

Risen With Christ Colossians 3

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon emphasizes the believer's new identity and life in Christ, calling for a transformation that reflects His character in daily living.

Scripture: Colossians 3:1

Topics: "Living Out Faith", "New Identity in Christ"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes that believers are placed in a new position through the death and resurrection of Christ, which transforms their identity and empowers them to live in accordance with this new life. He explains that being 'risen with Christ' means that believers are no longer defined by their past sins but are called to walk in the newness of life, reflecting Christ's character and love. Darby highlights the importance of recognizing one's association with Christ in glory and the necessity of living out this reality in daily life, urging believers to let the peace of Christ rule in their hearts and to do everything in His name. The sermon calls for a conscious effort to embody the life of Christ, as believers are seen as His epistles in the world.

Transcript

The whole of the exhortations here are founded upon this, that the believer is put into an entirely new place. Indeed everywhere, though there are different aspects of it (in Ephesians - seated in heavenly places; in Romans - walking down here; in this epistle - not going further than resurrection) we are in an entirely new place. Christ in every case is our life. Romans always looks at the Christian as down here. In Colossians we are called upon to walk as being in Christ. In Ephesians, we are called upon to be "imitators of God as dear children;" that is, as coming out from heaven in our walk here. In Corinthians, it is, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation," that is, a totally new thing. At any rate it is always a new thing, founded on the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If I look at the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, I say, it is not only that, but I am risen with Him; that is what we find in Colossians, but the cross, as the foundation, has closed all that man was in the flesh. God has not executed judgment yet, but He has convinced the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment - it is treated by God as a lost world. The death of Christ was that point where God Himself had come into the world in goodness: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself," and He was rejected. It was not simply that God had to turn man out of Paradise down here, because he was a sinner; but when God came in grace into this world, man turned Him out. In Hebrews it is, "Now once in the end of

the world hath he appeared," and it was the end of the world morally speaking. But God is now dealing in grace with this poor world, the fulness of grace meeting the perfect sinfulness of man. Just where man's sin was complete, the work of grace was complete. Where the highest sin was, the highest love was. It was the full blessedness of that work which brought salvation. It was the work of the Lord Jesus Christ which gave a character to the cross, for there everything came out completely: what man was, what the devil was, and what God was. You have the complete sinfulness of man in rejecting God come in goodness; then you get Satan thoroughly against Christ, and on the other hand Christ giving Himself up in love. When we come to dwell upon the cross, we find everything there; the perfect sin of man, and the perfect obedience of man in Christ, and the perfect love of God, and His righteousness even against, sin, when Christ was made sin. The glory of God was effected there, and everything depends on that; while it throws one world out, it begins a new creation, a new state, which Adam innocent was no more in than Adam guilty. Man altogether was brought out and judged (not that judgment is executed against sinners), but then on the other hand, that work is accomplished by which man gets a place in the glory of God - that is the basis of all. Satan is never called the prince of this world till the cross, for until then it was not shown that he had that power in turning the whole world against Christ; the carnal mind is enmity against God. "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee." He appeals to the righteousness of the Father in speaking of the world.

We have to learn what it is to be associated with a rejected Christ in glory, when they have not got Him on earth. Of course I do not see the things in glory, and we must walk by faith, with our eyes fixed on Christ, going through this world by the power which we see outside, with the consciousness of the relationship that is made for us by the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not now a question of whether I can meet God in the judgment. I know I cannot, I give up all thoughts of it; and I then come as a poor sinner to the cross of Christ, to find that I met God in Christ. Instead of going on, as a responsible sinner, to see how it will end, I see that it is all ended, but that God has stepped in, in grace, and saved me by sending His Son. He sent Him because I was a sinner, and now He is become my life; and my part with God is in virtue of what He has done. People will be judged according to their works; Christ had the fruit of what I did, and I have the fruit of what He has done. Then we get another truth, that receiving Christ as our life, "ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God," that is, we are completely associated with Christ where He is. He is our life, and it is hid with Christ in God because He is our life, and God thus identifies us with Christ. We all know His connection with this earth was closed when He died and went to heaven; they will see Him no more, except when He comes in judgment. Now the risen One has become my life, and I say Oh then, I am risen, for He has become my life. He has associated believers completely with Himself, not only put away their sins as guilty persons. The Christian starts with "My Father and your Father, my God and your God," only in a poor earthen vessel of course. Being a son, I have now Christ, the second Adam, to be my life, instead of the first Adam.

Now you will find how completely the apostle unfolds this practically. It is not our estimate of the blood of Christ that gives settled peace; the thing is that God estimates it rightly. The question is whether the offended person has accepted it. Oh yes! that is settled, for Christ is at the right hand of God. He gave it in love, and God has accepted it in righteousness. I am crucified with Christ. Then you are dead? Yes, thank God, I am. If you are dead, what is your life? Oh, I have a totally new life, and that is Christ; I am born again.

