

Reading on 1 Timothy 1 and 2

by John Nelson Darby

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the critical role of repentance and faith in the preaching of the gospel as outlined in 1 Timothy 1 and 2.

Scripture: Luke 24:46

Topics: "Preaching The Gospel", "Repentance"

Description

John Nelson Darby discusses the apostle Paul's guidance to Timothy on preaching the gospel, emphasizing the necessity of repentance and the importance of adapting the message to the audience. He compares the commission given to the apostles with the messages of Peter and Paul, highlighting the call for both Jews and Gentiles to turn from sin and embrace the grace of God. Darby warns against the dangers of losing sight of the value of forgiveness and the need for a genuine understanding of repentance, which must be rooted in faith in Christ. He also addresses the role of the church in praying for all people, including those in authority, and the broader implications of the gospel for the world. Ultimately, he underscores that true repentance involves a heartfelt acknowledgment of one's sinfulness and a turning towards God's mercy.

Transcript

The apostle Paul is here telling Timothy how to preach the gospel. Compare the language of the commission in Luke 24:46-48, with Acts 1:8 and chap. 2:36-38. In carrying out the commission - "repent and be baptised" - Peter told the Jews that they had crucified Christ, and they were brought to repentance, pricked to the heart; and we have Paul, in his preaching at Antioch, taking the same kind of ground, "I will give you the sure mercies of David," and, "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins," Acts 13. It was in the main the same kind of thing.

Ques. To what does verse 41 refer, "Behold ye despisers," etc.?

It was a warning to the Jews, then and there, lest they should perish. We find very much the same thing in Acts 26, "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light," "and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance." That is what Paul was telling them to do; so that, whether Jews or Gentiles, it would be turning them from the power of Satan unto God. The thing he was bringing before them was repentance. In the beginning of Romans it is the same thing to the Gentiles, though perhaps more vague. Peter also preached Jesus and the resurrection, and called upon them all to repent. That was his gospel message.

Ques. But there were men of intelligence there?

Yes, of course; many of them were philosophers, and Paul had to go down very low with them because they were very stupid. Still, it is, "the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance," Rom. 2:4.

Then, from chapter 5:12, he takes up the other point, namely, our being dead with Christ. This is not forgiveness, and hardly justification, though it involves justification.

What one seeks in preaching is, that the preacher, with his mind as the centre of all, should adapt himself to the condition of those to whom he speaks. And we need to be aware of the danger of losing the sense either of the value of forgiveness to the sinner, or else that of dying to sin in ourselves. I know that revivalist preachers will not listen to this, but they must go on and get conversions, and save souls. And it looks very fine on their part, but it will not do.

308 Again, one often finds those who get an apprehension of dying with Christ become unfitted in measure for preaching the gospel to the sinner, because they are so occupied with the truth that fits themselves.

Ques. You would not call that "gospel," would you?

Yes, I should, for I do not believe people ever have settled peace until they have that; we do not know the gospel fully, until we are made the righteousness of God in Christ. But the theologians, when they have the forgiveness of sins, go back to the fulfilling of the law, and that they call, "going on"!

Ques. Where do you put repentance?

Well, it is to be preached in Christ's name, and we must bring in Christ as the ground of it - that is really grace. Repentance is the intelligent judgment that, under grace, we pass upon all that we have done, and upon all that we are. It is not mere sorrow for sin, for when they were pricked to the heart, Peter set them to repent. It must be, of course, a judgment passed upon ourselves in the knowledge of what God is, or else it would evidently be incomplete. It must involve, too, that the claims of God are considered. The peculiar character of much of the gospel preaching nowadays, is, that it presents God as a kind of debtor to the world to save it, and that He must try and get people to pay Him the compliment of believing on Him. Repentance says, 'I am lost, and unless I repent, and believe, I shall be lost entirely.'

Ques. Did the prodigal repent, when he "came to himself"?

Yes, so far. Repentance is more than a change of mind; it is a change of mind, but it is also the judgment of what has gone before which a change of mind leads us to.

Ques. It is a man seeing God as a God of mercy, instead of his being merely terrified by his sins?

Yes, and repentance is to be preached in Christ's name. A repentance that simply says, 'I have done this, and I shall be damned for it,' is just a legal repentance - what Romanists call attrition, not contrition. I preach Christ, but I call upon men to repent.

Ques. Do you separate repentance and faith?

