

The First Man and the Second

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon explores the nature of sin and the necessity of Christ's redemption for humanity's return to God.

Scripture: Genesis 3:6-7, Isaiah 53:5, John 14:6, Romans 5:12, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Ephesians 2:8-9, Colossians 1:20, Hebrews 10:14, 1 Peter 2:24, Revelation 21:27

Topics: "Sin and Redemption", "Grace and Righteousness"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the contrast between the first man, Adam, who fell into sin and was cast out of God's presence, and the second man, Christ, who restores believers to a heavenly relationship with God. He explains that while Adam's disobedience brought sin and separation, Christ's righteousness allows believers to be made the righteousness of God. Darby highlights the importance of recognizing our sinful nature and the need for repentance, as well as the grace provided through Christ's sacrifice, which enables us to return to God. He warns against the lies of Satan that lead us away from God's goodness and stresses that true happiness is found in submission to God's will. Ultimately, Darby reassures that through faith in Christ, believers are forgiven and brought into the presence of God, free from sin and judgment.

Transcript

Man is by nature both a sinner and ruined - shut out by sin from the presence of God: and man, shut out, could not get back as man. The last Adam brings us back, not in the same way, but in a heavenly one - not to an earthly paradise, but into the very presence of God in heaven. He does not bring back to innocence, but to the "righteousness of God"; for the believer is "made the righteousness of God in him." This scene in Eden shews out God and man.

There is the natural conscience of man; for he acquired by the fall the knowledge of good and evil. A man steals, and he is conscious he has done wrong. Whether or not God's law tells him so, his conscience knows it. Look at Satan's temptation. What was his object? He wanted to make God's creatures think that God was not so good to them as He might be - that He was keeping back from them something that would be for their good - that He was jealous of their becoming as Himself. The natural heart is always calling God in question for having made it responsible to Himself. Its very nature is to question God's goodness.

Satan's great lie was, "Ye shall not die." It is his constant aim to make men believe that the consequence of sin will not be that which God has said it shall be.

When the woman had listened to Satan, lust comes in. Once away in heart from God, she must follow her own way. And what are men doing now? Helping one another to make themselves comfortable away from God, and in those very things that they know He hates. Beloved friends, should you like to meet God just as you are? You know you would not. If God should say to you, Come and be judged, you would wish to have it put off. You know you would. And, moreover, you do not like to think about this unreadiness. What did Adam do, and Eve? They hid themselves from God - nay, further, they hid themselves from themselves and from one another; for the covering of the fig-leaves was just to hide the shame of the nakedness which they discovered. And when they were hiding away from God, they were away from the only source of blessing. It was saying, The light has come in, and I must get far from it: just what the conscience of itself does now in the natural man.

112 Mark the character of the sin. They believed that the devil told the truth, and that God did not. Whatever thoughts they had in their hearts, they acted upon this. And men are still believing the devil's lie - hoping to get into heaven their own way, when God has said that nothing defiled shall enter in.

He wanted too to make them think that God was not so good to them as he would be - that God was keeping back from them the very best thing they could have. And are not men now looking to Satan for happiness, instead of believing God? Man cannot believe that it is God's mind to make him happy.

And now, beloved friends, this is not only a history of Adam, but it is a history of man, of yourselves. You may say, I have done very little harm. Well, then, you shall be taken on your own ground. Is it little harm to make God a liar? What had Adam done? He had eaten an apple. Do you say, And what was that? What harm was there in eating an apple? Alas! Adam and Eve cast off God, and that was the harm. Whether it was eating an apple, or killing a man, as afterwards came out in Cain, the principle was the same. It was casting aside God's authority, and making Him a liar. The root of the evil was there. It had only to bring forth and bud. Suppose I see a plant peeping above the ground. It has but two leaves; but I say, Here is a thistle, cut it up. I do not wait till it is grown to see what it is. And so with sinners. The evil is there, and has only to be developed. A little evil is seen, and there needs only time to manifest all.

Adam hides himself from God. Is there no harm in having so broken with God, as to want to get out of His presence? And it is not God you have harmed (as it is said in Job, "What profit is it to him if thou art righteous?") so much as it is yourselves. The God of love brings down into man's conscience the knowledge of the harm he has done to his own soul. One weighty reason why God has given His blessed word is to shew man what he has done to himself before God. It is in love He has given it; for if He were dealing with men in judgment He would have left them under it.

God called to Adam. When God speaks, it awakes the conscience; but this is not necessarily conversion. God speaks to shew man to himself, and bring him back to blessing. Alas! man is afraid of the only place where holiness can be happy. The awakened conscience shews the presence of God. You would not hide yourself from a policeman: and why? Because you know you have not done anything to make you afraid of him. But you would hide yourselves from God if you could: and why? Because you have done that which you know He hates, that which separates you from Him. Man cannot bear to meet with God.

113 It is remarkable that the only thing in man as such which one might in a certain sense call good in him - that is, conscience - only drives him away from God. Sin has made man get away from God, and it has forced God to drive out man from His presence. See man's sad condition - sinner, ruined, and shut out from God. And there is no way back to God except one, and that is through the Second Man. If Christ

comes in by the door into the sheepfold, there is no getting in some other way. He is the door, and whoso enters must come by Him. The flaming sword kept every avenue to the tree of life. There was no possibility of creeping up to it by some unguarded path.

Innocence, once gone, can never be restored. It is the same in common every-day things.

Man cannot get back to God by himself. Everything around us shews that man is out of paradise: toil, and suffering, and sorrow, and sickness, and necessities, and death, tell us of it every day.

