

The Saving Grace of God Titus 2

by John Nelson Darby

John Nelson Darby's sermon explores the transformative power of God's saving grace in the life of a believer, contrasting it with the law and emphasizing a heavenly perspective in daily living.

Scripture: Titus 2:11

Topics: "Christian Living", "Grace"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the transformative power of God's saving grace as revealed in Titus 2, illustrating how true Christianity elevates believers above worldly concerns and associates them with heavenly realities. He explains that while the law reveals God's authority, it lacks the revelation of His love, which is fully expressed in Christ's sacrifice. The Christian life is characterized by living in accordance with this grace, which teaches believers to deny worldly desires and live righteously, with their hearts set on heavenly things. Darby highlights that the Holy Spirit empowers Christians to embody this grace, making them witnesses of God's sovereign love and grace. Ultimately, he calls for believers to live expectantly, awaiting Christ's return and reflecting His character in their lives.

Transcript

The more we study the word, the more we see how it takes us out of the present world, and how it associates us with all things that are of God. When we come to what is Christian, it is not what the law was (that is righteous claim), but the revelation of God's grace and God's mind to give what takes our hearts from this world, and associates us with a revealed scene that is not this world at all, but outside it all. This is Christianity in its practical character; it is an association completely of our hearts with things not seen. When we walk right, we walk by faith.

"Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Servants are not to purloin. Why? "That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." Paul was so full of Christ Himself that he could not speak without bringing Christ in. He cannot say, "Husbands, love your wives" without saying what Christ was Himself, "even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it." It is no mere morality, nor a question of results.

The Christian is a person whose mind has got hold of the revelation of God by the power of the Holy Ghost. "He that is of the earth is earthly and speaketh of the earth; he that cometh from heaven is above all." The Lord says, "No man hath ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." He comes and brings from heaven the full revelation of what He knew.

This is the reason that no one received His testimony. He brings in these heavenly things: all His words were the expression of what He was, at the same time perfectly adapted to man down here, while all the fulness of the Godhead was in Him. We find in Christ that which is entirely divine and perfectly human. It is the bringing down of these heavenly things perfectly adapted to what man was on the earth; and now He sets us to walk through the world according to that which has been revealed to us. So with the servant: it is the motive power. If one say, You will be killed if you do that, my answer is, If I die, I shall only go to heaven. Earth loses its power and so does lust. "Not purloining": the commonest duties are connected with motives which take the heart above everything here.

373 There is no difficulty in the world that this principle does not rise above. You can never take a person entirely out of everything that surrounds him without a motive above them all: you may take him out of one thing or another, but not out of everything. Then the motive is everything done for Christ; and everything else is advanced and elevated because the motive is elevated. If the things in this world cease to be motives (of duties there are plenty), in the commonest things you get the soul lifted out of the world; the governing motives are above it. The Christian is thus unassailable. If men try him by pleasant and natural things, he is kept; for they are not Christ, and for him "to live is Christ."

The law brought in the authority of God, and of course it ought to have been obeyed. The law took up the relationship in which men stood with God and with one another, and said, You must walk according to these words. Duties were there, and God took man according to the way he ought to act, keeping the relationships as they stood; but there was no revelation of Himself. God's authority was there in claim, but this was not a revelation of love. Law told them what they ought to be as the means of finding out what they were. Christianity is a different thing; it is God revealed in grace, coming amongst men. What the law told was this, on the contrary: that God did not yet come out to man; and that man could not go in to God. Christianity, while fully upholding the authority of the law, is just the opposite: God did come out; and man is gone in.

The law was not an arbitrary thing, but the commandment was holy, just and good. The apostle, as touching the righteousness which is in the law, was "blameless"; but the moment the law added this, "Thou shalt not lust," to the perfect rule from God for a man where he was, it might as well have said, You must not be a man, for man was already fallen and a sinner. God added that to the rule of ordinary relationships, and it reaches the conscience.

But Christianity tests man in another way, namely by the very revelation of God. God did come out in blessed perfect grace and unutterable goodness; His Son became a man. Still it was the revelation of God, and men would not have God, but they rejected and crucified Him. Now the condition of man is proved; the judgment of the world is pronounced. "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin." "Now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father."