Some try to do so, and they put repentance before faith; they say we must first have repentance before God, which is absurd upon the face of it; for if a person does not believe my message, there can be no

repentance on the ground of it. When Peter said, "Ye . . . killed the Prince of life," they believed him, and then he added, "Repent."

309 Ques. Would you say it is faith in God's righteous character that brings repentance?

And faith in His mercy, too, or else I shall only see that I am going to hell.

Ques. Is, "go, call thy husband," repentance?

Well, in a sense, in a practical way, it may be.

Preaching begins with the Person of Christ. It is "the gospel of God . . . concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." Then Paul says that he is not ashamed of the gospel, because the righteousness of God is therein revealed. I should be very sorry to weaken the full place of repentance, for you will never build up a soul, if you have not smashed him. The jailor at Philippi had been brought to repentance, in measure, and was trembling about his sins. You may say that, in one sense, no one can believe fully until he has repented, or repent until he has believed. There must be conviction of sin before forgiveness is received; nor will a sinner ever have conviction of sin until there is something for him to judge sin by, and that is what he believes. It may be through the judgments or the law, but then he must believe that. There is a certain sense of goodness in God that attracts, else there is no repentance; it may be very feeble, but there must be something to attract. Mere fear does not go far enough. Ask the first person you meet, for nobody would like to be damned, that is clear. Even when Peter says, "depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord," he goes straight up to the Lord.

Ques. What of Judas, and his repentance?

In his case it was remorse, not repentance.

But in 2 Corinthians 7:10, there is a second word used, and different altogether; it should read: "Repentance to salvation, never to be regretted."*

{*See New Translation in loco.}

Suppose I had killed Christ yesterday, and I find out that He was the Messiah, I say, 'It is all over with me; He came to bring peace, and I have rejected it all.' But then comes the message, "He died to save you," and I ask, 'Is that possible?' And there I find an object for my faith.

Ques. Might there be the first faith, and yet the soul be lost?

310 No, no; though as yet it does not know it is saved.

If I have rejected Christ all my life, my belief now in His Person makes me think I am lost - that is true, of course.

Ques. Then do you make a difference in faith?

Well, there is what is called head-faith, as we see in John 2:23, 24. It was no work there of God's Spirit. When the Spirit of God brings in a consciousness, as with Nicodemus, then the soul begins to want something more. Wherever the Spirit of God works, there is a want. It may be that joy and gladness are in the heart, but there is a want. But where there is mere terror for sin, there need be no felt want in the soul.

And notice, no matter how high the doctrine or the gospel of the glory you preach, if there is a work of God in the soul, you will get back to the point of the soul's want. If your preaching reaches the soul at all, it will produce this, 'I am a poor sinner.' You will, I know, get a general sort of answer from people that they believe, but then you must try and get at their consciences, and prove to them that they do not really believe. Let us see your faith by your works. The Lord must guide as to how you are to do that.

In 1 Timothy 1:18, the apostle is alluding to the beginning of the chapter (v. 5).*

{*See note in New Translation in loco.}

Ques. Is there any difference between Paul being an apostle "by the commandment of God," as here, and, "by the will of God," as in Ephesians and Colossians?

Well, that he was sent and commanded to go is somewhat more positive; it is the injunction of God.

Ques. What are the "prophecies" (v. 18)?

Timothy had been pointed out by them, just as Paul and Barnabas had been in Acts 13 by, "Separate me." We have no particular account of it. He was well spoken of, and commended by all the brethren.

As to gift, we are now cast upon simple faith. There was a real difference, no doubt, between the position of both Paul and Timothy, and that of simple gifts in the Church. Paul had been up to the third heaven and had received definite authority, but it is a privilege for us to walk by faith without such a commission. There is apostolic commission in Acts, distinctly, but now it is rather what may be called a free ministry.

Ques. "That thou by them mightest war a good warfare." What is that?

311 By the prophecies; a consciousness that God had called a man out would give him great courage, but it may be additional honour put on us to work without it. Yet, in itself, this would give great strength. Such an one would, of course, still require the strength of God every moment. Faith may give a man the same place now.

Ques. Would you say that one who had given up profession of faith, had made shipwreck of faith?

No, that would be apostasy. The not keeping a good conscience had led some into shipwreck.

Ques. Would wrong doctrine be heresy?

Holding other doctrine would be heresy, if it led to separation, and it might or might not be apostasy besides.

Backsliding is losing a good conscience.

The effect of backsliding is shipwreck of faith.

Giving up profession of faith is apostasy.