The apostle takes up this point, "In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them." People make religion out of these ordinances; it is not owning that we have died with Christ. We belong to

heaven, though we have not got there yet. Now I say, I look at the second Adam, my life is hid because He is hid, and when He appears I shall appear - you cannot separate the two things. Having Christ as my life, I have power against evil. He does not talk of dying to sin, but that we are dead to sin. Christ having died, I have the title and duty to reckon myself dead; when I have Him, I have power. I had no power, "In due time, when we were without strength, Christ died for the ungodly," but now I have Christ as power. I could not succeed in being anything I ought to be, but He has come and redeemed me out of that state. I find out my weakness, but I find I have Christ as strength. In the new life in Christ, there is power, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh;" it required righteousness from me, but never produced anything in me. It was a perfect rule for man as a child of Adam, but as he was a fallen child of Adam, it condemned him because he was a sinner. Did the law give life? Oh no! for then we should have had righteousness by it. Did it give me strength, righteousness, or love? It tells me to love God with all my heart. Why? Because you will be cursed if you do not. Christ comes and does the very opposite: instead of imputing the sins, He takes them, and becomes my life, my strength, and a blessed object for my soul to live by, "that I may win Christ." The law could do none of this. By faith (Christ being my life) I can say to my flesh, You have not one word to say to me, you were condemned on the cross. Where is the condemnation? In His death. Oh, then it is gone. The flesh will be there trying to act, and the apostle goes through these gross sins in verse 5; but you have not to die, you are dead, "mortify therefore," and now that you have power and life, do not let the flesh act I live in Christ, and therefore I must not walk in these things which are contrary to Him.

Now in verses 8 and 9, you find another thing, where there is no lust. There are three characters of sin here. One is lusts (ver. 5), another is violence (ver. 8), and the other falsehood or lying. (Ver. 9) Corruption we have looked at: it is "mortify therefore;" but now it is not a lust, but "anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy." My flesh is unsubdued and unbroken, "but now ye also put off all these;" not only lusts, but an unsubdued will, which will not do for a Christian. And the third thing is, "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;" I have done with Adam. The exhortation is founded upon this: seeing I have put off Adam, I have the title and right to say, "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin," what the scripture calls flesh. By faith I hold it as a thing that is not to stir. "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus" - the power of death, the sentence of death in myself, that I should not trust in myself, but in God which raiseth the dead. I am carrying about the dying of the Lord Jesus, and I am not going to let the flesh stir.

Mark the blessed consequence of this; now I have a new man, I have put off the old man. If I am a Christian, God looks at me (and faith takes this as a truth), not as a child of Adam at all in this world. What are you then? A child of God. The law was a perfect measure for the first man; and now, what measure do we get for "the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him"? I know God. As in Ephesians, "which of God is created in righteousness and true holiness." It is a new nature which is like God, in fact it is Christ as my life. It is the same kind of life as He had (we speak now of that which is communicated). What is the measure of this "knowledge"? Why, what is in God - true spiritual knowledge - I am called to walk according to that; we are to be followers of God as dear children. I get the knowledge of what God's nature and character are in Christ, in a Man; well, then that is the way I am to walk. Did not He love His enemies? You go and love your enemies. Was not He holy? You go and think holiness. Was not He kind to the unthankful and evil? You go and do likewise. There is of course growth in likeness to Christ. The Spirit of God takes of the things of Christ, and shows them to me; very well, that is the way you must walk. It is not merely that I avoid gross sins, but I have to put on the new man. This apprehension of how God has revealed Himself in Christ is a perfectly new thing. I have the mind and

spirit of Christ, the new man, and Christ as my life, and the perfect pattern of it, according to which I am to walk. What I get in Christ is alone and unique, perfect goodness in the midst of evil - go and walk like Him.

In verse 11, "Christ is all and in all." "Christ is all," the whole and sole object, and He is "in all" as the power of life and strength. "Christ liveth in me", that is "in all," and "the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God," that is "Christ is all." He is all to me, and if He is all, there is nothing else. We have various duties, but the question is, is our motive in them all, serving Christ? If you get distracted from that, you get away from Him. I get sonship in John. In Ephesians it is, "Be ye therefore imitators of God as dear children;" it is as dear children we are to follow. God puts us into this relationship, and then tells us to behave according to it. A child could not make himself my child, even if he were to behave like an angel.

