wonderful to think that God has created us in Christ for His own glory. Christ is the attractive power to our souls there. What then is this poor world to us? A person just converted thinks nothing of this world at all, and that is the right thing for all of us.

The Lord give us, as quickened together with Christ, as raised up together with Him all trespasses forgiven, to know what our portion is in Christ, and as new creations to walk in that sphere to which we belong.

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