374 Man was thus fully tested. A nation was taken up to try thorough agriculture of the human heart; but it brought forth sour grapes. Then God said, I have yet one Son, it may be they will reverence Him when they see Him. But said they, "This is the heir, come let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours."

Christianity is the testimony that man is lost. You have thus the rejection of Christ bringing in the condition of the whole world before God. Not only is man out of paradise; but he has turned God out of the world. In the cross, in which man shewed his enmity to God, the blessed work of redemption was wrought, the

sacrifice put away sin was accomplished, and man has gone into glory. As the law was the testing of man as a child of Adam, so in the gospel I have now got the "Second man" - much more than a man, of course - gone into glory. The more we meditate on the cross, the more we see the place where sin above all was manifested, the place where obedience was perfected. Sin was at the highest point, and there was the absolute perfection of obedience; I see sin where obedience is perfected. Christ was there glorifying God in the place of sin. There was the absolute perfection of obedience, and the absolute completion of man's sin. Where was judgment shewn in its fullest character? Not in the condition of the sinner, but in Christ made sin for us. The perfect love of God was shewn there; what man is, was shewn there, what Christ was, what God was also in judgment against sin.

But the consequence of the cross is that man is in glory, and believers are justified and cleansed through Christ's blood, all cleared and cleansed. Then the Holy Ghost comes down, dwells in them, and connects them with the Man in glory. Paul first sees Christ in the glory; he did not lose Him in the clouds like the others, but he saw Him first in the glory beyond the clouds. "Delivering thee," in Acts 26:17, means taking thee out from among "the people and from the Gentiles": he was neither Jew nor Gentile; he was completely associated with Christ in glory. The gospel went out to every creature, coming out from heaven on the ground that Christ is in heaven.

375 The Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shews them to you. All your relationships as a Christian are in heaven. Thus is where the Christian is in these verses in Titus. He has the Holy Ghost to go according to the heavenly Christ; he looks back to what I have been speaking of; he stands between the first coming and the second, having a clear apprehension of the effect of the first and also of the second. This is not prophecy at all, which foretells things coming on the earth: there is no prophecy of heaven. Prophecy refers to the government of this world. Hence John the Baptist says, that he was talking of things on the earth. When Christ came He told them heavenly things, and, having been sacrificed to put away sin, by the baptism of the Holy Ghost associates with Himself there.

The Christian is a person who has the Holy Ghost and who stands between the first coming and the second. Israel is a witness of God's dealings on the earth; the Christian is a witness of His sovereign grace that gives man a place in heaven. Prophecy told of a day of darkness coming on the earth. "We have also the word of prophecy more sure whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a candle that shineth in a dark place." A candle is a very useful thing. What do you get in the Revelation? Trumpets, seals, vials, all judgment; but this prophecy is my candle, and I see where all evil will end. It is all very useful as a warning; but when Christ as the day star dawns in my heart, it is attracted out, it is of the place. "I will come and receive you unto myself - that is in heaven! The Lord teaches us to look for Him in affection: we are converted to this - "to wait for his Son from heaven"; we are not converted to prophecy Grace has appeared, and it teaches us to look for the glory of His appearing. Compare verse 11 with 13.

It is hard for us first to feel, "In me, that is in my flesh dwelleth no good thing," and next, to know that the world is judged.

The gospel is grace addressed to the lost, not probation to see how I shall turn out. It has turned out that I loved every vanity better than Christ, that is, in short, that I am lost.

The flowers of human nature are often no less pretty: the blossoms on the crab are as pretty as those of the apple. Character is not the question, but motive. A cross man may be breaking his heart about his temper (there is the same difference in dogs; of course an amiable dog is much pleasanter to meet than a

cross dog). It is conscience, not character at its best, which shews I have had to do with God. In the gospel I find what I am, and what God is; I have found a grace which has met man in this state. The gospel turns me from what I am right over to what God is to the lost. I am guilty by what I have done; I am lost by what I am. The fullest grace comes in; but grace connects me with the fullest salvation. The Saviour has come to deliver me out of the condition I am in. All I have done, all my condition as a child of Adam, I am completely done with; I have got to the end of myself. Salvation is a big word. I have my place in the Man that is gone into paradise above, not in the man that was turned out of paradise on earth. That is the way grace appears: it is not help; it is salvation, the blood of Christ the ground of it. I get sins sent away, the conscience made perfect, and Christ always appearing in the presence of God for me: there is not an instant of my life as a believer that Christ is not before God for me. I am now a man saved, justified, cleansed, made the temple of the Holy Ghost. There I stand in that Man in glory.

