

Psalm 51, 2 Cor. 3 and 4

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon explores the dual truths of human depravity and divine grace, emphasizing the transformative power of gazing upon Christ.

Scripture: Psalm 51:5, John 21:15-17, Romans 7:18, Romans 8:1, 2 Corinthians 3:18, 2 Corinthians 4:7, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 2:8-9, 1 John 1:8-9

Topics: "Redemption", "Transformation"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes two profound truths in his sermon: the utter ruin of our flesh and the incredible grace we receive through Christ's redemptive work. He illustrates how King David, despite his grave sins, recognized his condition before God, leading to true repentance and transformation. Darby explains that understanding our sinful nature allows us to appreciate the depth of our redemption, as we are transformed into Christ's image through gazing upon Him. He encourages believers to confront their true selves and embrace the freedom that comes from acknowledging their total reliance on God's grace.

Transcript

There are two truths which the more we understand with God the more power we shall have. First, what our flesh is: it is utter ruin and evil; and second, the astounding place we are brought into through grace and the redemption [sic, redemptive] work of Christ, and then gazing upon Him we find the transforming power changing us into His own image - a very feeble image, but true. Here are two great truths which the Lord weighs out in the balances of the sanctuary. . . having a title through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. [?]

In proportion as we learn one truth we learn the other. We only learn truth with God. There was a wonderful power of the Spirit in King David. He had sinned against everyone, murdered Uriah and a host of men, but God so fills the vision of his soul that he refers it all to God. "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned." He justifies God, accepts the punishment of his iniquity and comes to be of the same mind with God about his condition. He goes back to original sin (as it is called), v. 5.

This scripture, Ps. 51, is not the deliverance of Romans 7, where a person learned grace, it is more than that: it is judging the nature of the flesh and that condition out of which God delivers men. And here I get the difference of dispensation. A quiet person who has gone on without outward falls or troubles with the ordinary experiences of a christian life may be given by God such a sense of himself as will force him to this v. 5. When I see a thing as God sees it and am conscious that I do so, there is positive power with

God.

The first part of Romans deals with the question of forgiveness of sins, then comes the question of sin: I find I am nothing but a sinner after all, and if not kept may do worse things than I ever did before - and the answer to that is that you have died with Christ. God says you are a dear child, but a poor thing. You have eternal life - My Son's own life, but in an earthen vessel - and then comes our judgment - this loathing of the earthen vessel. How far have we all got to this?

If honest with ourselves, how far have we judged ourselves? Not the evil that has come out, but the evil within. David says, "Well, there never was any good in me - I have shewn it thoroughly out, sins are the fruit of the thing I have got: we have to confess our sins, but we have to confess our nature too, that it is as bad as God says it is, and this gives strange liberty to the soul, and peace. I say: I see what the blood of Christ has cleansed me from. Peter loved the Lord strongly - he was a fine man, but very self-confident.

His conscience was not reached by this 'look,' when he went out and wept bitterly: his affections were reached, but in John 21 the Lord came to shew Peter he must be broken - asked him three times, 'lovest thou me?' and then his conscience was reached. He got this immense blessing - he judged himself - saw his self-confidence and folly and that if he was to go on at all it must be the Lord, not Peter. Do you think our consciences have been so reached that we are free before God to say we are as bad as He says we are?

This is a serious question because we never shall understand what redemption is until we see in ourselves the total ruin of nature. We are redeemed by Christ, and the treasure is in an earthen vessel. When gazing on Christ and the affections moved, we are not sinning. Look at 2 Cor. 3 - it is not for apostles or any particular people, but for all of us. When looking at Him, will is not in activity. "We all, with unveiled face beholding" etc. The eye of faith is opened now and it sees the glory streaming from the face of Jesus Christ.

What does the unveiled face tell me as I gaze upon it here? That no sin or sins arise before God for His people; as to their standing, Christ [or, people, as to their standing; Christ] is seen with unveiled face, and there is nothing between us and the eternal God but the love that has brought us there. It is our privilege to be occupied with Him, seeing Him. You can't follow even a worldly person, even a superior, without imitating him. The more I see the moral glory of the Lord Jesus the more I see how unlike Him I am - nothing in me as it ought to be, and so the transforming power goes on, and the person begins to bear some faint shade of the image of Christ - a poor thing indeed - still Paul could write to the Corinthians "Ye are the epistle of Christ."

In 2 Corinthians 4 we get the contrast between Moses and the apostle. Moses' face shone, he was a great man, but we (apostles) can say nothing about ourselves, we are hid behind Him in whose face the glory shines. The apostle had seen Christ in the glory and that was his testimony; as sure [surely?] as you know He is there, you are saved, but "we have this treasure in earthen vessels," then we get the provision for the exercises.[?] You must get to the cross as quickly as you can, "bearing about in the body the dying" - finding He is our life and we failing in manifesting it. God applies death (sorrows, losses, etc.), His ministry that the life may be manifested. We see ourselves in the mirror of God's word in Ps. 51 and again here in 2 Cor. 4. The Word, God's great instrument with His people: He uses it as a sharp two-edged sword.

As being saved, because I know that I am delivered and I know that He loves me as He loves the Lord Jesus, I want to see myself as God sees me. He says, 'You are all bad, no good thing ever came out of you: you had better have done with yourself!'

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