

On Eternal Life

by John Nelson Darby

John Nelson Darby's sermon emphasizes that eternal life is a divine gift through Christ, assuring believers of their identity and responsibility in Him.

Topics: "Assurance of Salvation", "Eternal Life"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes that eternal life is a gift from God through Jesus Christ, available to all believers regardless of their spiritual maturity. He explains that this life is not based on personal merit but on the sufficiency of Christ, who is the source of life for all Christians. Darby reassures that those who believe in Christ have already passed from death to life and will not face judgment, as they are united with Him in righteousness and glory. He encourages believers to seek heavenly things, reflecting their new identity in Christ, and to live in the assurance of their eternal life. The sermon highlights the profound love of God that grants us this eternal life, which is a divine reality rather than a mere concept.

Transcript

{Published as 'Extracts' in a 16 page pamphlet, some are in the Collected Writings but it is added here as helpfully bringing together teaching on this subject and some of it cannot be found in the Collected Writings.}

The Epistle of John, that is to say, his first, shows us the life that comes from God by Jesus Christ. John sets God before us, the Father revealed in the Son, and eternal life in Him.

The babe who can but just confess Christ has eternal life, as truly as the strong man in Christ. It is not a question of what I am, but of what Christ is.

He is in all Christians; He is their life. "Christ is all, and in all." He is in us as our life; and, being in us as our life, Christ lives in me; and the life which I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God. He is all to me. There is the Christian depicted in a few words. Having positively put off the old man with his deeds, and having put on the new which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him, Christ is everything to him, and Christ is his life in him. Christ is everything as the fulness of this object, and Christ is in him as his life. Most simple, most wonderfully full! He does not say what a Christian ought to be; it is what a Christian is that we have here. Christ is his life, and Christ is everything to him as having this life.

"The gift of God is eternal life." It is all grace; and I would rather have eternal life as the gift of God than ten lives of my own ever so long, because it is the proof of His love to me.

If we have heard His word, and believed on Him that sent Christ, we have eternal life. You hath He quickened who were dead. Eph. 2:5. We have that perfect blessed holiness that can stand before God. Believing on Him, I have got a life in which I have the blessed certainty that I shall not come into judgment. I have already eternal life and I have passed from death unto life. I was dead, but I am raised, as to my soul, by the power of God. I have got Christ. He has made me whole. He has given me both life and righteousness.

Since the fall of man, since our judgment has been a fallen one by sin, our thought of obligation and duty is always as a means of gaining something. People often fancy, that if there is not the uncertainty attendant upon this responsibility to get life, there must be carelessness. But supposing you have got children, they are your children, and never can cease to be your children. But does that destroy their responsibility? Their relationship to you is the very thing that forms their responsibility.

Man is clearly proved to be a child of wrath. If man is dealt with as man, he refuses to come to God - "none righteous." When Christ comes, it is altogether another thing. God now approaches man, which is grace; not man the means for man to come to God; but God coming to man. He visited men in their sins, that they might live through Him. All was darkness, degradation, and idolatry. God takes them out of that condition that they might live through Christ. "God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son," and thus we are brought into His presence. The life I have as a saint is the fruit of the love of God - life communicated by grace; not creation putting me in a position and sustaining me, but when I have failed, His grace has abounded over it, and given me this life in Christ, when I was dead and enmity against Him; and the very truth that I have life is the proof of His love. We live through His only begotten Son.

There is more truth in God's life than in man's life: it is not a name, a voice, a notion, but eternal life, that very life which Christ has now, that very life which is without end, that we have. "He that hath the Son hath life;" he has it now: there is no such thing as shall, as regards our possession of it. "He that believeth hath everlasting life." And is not the believer called upon, by these wonderful mercies, by this stupendous grace, to exhibit his possession of this eternal life? He is. And how? The apostle says, "Seek those things which are above." Col. 3.

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." I have received Him who has risen, as my life. Nothing can be more important in its place than a distinct and definite apprehension of this; not only Christ has died for us, but we can also say that we have died with Him.

"Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."

Mark how distinctly he here associates us with Christ. He says, Christ is hid in God; well, He is your life, and your life is hid there too. But Christ is going to appear; and when He appears, ye also shall appear with Him in glory. There is complete association with the Lord Jesus now for life, so that my life is hid with Him in God, because He is my life; and when He appears, I also shall appear with Him in glory.