376 Now the Christian is taught by grace - "Teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." I am redeemed out of the world, but I have got to walk through it. How did the present world come? God never made this world or age (of course I do not mean the physical world), He made paradise. Sin and the devil made this world; for morally speaking God did not make it. Cain goes out from the presence of Jehovah; he settles, when a vagabond, in the land of his vagabondage, and builds a city. Next, the city must be a pleasant place; what harm was there in brass and iron? None whatever; but there was a great deal of harm in going out of the presence of Jehovah. What harm was there in the trees of the garden? If you bring in God and Christ in speaking to the men of the world, they will turn you out; they say, It is not the time for it. Well, it may not be; but it is never the time with man to bring Christ in. The world is all built up away from God; man will not have God come into it.

You have the whole life of the Christian practically summed up in three words, "soberly, righteously, and godly": "soberly" with self-restraint; "righteously" as regards others; "godly" with God. In this new place, with new motives, he is to live in the power of his new life; he has an object out of the world.

377 Faith, human faith, is always the spring by which anything in this world is done; God gives me what is divine. A man is always what his object is; if Christ is a man's object, he is a Christian. "That I may win Christ," this was Paul's object He had found the blessed Son of God willing to become a man to save him; he is looking for Him; he wants to see the One that loved him.

I am not speaking of doctrine, of an item of knowledge, but of what I am converted to; it is the thing for which a man is converted, the object. As I have borne the image of the earthy, I am going to bear the image of the heavenly. I am going to be with Him, and I want to be like Him. You will find this strikingly as the hope of the Christian; and so the Lord never says a word that goes beyond the present life; He takes care not to put His coming in a shape to make it necessarily more distant. The virgins that fall asleep are the same virgins that awake; this is the principle. The servants the lord gave the talents to are the same servants with whom he reckons. That in the seven churches we have history I do not doubt; but does He give it as history? No, He takes care to give seven churches then before Him; He will never sanction the heart making a delay. You are to live as you would live if you were expecting Him every day. Whether changed or raised, then we shall be with Christ and like Christ. Christ will be satisfied; so shall I. The thought and purpose of God is to have us like Himself and with Himself. He is still gathering out souls. But on the other hand we are to be as men that wait for their Lord." If a mother is expecting her son from America, she is always expecting him, for she loves him. When a person is really waiting for Christ, he has the room of his heart ready for Him. He has given Himself to have us for Himself, with hearts united,

gathered up, to Him; a peculiar people, a people of possession, manifesting the character of God in grace till He display it in glory.

Now, beloved brethren, where are we? Can we say, "This present evil world," not in hardness as if we did not once belong to it, but as the world that has rejected Christ, and of which Satan is the prince? The world is not only a sinful world outside the earthly paradise, but a world that rejected Christ when He came into it.

378 The things I shall have in heaven are to form my heart now. Our hearts are so dim to see these heavenly things, but it is God's thought to reveal them to us. "Now we see through a glass darkly" - true, but we see the same things. 1 Corinthians 2, often quoted to prove I cannot know them, really proves I can. "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." Christianity says He has revealed them all. Quite true, it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive them. In the Old Testament they did not know them (of course not); but the Holy Ghost has come down to reveal them to us. The veil is rent, the way into the holiest of all is manifest. There is a perfect contrast as to the condition of the saint now. I am associated with Him now; I know I shall be like Him then. He has become a man for the very purpose to have me with Him in glory. I know that righteousness is there, and through the Spirit I am waiting for the hope of righteousness by faith (that is, for glory), for Him to bring me actually there. I am so identified with Christ that, when He appears, I shall appear with Him in glory.

Has this power over our hearts? Are your hearts settled as to the perfectness of His work? Is there such love to Him that you wait for Him who loves you?

The Lord give us in these last days to have hearts thus watching, taking His word, and clinging to it. This gives us what is heavenly, and perfectly suited to us while here.

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