There is another character of evil in our souls - and that is a readiness to excuse ourselves. Adam laid the blame on the woman. "The woman whom thou gavest me," etc. It was as much as saying, Why did you give me this woman? It was your gift caused the sin. He wanted to put it off from himself as a question between God and the woman. It was not untrue, and yet it was as far as possible from the truth. It is the way of our guilty nature to throw upon another the sin in which our own will is concerned. And God judged Adam out of his own mouth. The excuse he makes is the very reason for which God condemns him. "Because thou hast hearkened," etc. Our excuses are thus our condemnation.

There is not a word of comfort in all that God says to Adam or his wife. It is all sorrow and suffering in prospect - toil and pain. God shews man his sin to convict his conscience, not to make him happy. Grace comes in, and salvation, and therein he can rejoice. But God wants sinners to feel their sins, and not to find any comfort except in Him. He must take them out of themselves for that. If my child has been perverse, do I wish him to be happy about it? No; I want him to feel his naughtiness. I am longing to forgive him, and winning him to forgiveness; but he must feel his sin.

114 God did not leave these poor condemned sinners without comfort. But it was to the serpent He said, "The seed of the woman shall bruise thy head." It was a new thing that God was bringing in - a new person and a new way. Christ was the "seed." Where the sin had come in, the remedy was to be brought out. The blessing should come by the Seed of the woman through whom the curse had entered. This was the perfection of grace. And grace is perfect in another way. If sin has come in, sin must be entirely put away. He who shut man out from heaven has fully provided that which shall shut him in again. To be brought nigh to God through the precious blood of Christ is the place of believing souls. And how is this blessing brought? Because of the grace which is in God. Christ loved us and gave Himself for us.

God must have us see our sin as between Himself and us. We shall be justifying ourselves till we justify God in condemning us. We are then of one mind with God. To see sin as God sees it is repentance. It is "truth in the inward parts." It is holiness and truth in the heart. And then there is all grace to meet the need that is thus found out. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." A man judging himself in God's light, without seeing Christ as the promised Seed of the woman, is almost in despair; but "God commendeth his love to us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." We do not want a good Adam, - but a great God and Saviour. In the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, see all the wrath for sin laid upon another; and that other, who? What the soul wants is pure simple grace to meet it just where it is. If you were driven out of paradise yesterday (it is as though God were ever saying) here is comfort for you. When you learn that you are ungodly and without strength, behold what has been done to bring you back. Are you so content with God's judgment about you, as to submit to this grace? It is the woman's seed that must be the hope.

Sin must be perfectly put away. The sinner brought back to God must be spotless. Christ does not enter heaven again till He has accomplished this. "When he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down," etc. When all was finished, He took the throne of righteousness. It is a more living and mighty truth to my soul,

that Christ, as the last Adam, is in the heavenly paradise, than that the first Adam was cast out of the earthly one.

115 It is through grace, and through grace alone, that we get to know God. If I could present myself at the door of heaven, and seek admittance on the ground of my own righteousness (supposing for a moment it were possible), how should I stand there? For "to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt." I might know God as the One who dwelt there, but it would be a cold entrance; I could not know Him as a God of love. What grace is shewn in paying a man his wages for His work?

No, it is my joy to find it all in another, and not in myself God justifies me when He says, My Son has been given for your soul, and died for sin. We are clothed with Christ - we have put Him on. If I be asked, On what ground do you expect to get into heaven? I say, I am become the righteousness of God. What more could I have or want? If asked what I am in myself, I say, A poor sinner, and this to the very end; but I am now in Him who is the delight of God. True, I do not know Him fully, but He has redeemed me; and I am in Him that is the life. He is in me, and I in Him; and where He is, there I shall in due time be also. Now I want to serve Him better and to shew forth His praise. Perfect power will by-and-by come in, and not a particle of my dust can be left behind. The body is His as well as the soul. Death has been vanquished for it. We are still in the body, and bear it about with us as yet in the bondage of corruption; but Satan's power is crushed. The serpent's head is bruised. We have to do with him now, but his power is broken. He has been overcome, for Christ went down under the full power of him that had the power of death; and He came up from it triumphant, for it was not possible He should be holden of it.

We are told, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." We are not to overcome him (that we never could do), but when he meets Christ in me, he cannot stand that, he must flee. "Thou shalt bruise his heel." The blessed Son of God came down to go through this for us. He said, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God": and that will was our salvation. "By one offering he perfected for ever them that were sanctified"; but then that offering had to be made, See the Lord Jesus Christ coming down from heaven in love, to devote Himself to God for our salvation; and this changes a man's heart. Jesus drank the cup of wrath for sin, full and to the dregs. He tasted death - was shut out from God's presence - endured the hiding of His countenance; and all this, that He might bring us back into the presence of God without judgment and without sin, but with everything that could make us happy and blessed for ever. He lived in God's love; He dwelt with the Father; and He knew well what He was bringing us into, what He was giving us to share. But He knew too what the holiness of God was, and what His wrath was; and therefore He knew what He was delivering us from. How I shall hate sin, if I have seen Christ agonizing for mine upon the cross!

116 Well, the moment a poor sinner looks to Jesus by faith as his divine sin-bearer, his sins are all gone - they are put out of God's sight for ever. And Christ is in heaven. Could He take the sin there? No; His very being in heaven proves it all left behind. The poor sinner gets the fruit of all that He has done, and all that He is - pardoned through His blood, brought nigh to God Himself Peace has been made through the blood of the cross. And the glorified Man is in heaven, appearing in the presence of God for us - of His Father and our Father, of His God and our God.

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