

The Eternal Sonship of Christ

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing the Sonship of Christ, which is essential for our relationship with God and gives us fellowship with the Father.

Scripture: Colossians 1:15, Hebrews 1:2

Topics: "Trinity", "Eternal Sonship"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the eternal sonship of Christ, arguing that the term 'Son' refers to the Person of Jesus rather than His nature. He warns against confusion regarding the Trinity and asserts that the Son existed before creation, actively participating in God's works. Darby highlights that understanding Jesus as the Son is crucial for recognizing His divine authority and the relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He stresses the importance of Scripture in affirming this truth and cautions against human interpretations that undermine the glory of Christ's sonship. Ultimately, he calls for a deeper appreciation of the Son's role in creation and redemption as foundational to Christian faith.

Transcript

Though I have ever held this verse, to say the least, to be very doubtful from the course of the meaning, it is not to discuss this at present I write, but another point of importance - the use of the term Son.

There are those who, objecting to the term Son as applied to the divinity of our Lord, stand on the verge, if not slipping into, confusion of the Persons.

It is the name of the Person, not the nature; and the Person is personally known to us, fully in the revelation of God in Jesus.

But while no man knowing the Son but the Father, the manifestation of God in the Son - in Jesus - makes the language of man scarce preservable from error, if we wish to affirm things separately, of the natures when affirmed about the Son, yet is that which is revealed very distinct, but it is spoken about the Person into which the man was brought and therefore is rightly spoken of Jesus, and the connecting point of faith, not to know there is a Son, but that Jesus is the Son of God.

Nevertheless the works of God as such are directly attributed to the Son before the incarnation of, or rather in, Jesus, and therefore we are justified (much more than justified) in speaking of the Son as we do in the Trinity.

Thus Heb. 1 has "spoken to us by the Son, . . . by Whom also He made the worlds." We are therefore justified in speaking of the Son as before the worlds.

Again in Col. 1 where His whole personal glory is brought out - "In Whom we have redemption" (His dear Son) ". . . the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: for by Him were all things created which are in heaven and upon earth. . . all things were created by Him" (i.e., the Son) "and for Him; and He is before all things," (the present state) "and by Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body" (His official glory), "the church, . . . the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased" - not the Father, this much misleads, but - "the Godhead that in Him" (the Son) "should all fulness dwell" (to wit, in Jesus) - for in Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

266 The Father dwelt in Him, and the Holy Ghost was upon, in all its fulness of indwelling presence.

Could there, I need scarce say, be separation, but He was not the Father, nor the Holy Ghost, but the Son.

Though He did His works by the Spirit, and the Father that dwelt in Him did the works, all fulness dwelt in Him.

He was the Son, and by Him all things reconciled, His actual efficient work.

In a word, God was in Christ, but there again we have the warrant for the speaking the name of His Person as revealed to us of the Son as before the worlds, "In Whom . . ."

Again that our Lord was addressed as the Son in His Godhead is further manifest as it is said and written,

". . . unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom."

They therefore seem to err who do not give the title of Son to our Lord as connected with His Godhead, if they say this name is known to us only through His manifestation in the flesh.

I believe so surely, both of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost alike unknown to us before we knew them by the indwelling and revelation of Jesus, God manifest (in the flesh), illustrating His character and opening out the fulness more revealingly.

I feel it would be opening a gap for evil to acquiesce any further in this, for the Scripture does not acquiesce in it, though as stated below it is not only sound but blessed and glorious truth, but it is better to acquiesce in nothing but Scripture, for one does not know where it would carry one.

The Word was personally known to us as the Son revealing the Father by the Spirit, and we beheld that the glory of the Word was the glory even in Jesus of the only begotten with a Father, His nature, inheritance and dignity the same, though while humbled He gave the glory all to Him in all that is revealed in this.

267 I fear using the fountain of blessing and glory in men's cavils, distortion, and pride.

But I say we are scripturally justified, and bound to silence these cavils, in speaking of the Son as acting in His creative capacity in the Godhead before the worlds, although we know that Person, or any Person, by His incarnation in which centred the unfolding of the mystery.

But we are bound to hold to this most important and essential (strictly speaking essential) truth as connected with the revelation of anything and subjection to any truth at all, for all blessing flows from believing and receiving from the Father, by the Son and through the Holy Ghost - thus the revealed, known and worshipped source of all blessing, the sum of the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh.

Nor is it less important that we should understand Son to be the name of the Person, not of the nature, for as we see that by Him He made the worlds, God over all blessed for evermore, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today and for ever," competent to sit in the glory of His Father's throne, and sitting there in the glory which He had with Him before the world was.

So also we know that "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law," than which indeed as magnifying the law nothing can be more wonderful; and "then shall the Son also Himself be subject to Him that did put all things under Him."