Verse 12, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering." I am bound, in walking as a Christian, to carry along with me the consciousness of this; I am sanctified as "the elect of God, holy and beloved," God delights in me, I am His beloved one, He has sanctified me. In what measure and degree? What do I mean by holiness and righteousness? I mean what Christ was to God. What is righteousness? Why, what Christ was; well, then, what is redemption? Why, you get that fully at the end in glory. God puts us into this place first, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God;" now you go and behave like that. What a blessed thing it is to see where He does put us, the present consciousness of relationship. "He died, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves;" Christ gave Himself up for a parcel of sinners. It is the standard that is given to us, not to "live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again:" but He does not call on us to walk according to this, until He has put us in the conscious relationship. Verse 12 is just what was in Christ. Do you get wronged and injured? You go and take it patiently. He forgave the people: you go and forgive them. You are the epistle of Christ. The world is reading Christ in us, just as they read the ten commandments off the tables of stone; and scripture does not say, you ought to be the epistle of Christ, but, you are. Duties flow from that place. It is not merely a "kindness" among men, but it is "charity," which is God's love. Charity tests everything, whether it is up to the mark or not. We are so apt to degenerate, poor creatures that we are, that God Himself has to be brought in (ver. 13), to keep up the measure of the love in its true, real character: divine love, which must be holiness.

Verse 15. "And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts." What sort of peace do you think Christ had? Besides peace of conscience, there was the peace of an undistracted heart. Your heart is often distracted, and of course you have not Christ's peace. If He has brought us into the relationship of sons, we must walk in the peace in which Christ walked. What I feel so important for us is this, that it is not only forgiveness, but the mind and purpose of God is, to bring us really, livingly, and consciously into the place where Christ is. By the Holy Ghost I know I am in Christ; then I know that Christ is in me. I am perfectly accepted as Christ is; then my part comes, which is, Christ to be shown out, "That the life of Jesus should be manifested in our mortal flesh." He has left His own peace with us; and now, beloved friends, are we walking in the peace that Christ had in this world? It is perfectly true that we are to judge ourselves; we find we can do nothing without Him, and if we have been careless, we shall discover that we have not power and strength; but still what He has done, is, to set us consciously in His own place.

Verse 16. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." Here I have the positive enjoyment of all the divine things which are revealed. Do not think that we cannot know and enjoy all the things that belong to us as God's heirs. Live like Christ, and you will certainly find something of the Master's reproach. If the spirit of the world is active in me, of course I do not see clearly; but the Spirit of God is given to us,

that we may know these things. I have the word of Christ dwelling in my heart, and the Holy Ghost takes the things of Christ and shows them to me. When I know that every saint will be perfectly like Christ in glory, I say, What a blessed thing that will be. Whilst we have universal joy, there is a special link a person has with Christ's joy, which no one knows but himself.

"Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." (Ver. 16.) Spiritual songs to enjoy the Lord in. I have the word which brings all these precious things - the love of the Father - into my soul, and my song goes up in praise to the Lord.

Verse 17 is a very simple direction, but how it sweeps things away: "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." If you are going to buy a house - are you doing that in the name of the Lord Jesus? It is the motive that governs us. My life is not made up of heroisms, but of a hundred different little things; do them all in the name of Christ: it is everyday life. Supposing I am living three-quarters of my day without Christ, I then have to make an effort to get back. At the bottom of my heart, Christ, and at the top, blameless conduct, perhaps no one can reproach me, but a man in between the two. When I look back over today, has it been for Christ? Never do anything except for Christ; you will find it will keep the heart fresh.

Now let me ask you, Are you willing every day to take the place of being an epistle of Christ in this world? If you are, then of course you ought to do everything in His name. There is no growth in acceptance, for it is "in the Beloved," but there is growth in the Christian as to his path. I know Christ better, and I imitate Him better. If I am in earnest, I am very glad to be kept close to Him. When Christ is in the heart, the whole thing is easy, but it is not easy when the world is in the heart. If you get a pretty bit of dress, that is more than Christ. It is the question of what is near the eye of the mind. If I am walking with the peace of Christ in my heart, I get the word of Christ to dwell in me richly in all wisdom. Who gets the knowledge of the highest privileges of the Christian in John 20?

Was it the apostles? No, it was Mary Magdalene, for her heart was clinging to Christ: the disciples could do without Him; she could not, and He reveals Himself to her, and tells her to go to the disciples and say, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, unto my God and your God." In the measure in which we keep close to Christ, the word of Christ dwells in us richly. The affections of the heart are up there, and the Holy Ghost takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us, and my responsibility is in everything to show forth Christ.

The Lord give us to see, very distinctly and clearly, that we are put into an entirely new place. If the Spirit of God is dwelling in me, my place is not as a child of Adam at all: I am in Christ, and Christ is in me, and my responsibility is to walk not as man ought to walk, but as a child of God ought to walk. When we see the perfectness of grace in Christ, we shall soon see how far short we are. Are your hearts set upon Christ, so that your one, earnest desire is to glorify Him? If the life of Christ is manifested in everything I do, the world will soon find it out. God has left us the consciousness to walk in His favour as Christ Himself. Then the motive of anxious love to Him is to seek to glorify Him in everything we do: dead with Christ, risen with Christ, entirely associated with Himself, and a witness for Him here.

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