

The Power of Life in Christ Risen 2 Corinthians

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by John Nelson Darby

The sermon emphasizes that the hope of the believer is not death, but to be 'clothed upon, that mortality may be swallowed up of life', and that death is a positive gain for the believer.

Scripture: Isaiah 53:5, John 11:25-26, Romans 8:29, 2 Corinthians 5:4, 2 Corinthians 5:8, Philippians 1:21, Hebrews 2:14-15, 1 Peter 3:18, 1 John 3:2, Revelation 21:4

Topics: "Hope in Christ", "Life After Death"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes that the believer's hope is not in death but in the life that comes through Christ's resurrection. He explains that while death is a reality that breaks all ties of nature, it ultimately leads to the possession of eternal life and the joy of being conformed to Christ's image. Darby reassures believers that they are free from the condemnation of sin and that death, while a terrifying prospect, is transformed into a gateway to glory through Christ's sacrifice. He encourages Christians to find their home in God's love and to rejoice in the hope of eternal life, which is a present reality rather than a distant hope. The sermon concludes with the affirmation that death is a gain for believers, as it leads to being with Christ.

Transcript

The hope of the believer is not death. It is "not to be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality may be swallowed up of life." He need not be unclothed, that is, of himself. The purpose of God is nothing less than that we should be conformed to the image of Christ; Rom. 8. Our proper hope is to see Him as He is, and be like Him. It is the power of divine life conforming us to Christ the Head that we hope for; and this is what He has wrought us for. Being in utter ruin, we can now only look to what are God's thoughts and purposes about us, and therefore hope comes in as a very necessary help; but hope is not all our joy now, and when we get to heaven, there will be no hope left. Our proper joy is not hope at all, though now, seeing there is nothing satisfying here, one of our greatest joys is hope. What He has brought us into now is not subject of hope at all. We do not hope for the divine nature or the love of God. The divine joy of the believer is having these, while rejoicing in hope of the glory of God.

We have a hope in death, but death is not our hope. There is that in it which is more than hope - the possession of life; and that death does not touch but set free. There are some things we should be at home in. We should be at home in God's love; and at the judgment-seat of Christ, being like Him, we may

be at home. True, we are at home, too, in conflict here, temptation, etc.; the promise is "to him that overcometh." But, in spite of conflict, our hearts should be at home where God has put us

When death comes in, it breaks every possible thought of nature; it is a terrible thing in this way: every thought of man gone - not a single thing to trust in - everything in nature broken down.

Another point is, it is the power of Satan which none can control. God has the power of life, but if He had called in question Satan's power in death, He would have annulled His own sentence. Death must come in, breaking every tie of nature, and bringing in every terror connected with Satan. The sentence must be executed by God Himself, and therefore it is the judgment of God. There is judgment after it. "It is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment." What can this judgment be? If I die and God brings me into judgment, I must be condemned for the sin that brought me there. "Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (I am not now speaking of deliverance.) In every sense death is a terrible thing. Besides the natural dread that even an animal has, there is a terror in it, because all ties are broken by it; everything, however loving, is gone, when death takes it. The power of Satan ushering into judgment, it can bring nothing but condemnation for sin. It is also what God has put as a stamp on man, and no skill of man can avert it. It comes with bitter mockery amidst all the progress of which man boasts. In all this we see what death is in itself, as the wages of sin. But there is another way to look at it. The way God has taken it up and entirely delivered us (those who believe); and now, if there is a bright spot in a man's (a Christian's) life, it is at his death. It brings in a bright gleam of the future, entirely by Christ. "If one died for all, then were all dead," etc.; "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death . . . and deliver them who through fear of death," etc. This blessed truth is simple in itself, familiar to us, that the Son of God, of whom it is said that it was not possible He should be holden of death, did come down into it, has gone under it, and is risen. The second Adam came into the very place of the first Adam.

