

The Full Import of Conversion 1 Thessalonians 1:9, 10

by John Nelson Darby

The full import of conversion is a man being turned round to God, with repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, resulting in a new life in Christ and a new position in resurrection.

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 1:9

Topics: "Conversion", "New Life in Christ"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes that true conversion involves a complete turning to God, where Christ becomes the central focus of one's life. He explains that conversion is not merely about relief from guilt but about receiving a new life in Christ, leading to a transformed state and purpose. Darby highlights the importance of understanding one's identity in Christ, being dead to sin, and living by faith, which allows believers to walk in the Spirit and reflect Christ's glory. He stresses that true sanctification comes from recognizing that all sins are forgiven through Christ's sacrifice, leading to peace and acceptance before God. Ultimately, Darby concludes that conversion is about having Christ as everything to the soul, guiding believers to live in a way that honors Him.

Transcript

(Words of Faith, Vol. 3, 1884, page 36.)

It should ever be borne in mind that the Lord Himself must be the centre in testimony, however blessed it is to put forth the gospel of God's grace. Here, in Thessalonica, these souls were brought out to serve the living and true God. The whole man turned to God - a totally new state from beginning to end; not merely getting relief to conscience, but God Himself in Christ become the object before the soul. This is the full import of conversion, as we get it in 1 Thessalonians 1:9, 10 - a man being turned round to God; there is repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

When you believe, you get an entirely new life and you judge the past - you repent because you believe; it all comes together, like the prodigal, when he turned to his father's house, there is a totally new life, state, and object. "They who are of the Spirit, mind the things of the Spirit," &c., and "Our conversation is in heaven," &c., is the doctrinal statement of this. You must get such a knowledge of self as to get rid of it. If you faithfully said, "I am dead," Satan could not tempt you. You may not always be able to do this, but it is yours to say, as one "born of water and of the Spirit." The water cleanses, but being born of the Spirit

gives a new position and a new life.

We know we are born of God - that eternal life that was with the Father is my life, and that is Christ; He has become my life. The Lord breathing on the disciples was not the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. When Christ ascended to heaven, He received the Holy Ghost afresh for us. He had it before, but He received it for us when He went up on high. It is through the second Man, gone into glory, after having put away our sins, that we get the Spirit. God comes down to us in our sins as Man, and as Man He goes up, and receives the Holy Ghost for us. Man in Christ takes a new place in resurrection.

The work of Christ on the cross clears the conscience; then Christ Himself becomes our life, This is a totally new state - a new creation.

The first thing needed, is to have the question of sin settled, and to know that all our sins were borne by Christ, and put away. If you charge me with my sins God declares that the blood that cleansed me is always under His eye; He cannot impute my sins to me, their imputation was to Christ. It is what God sees that clears me, not that I have accepted Christ, but that God has. What gives Peace, is, that the work of Christ has perfectly settled the question of sin.

Practically, if I sin, not only am I miserably failing, but I am doing the thing that caused Christ's agony, but if it did that, it cannot be imputed to me. We have the teaching connected with our practical state in the type of the red heifer. (Num. 19) The ashes - sin consumed on the cross - with the running water, were sprinkled on the unclean person. The ashes are applied to the soul in testimony of the whole thing having been consumed - sin put away. If I indulge a foolish thought even the Holy Spirit is grieved, and I am uncomfortable, but I cannot judge myself for sin, unless I am certain that it is not imputed. The answer to everything is the work done on the cross. That work sets us in the presence of God, in the light, without a stain, our sin having been laid on Christ, according to God's knowledge of it.

Nothing tests the heart so much as realising that the worshipper "once cleansed, has no more conscience of sins." There can be no real or right sanctification till a man is clear about sin. Until I know my perfect acceptance, and am perfectly assured of salvation, through all sin being gone, I am mingling up my state with my standing. The holy nature is there, but there can be no proper sanctification till I see that Christ has not borne my sins up to such a day, but that all my sins are gone, and, besides that, I have a perfect acceptance in Christ.