Eternal life has come down here, and I have it in a world that has all its life from the first man; in a world entirely departed and alienated from God; a world that had its origin in man having been turned out of

Paradise; a world that when Christ, in divine beauty and grace, was in it, spat in His face and turned Him out.

But where does my heart go to out of the world? To that blessed life I have in Christ. I may have got it but yesterday, but the thing I have received was up there for me before the foundation of the world. I have got Christ as my life - the life I live is by faith of the Son of God; and it was in God's mind to give me this life before the world was. "He that hath the Son hath life" - a life not of man at all; and having got it, I am to show what is the effect of it, and from whence I got it.

As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; so the Son quickeneth whom He will. John 5:21. Here there is no distinction between the Father and the Son; both equally give life.

But there is another important point settled in this chapter; namely, how we can know that we possess eternal life and shall escape the judgment. When the Lord presents Himself as giving life, He shows us how we may have the assurance of possessing that life. Many honour Him as the source of life that cannot say, "I have the life." Many own Christ as the only way, who cannot say they have got life. The Lord does not leave anxiety on this question unsatisfied. He knew man's responsibility under sentence of death and judgment, and so He says (v. 24), "He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation [judgment]; but is passed from death unto life."

Man was in death, but judgment was not yet executed. It is the same now. But whenever a person has listened to Christ's voice, and owned the Father in sending Him, he hath everlasting life; he is passed from death unto life.

We "shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." The apostles possessed this life by direct communication; the saints receive it by the testimony borne to this life.

The thought in verse 17 [1 John 4], "As He is, so are we in this world," is that the saints are in the same place as Christ. If I have righteousness, it is a divine righteousness: We are "made the righteousness of God in Him." If I have life, it is a divine eternal life: "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear." If I have glory, it is the same glory: "The glory which Thou gavest me I have given them." If we have an inheritance, we are "joint-heirs with Christ;" if love, it is the same love wherewith the Father loved Christ: "Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved me."

"As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." Therefore it is that in the epistle of John we get the same truth brought out. First of all, we have there (1 John 4:9) that the love of God was manifested toward us, "because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him." There I see divine love, that visited this world in the person of the Son of God. There were two things that were needed. That He should be the propitiation for our sins, because we were guilty, was one; but besides that, He goes on to say, "Herein is love with us made perfect," etc. There is the perfectness of love. Not merely that God's love visited us in this world, in all our need and sorrow, not to leave us there. But here is the love of God "made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world."

How can I have boldness in the day of judgment? Why, I am the same as my Judge, and in this world too. "As He is, so are we in this world." Just what I get here, "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." It is the same truth. What a thing that is! What a salvation it is! Not merely mercy that forgives

sin; it is a real, perfect salvation, it is a deliverance which has taken us, as in Christ, out of the condition in which we were, and has put us into another, and that other is Christ. It is true that we shall all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ; everything must be brought out there. But even so, why, I am like Himself. What is He going to judge? How do I get there at all? Because Christ has come and fetched me. "I am going," He said to His disciples, "to prepare a place for you. And if I go . . . I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." So that when I come to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, it is because Christ has so loved me, that He has come to fetch me there; and in what condition? I am in glory before I get to the judgment-seat. Everything will there be brought out, and with immense profit and gain to us. We shall know right and wrong then, as we are known. We shall be manifested, but manifested before Him who is in the presence of God as the warrant of our salvation. We shall not thoroughly bear the image of Christ till the time of glory. But even now as to our standing before God, "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." Now, as regards my soul and my eternal life, He has come and brought us into this condition, making Christ to be my life, and in Christ my righteousness and hope. He has brought me in faith, and in the truth of my new nature, into this wondrous place in Christ. The realization of it is another thing, and may be hindered through failure or infirmity. You begin to search perhaps in yourself; and find such and such a thought contrary to Christ. But I say, That is the old man. If you take yourself by yourself, there is not righteousness for God, and therefore you cannot stand an instant in God's sight. I must look at Christ to see what I am, and I say, "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly;" and that is what I am in the presence of God. There is no veil; we are to walk in the light, as God is in the light.

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