267 Then we were under sin, judgment, wrath, condemnation, and He has been under it all - He was made sin. Had God not measured the sin? Yes. Did He not know the consequences of it? Yes; and He "spared not his own Son, etc. Did Christ not know all that was involved in it? Yes; and He came in the full love of His heart to accomplish the purpose of God - to drink the cup; but such was His agony at the thought of what the cup was, that He sweat great drops of blood. It was the thought of sin, death, and judgment that made Him shrink from the cup, but He went through it with God. The power of death was gone, in a sense, when those who came to meet Him saw Him, "They went back and fell on their faces." He had nothing to do but to go away then, but He did not: He offered Himself up. His disciples might go away, because He stood in the gap. Thus He takes the cup as judgment, suffering the penalty of sin. It is not now Satan (as in the agony in the garden) but God. When on the cross He cries, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He drank the cup thoroughly on the cross, then He died. His body went down to the grave. Was it the power of Satan when He said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit?" No. He gave up His spirit, waiting for the resurrection. He went down under death, took up the whole thing - sin, Satan's power, wrath, etc. He was made sin for us. "He died unto sin once."

268 We have thus seen what death was for Christ. Now see what it is for us. In nature it is everlasting wrath: but there is not a bit of the wrath, not a bit of the sin, remaining for the believer. Is God going to judge the sin He has put away? No; there is not a trace of it remaining. "He has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" - "condemned sin in the flesh." The strength of it all is in this - that He was "made sin," because He had no sin of His own. He suffered for it once, the just for the unjust; 1 Pet. 3:4. "Condemned sin in the flesh." God has done it once for all, and now He lives, and there is no more about the sin. "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second

time without sin," having nothing more to say to it, and apart from the question of sin altogether, to take us into glory.

Looked at as the nature, He had no sin, but I had sin, and that is put away; sin is entirely put away, abolished for ever. He has come up from under the consequences of death, after sin is put away. The life He took up is in the "power of an endless life." I have new life in Him, life born of the Spirit, and "the life that I live, I live by the faith of the Son of God," etc. Then what about the old man practically? As I have this new life, the old man is reckoned dead. I am dead. What is dead? The old man; I am "baptised into his death." The "corn of wheat" must die. Death ended all connected with it, for dying is unto that by which I was held. The law has killed me. The effect of the law, if we see its value, is that it has killed me, and I have life in Christ. Scripture does not speak of our dying to sin, or of our dying to ourselves; but we "are dead," and are to "reckon ourselves dead." "Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as thou alive in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?" The old man is an antagonist in its will; but I am dead to it. I have done with that which hindered my going to God. Has not a man done with that to which he has died? Literally, when death comes, I shall have done with what is mortal. Mortality is to be "swallowed up of life." The old nature is a thorn I shall be glad to get rid of; it is mortal, corrupt, and now by sin under the power of Satan. But then it will be gone, this corruption and mortality. The mortal body having died, I shall have nothing more to do with death or the old nature.

269 What of the new nature? Is this done with? No; it is getting home, where the affections will have full play. In death we have done with the old nature, the first Adam, and get a great deal more of the Second. This is "far better." I shall have got rid of mortality when I die. "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord." Who is this person? The new man. I am absent from the body, present with the Lord. Leaving this wretched poor mortal, to be with Christ, is positive gain. It will be better still to be glorified in the body with Him, complete in all with Christ; but now it is "gain" to die.

What was Christ's own thought about dying? What He said to the thief shews: "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise"; and to His disciples He said, "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I go to my Father." In Christ there was the perfect consciousness of gain. Was Stephen less happy in his measure when he died? Hear him saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." The fact of death is leaving the old man entirely behind, and going to be with Christ. There is positive gain in having done, in measure, by faith now, or in fact by-and-by, with the mortal.

Then there is the dying daily. But there is not a single thing in which death can come, but it is positive gain, and for the life of the spirit. The sorrow which comes in by the breaking of natural ties is for blessing, reducing the flesh, etc. If there is will in the sorrow, it is bad; but trial is to be felt. Peter did not like the thought of the cross; his flesh was not broken down to the point of the revelation he had from God. Then there must be a process gone through to break it down, either with God in secret or through discipline.

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