If we ask how can this be, we have the evidence of that in the fact of His having been so before; and thus the Lord secures and settles our faith, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit bringing us into blessing by giving us the facts of faith realized when they might be difficult of intelligence as to their internal possibility from our narrow nature and might be said to be contrary to natural possibility.

So it is written, "the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour."

If we say He were not the Son till the incarnation, then do I utterly lose the link of connection of His being sent from above, for then were it only after He was a Man in the world that He was sent about as a Man, but no, He was sent into the world - not to multiply passages, which are innumerable, for our connection with God hangs upon it.

268 If therefore the name Word be applied to our Lord previously so as to deny the relationship of Son instead of, as I have said, further illustrating what He is, Whom none knoweth but the Father, then I say that is using the testimony of "the brightness of His glory" to destroy a distinct glory and the first glory and blessing of Christianity, i.e. in relation to us.

Moreover the full glory of our Lord's headship hangs upon the recognition of this truth, for as Firstborn of every creature it is by Him all things were created. So that the headship of creation in the Son rests upon this "for by Him. . . ."

Hence we strike at the sphere of our Lord's glory if we strike at the creative Sonship.

It is most important therefore as regards our relationship to God - that first link in the chain that brings us to God, gives us fellowship with the Father, and is the spring therefore of all this very point.

The Father sent the Son . . . it is what each were, the Sender and the Sent. I know nothing previous to this.

It is the Son that is the "brightness," only I did not know this nor Him till the incarnation, nor did a Gentile till the resurrection, nor indeed any till it pleased God to reveal it in Him, though there are full glimpses of it and statements in the Old Testament.

Nor did I know the Father a bit more, nor the Holy Spirit in His indwelling, though holy men spake by Him.

No more than I know the Son till taught of Him (though He made the worlds), nor the Father till the Son reveal Him.

But the office of Christianity is to reveal the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, to make known this relationship in the Godhead (in our enjoyment of the results) into which creature is brought in blessing in the intelligent, Spirit-taught and quickened church the personal fulness of Him Who being such filleth all in all because the fulness dwelt in Him.

Most important as regards His glory because the creative power is thus associated with redemptive power - is associated with, as the basis of the headship glory.

Proverbs 30:1-6 is a most important passage, humbling us to profit, and yet opening to faith what man cannot enter into - a very important passage.

269 I have made this memorandum not to prove (it is known by communion in my own soul, i.e., to myself, communion with the Father by Him), but to show its importance because of the destructiveness of breaking the blessed link. The Word is our most important revelation of what He the Lord is - most important.

The Son is another most important revelation of what He, Jesus, is - the revelation, the name, the truth of His relationship in person in God, or in the Godhead.

If we do not see Him in this with the Father, we lose all the value of it in Him as incarnate.

It is another revelation about Him

No one can give me the partakings of the divine nature. No one can call me into this relationship in integral blessing unless he be in it vitally, unless he be in it in His union with the Father

Therefore the holy thing born of the virgin is called the Son of God, and in Him the fulness is manifested ever of God, and yet we are adopted into it further.

Officially the Word, might I not say, constitutes the apostleship, the Son the priesthood of Christ, both exercised as a Man, but in both competent for it from their respective characters. In a word, He is the Son.

As to any question arising from the term "begotten," it is only weakness itself, for if we argue from the Word, He was a Son before He was begotten, for the resurrection was the day He was begotten, yet was He not a Son while walking on the earth?

When He made the worlds He was a Son. I know Him as a Son in all that He is, and His acts, through some of them here. "Though He were a Son" - I see it as clearly as God's own truth, and it is in this I have to be receptive of truth by God in grace, not judging by my poor incapable intellect.

The love of the truth is a great matter in subjection of spirit, not to lay down the imaginations of man, but to be thankful for the communion of God, and not to depart, or bear departure from the Scriptures.

When we have to speak, God's Spirit will teach us what to say. As for me, I feel I may err in every word. I resist utterly when the truth of God is set aside, yea I trust ever will, by His grace.

270 As for me myself, I am but as the beasts that perish incapable of these things to know them. As revealed they are all my blessing, for God is revealed (reveals Himself) in them to me. So that one is taught of God's Spirit. I could not depart from them. I hold them fast with life. They are between me and my God in thought. I defend them and I do not discuss them with men as questions. I speak of matters of faith which have been made known by faith to me, as God gives me utterance, and I recur to His word to guard as it teaches them where His Spirit is. I hold it vital to hold the Sonship before the worlds. It is the truth.

{This article was found by one who came into possession of many of J.N.D.'s MSS. letters and papers in 1938.}

{The original Mss. can be seen by appointment by any of the Lord's people at Bank House, Redruth, Cornwall.}

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