Paul delivers to Satan, and there I get specific power. It is not merely that God may put a man into Satan's hands, He may do that any day, but here it is a person doing so by authority.

Ques. Was it an act of church discipline?

No. Paul was neither a church, nor the church; but what he did, he did as an apostle, not as a mere individual. In the case of 1 Corinthians 5, he acted with the church, but here, without the church. This is quite distinct from, "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person." It is moral discipline, delivering to Satan for the person's own good.

Ques. Could a man do it now?

If he shews me it done, I will believe it. It may, however, happen any day, at the hand of God, or by bodily affliction, loss of goods, loss of children, etc.

Ques. Would you include mental distress?

That would rather be "fiery darts," I judge.

Ques. Had not Job mental distress?

Well, some, but it was rather as the practical effect of his other sufferings. Yet he was still looking at the goodness of God, and he spake more rightly than did his friends. External suffering drank up his spirit. I do not know that Satan could have given him spiritual terror. It is wonderful just to see the human heart as a kind of battle ground between God and Satan.

Paul now tells us, in chapter 2, of order in the church, but exhortation comes first; and in that respect, it is remarkable that he first goes outside the church for the object of their supplications, "for kings," etc., though such were persecutors, and whom they might think reprobates. But, he says, God "will have all men to be saved," etc., and therefore, in our church-thoughts, we must take in "all men," persecuting kings, and people most likely to be omitted.

312 Ques. Are we to understand that the church, down here, is to have a bearing on the world?

Yes, in the way of grace; the church is the very thing that condemns the world, yet it introduces grace to the world. It proves the world lost, and then sends salvation to it.

In this passage, we have gospel in contrast with law. Law took up Jews, and they thought they should have nothing but Jews. No, says Paul, you must have everybody. As a citizen of heaven, he can care for the world. People often pray for the King or Queen, and so on, but it is wider than that. We pray that the saints in the world "may lead a quiet and peaceable life"; so that I should pray as much, say, for Napoleon as for Queen Victoria. It puts the saints in a supplicatory place rather than in a priestly one; that is to say, it is not pleading for persons in relationship with God.

Ques. Does it include the thought of the saints praying for the gospel all over the world?

Well, yes, and in that respect it is important, because whilst being occupied with the church, there is the danger of our getting off the larger-hearted place. There is this aspect here, namely, the casting away of the Jews, and the reconciling of the world. During the law, man was under God's eye in a little sphere of responsibility; but all that is over, and now it is the accepted time, and day of salvation.

Ques. "Who will have all men to be saved"?

Yes. It is God's mind and willingness, not His counsel. It is thelo, not boulomai.

When the churches had rest, they were edified and multiplied (Acts 9:31), and so we pray "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life," etc. Yet we have to watch lest anxiety about the church should hinder our going out to the world. The difficulty is to maintain the two-fold testimony. A third thing there is which we only find in the last epistles, and that is, a church in this great big Christendom. The system is never to repent. God "gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not," (Rev. 2:21), though individuals may get clear of it. In Sardis, we have a kind of beginning again, but there they are treated as the world in a certain sense. In Laodicea, they are given up. There is no repentance apart from grace, nor can there ever be. "They repented not to give him glory," Rev. 16:9. That was like the repentance of Judas who went and hanged himself. Unrepentant sinners will shew the character of blasphemy rather than of sorrow for having lost something. In Judas, it was not repentance towards God. I may say of some conduct of mine, 'What a fool I have been,' but that is not repentance. I have lost, say, £1,000, and I say, 'I might as well have given it to somebody, or thrown it in the street.' That is not repentance. In Esau, there was sorrow, but no repentance. "He found no place for repentance." He sought the blessing, not repentance. He wept for the blessing, "Bless me, even me also."

313 Ques. What is the difference between supplications and prayers?

Supplication is more earnest than prayer. Paul goes from the most earnest crying down below, right up to the giving of thanks.

Ques. What did Paul's ministry include?

Paul's ministry was to all the thing (see Col. 1:23-25).^{*} Gentile blessing was before God's mind, but it had not come out before this; and now, the responsibility question for all flows from the cross, so it was to be testified in due time, "a ransom for all." This we find over and over again; it is the very character of the gospel that Paul brings out. Peter's message has a transitional character, for he was the companion of Christ down here. Paul did not know Christ after the flesh, though he had known Him as the Messiah of promise; he saw man gone in judgment before God, and God coming out with a wholly new thing. The salvation in Christ with eternal life was in Christ before the world existed, and when the history of the first man was finished, then the second Man came out. Peter follows Christ up to the cloud, and he does not go beyond the Lamb offered.