There are three things: peace as to sins; present grace; and glory to come. Not merely no condemnation as in Christ Jesus, all sin having been cleared away, but a position - a new place in Christ Himself - is ours. All, as to the first Adam, was settled on the cross, and I have a new place in Christ, and I am called to walk now as Christ walked, but I am to be conformed to God's Son in glory. I am to walk as Christ walked, not to be as Christ was. He was without sin in Him, we have sin in us, but sin in our walk is never to be allowed.

"We all, with open face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory." Not only are my sins cleared away, but I see a Man gone into glory, and now, not only I would not sin, but I want to be like that Christ in glory - I press on towards the mark. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." I see Christ in glory by faith now; I know I am to be like Him by-and-by, and I want to be as like Him as ever I can be, even now. It is like a light at the end of a tunnel, the nearer I get, the brighter the light. I see the flesh in me never changes, only appears worse and worse;

but if my eye is fixed, and my mind is occupied with, and full of Christ, I shall get more like Him at every step - "changed into the same image from glory to glory."

There must be nothing in the heart or walk not like Christ - all must be given up to Him; and, as to walk, I am to walk as Christ did. The account we get of the flesh is lawlessness, before the flood; then, under law it makes a golden calf; then, Christ, come in grace, is rejected and crucified; then, the Holy Ghost is rejected through Stephen; and lastly, if a man goes into the third heavens, as soon as he comes down the flesh must have a thorn. There is no changing it, but that is no reason why we should let it act; there is no present consciousness that the flesh is acting at all if the soul is full of Christ. I am not thinking of it if I am thinking of Christ, I reckon the flesh dead. If a man is dead, you cannot charge him with a wicked will and lusts. Not only Christ was crucified, but I have been crucified with Him. I have always that death of the cross to bring in, and I have Christ as my life - "If we be dead with Christ, we shall also live with him." I get the power of Christ acting in me with this new life. The sin I find in my flesh was put to death in Christ, and I have done with it. But another point I get Christ as the object of my life - "The life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

You find many who know their sins are forgiven, yet do not know what it is to have been crucified with Christ. You can never get rid of self till you know this. In Romans 7 the soul is quickened, but not delivered; it is under the first husband, renewed, because of knowing the spirituality of the law, but it is learning that it has no strength. It is harder to learn that you have no strength, than that you are ungodly. The last stage is, "I thank my God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." This is deliverance. The moment Christ comes in there is power, but I must learn my weakness; not a balance between flesh and Spirit. God in Christ having condemned sin in the flesh, I am dead to it. If I am told of a fine concert, or anything else, I say, "I am dead to it." A gardener has no idea of pruning a crab-apple tree, he cuts it down, and grafts with a new thing altogether.

People do not recognise the fact of their having died with Christ, as well as of Christ having died for them. Many a quickened soul does not know the full value of the work of Christ, and that "as he is, so are we in this world." When the blood was on the lintels and doorposts the Israelites were safe, but when they came to the Red Sea, and were told to stand still, and see "the salvation of God," there was positive deliverance - they were taken out of one place, and put into another.

Dry standing is, that I am not in the flesh, but in the Spirit: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" - is not in a right standing at all. "Ye in me, and I in you," that is where I get my standing in Christ before God. I am quite perfect, if I am in Him, and He in me; and I have, as to the body, to reckon it dead.

The way the Thessalonians lived, as to testimony, was most blessed. One can never present it by trying to do it. If my heart be full of Christ, I shall not merely be avoiding evil, but, as Paul prays in connection with the Philippians, desiring to be filled with the fruits of righteousness; and, having got God's mind, I shall yield my body as a living sacrifice to Him. Paul did but one thing; he ran after Christ in glory. This is what conversion really is - Christ everything to the soul. J. N. D.

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