{*See also note in New Translation in loco.}

Ques. How far does it go, a "ransom for all"?

To all, of course. He was not an apolutrosis, nor antilutrosis, but antilutron. If it had been the former, you would get all the people saved. It is merely an adequate price paid, so that God can now send out a testimony to all the world. "The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29) is a great deal wider. There, I believe, the new heavens and the new earth come in. But here, it is an available price, so to speak. Whatever God is now doing, sin is the occasion of it, whether judgment, or mercies, or salvation, or discipline, or patience, or anything else. Time will come when there will be no sin at all, and that is the point of holiness: "who taketh away," etc. It will then be all accomplished, but it is now applied to us. "Preached to every creature," etc. (Col. 1:23) is just founded on this.

314 Ques. How could you use that now?

I should say, 'the blood is on the mercy-seat - come!!' It is never said that He bare the sins of the world.

Ques. He bought a field, as well as treasure in it?

Yes, but there it includes all creation. We find the same thought in the passage, "should taste death for every man," as in the one, "which taketh away," etc. This goes beyond everyone; it is really for everything, though we see not yet all things put under Him.

Ques. In Leviticus 16, atonement is made for things as well as persons?

Yes; the most wonderful thing to me, in that connection, is that, not in chapter 16, but in chapter 8, the tabernacle and vessels were all anointed with oil, and not merely was blood upon them; that is to say, the Holy Ghost takes His place in all creation. Though not guilty, the creation is defiled, and it is to be reconciled. Satan goes into the heavens now as the accuser of the brethren.

Christ is now Mediator between God and man. I do not think I could use "mediator" beyond men. He did not take up angels, that is, their cause, but He took up the seed of Abraham. He will reconcile all things in heaven and earth. At the present time, all is in confusion. An angel receives a command to answer Daniel's prayer and has to stay three weeks on the way. It was under God's hand, of course, but there it is, and in that respect all is in confusion.

Ques. What is a mediator?

One between two. The law was ordained by angels in the hands of a mediator, because Moses was a go-between, i.e., as between the people and God.

Ques. Do those reconciled need a Mediator?

315 Yes, for intercession; but not for redemption, because that is accomplished.

Ques. What is the force of "God is one," in Galatians 3 : 20?

Well, I believe it is this, Paul is proving that, under the law, the state of man is hopeless and unsustainable, whereas with promise it was not so. There were the two cases, a promise made, not in Christ, but to Christ - to the seed. "To Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." That is to say, we have a promise of God to Christ the Seed; and if God made a promise to a person simply, it rests on God's fidelity that it should be accomplished. But when I get a Mediator, it does not rest simply on the promise, or on one, but on the fidelity of the Mediator also, that is to say, on both. With Israel, it rested on both parties; one failed, and it was of no good.

Ques. What is advocacy?

Advocacy is a particular part of mediation.

A mediator looks at a broken relationship; advocacy, at an established relationship. We find a Mediator in Hebrews, and there He is with God. We have to do with God in His own nature and character as such.

Ques. Does not the thought of mediator put the mediator between the individual and God, which is not the case with priesthood?

Yes. It is true that in Christ we are brought into the presence of God, but the idea of a priest now is, that we are walking on the earth and God is in heaven. We have boldness to go in, through the blood of Christ, and we have also a great priest over the house of God. In John's epistles, we have the relationship with the Father and Son; in Hebrews, it is man walking on the earth, but through redemption. In Romans and Ephesians, it is a question of a man in Christ, with no thought of a mediator at all. There I am, directly before God in Christ, accepted in the Beloved. But it is equally true that I am a poor creature here on the earth; and in a sense I am away when Christ exercises His intercession; and that is also the characteristic of Hebrews, where we never find the Church except in a millennial reference. As in the breast-plate, Christ sustains His people on His heart in love, the Urim and Thummim, their judgment, being in the centre of it. He bears our judgment on His heart according to the light and perfections of God Himself. It is not judgment as estimate. I should associate judgment with the Urim and Thummim; our directions for guidance are according to the light and perfection in which we stand before God. Ephesians addresses us as those who are to be imitators of God. Colossians shows the life of Christ is in us. Philippians gives the walk of the saints in the Spirit; and we have there, too, the present conflict as seen in the life of Paul. In Ephesians, we have no time, excepting that we are not yet with Christ, which, of course, we cannot help.

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