

# To Live - Christ

by John Nelson Darby

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a life of occupation with Christ, where every avenue of the soul is guarded and under the watchful care of the Spirit.*

**Scripture:** Ephesians 2:8, Philippians 1:21, Philippians 2:5, Philippians 3:14, Philippians 4:13

**Topics:** "Living For Christ", "Spiritual Growth"

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## Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the essence of living a life centered on Christ as depicted in the Epistle to the Philippians. He explains that salvation is a journey to be attained, urging believers to work out their salvation while recognizing their standing in Christ, which is free from the corruption of the flesh. Darby highlights the importance of spiritual growth and the responsibility that comes with being in Christ, encouraging believers to live in a way that magnifies Christ in their lives. He reminds the congregation that while they face temptations and challenges, they have the power of the Holy Spirit to guide them and the assurance of God's faithfulness to complete the work He has begun in them.

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## Transcript

This Epistle to the Philippians leads into a very peculiar apprehension of the Christian path. Its object is not doctrine, but Christian experience, and it is well for our souls to look it in the face and see how far our spirit and thought and mind answer to it day by day.

In this epistle salvation is always put at the end of the path as a thing to be attained - "that I may win Christ." This is an important principle for our souls. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," always looking to the end; and we have first to see that we are set in the place of redemption to run to the end of our course.

At the same time you will see a power brought in that supposes that in running we shall always be glorifying Christ, and above the circumstances.

I will say here that there is always an exercise of soul which goes on before we know redemption, and there is a distinct and definite responsibility under which we lie as Christians - not the responsibility of the first man, which inevitably ends in judgment. Our responsibility as sinners refers to acceptance, but that is settled completely: we are accepted in the Beloved. Now the responsibilities are ours as Christians, and duties always flow from the place in which we are already set.

As to man's condition, we get the truth that we are all lost, but souls individually go through a process shorter or longer before owning this, before submitting themselves to the righteousness of God. It may be learnt suddenly, or it may be a long time about, but the soul has to recognise this, that the flesh is utterly corrupt. "In me, that is, in my flesh, there dwells no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . And when I would do good evil is present with me."

198 As regards our standing in Adam as sinners, we are redeemed out of it into Christ, accepted in the Beloved, and the believer is in a standing and condition which is made for him in Christ. "At that day" (the Lord said) "ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you." Now, that is the only true Christian peace. The angels see us in Christ up there; Christ is in us down here. Do those around us see it, and does the world see it?

The exercises of soul which precede this are all most valuable and useful to thoroughly teach us that our standing is not in the flesh, and we then get settled peace by knowing it. We put our seal to the truth of God in the judgment He passed upon us, and our souls now having divine light say, "In me is no good thing." Not only as a doctrine of Scripture, but in the presence of God we have to own that we cannot stand a moment in His sight. And here we get another thing, that the sins of the flesh were borne by Christ on the cross and put away for ever.

Again, Christ glorified God, and is as man on high sending the Comforter down to dwell in us, so that I can say my standing is no more in the flesh, in the first Adam at all, but in the second Adam.

Well, now there is a responsibility that flows from that condition. You find in this epistle the effect produced by the Spirit of God in the Christian when he is in the place, and we have to judge whether we are using this true liberty as those who are alive to God from among the dead.

199 Sin is never mentioned in this epistle. It is not that the flesh is altered in Paul or made better - it never grows better. In many things we all offend, and Paul had a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him, to keep the flesh down. But this epistle shows us that a power has come in and dwells in us, which leaves us always without excuse if there is a thought that is contrary to the Spirit of God.

It is not always at the given moment we have the power to resist, but why not? Because I do not put my armour on. But whose fault is that?

There may be liberty of heart with God and confidence in Him to say I am a child of God through Christ Jesus. I have got my place, a place which is the riches of God's mercy, but is there found growth? "Growing up into Him in all things which is the Head." He has given me a place with His Son. He has given me to be in His Son, that He may unfold His glory through the countless ages of eternity - now through the Holy Ghost, and hereafter in glory. We have to enjoy this in Him. Our place is in the last Adam in righteousness. He has redeemed us out of the condition we were in. I am in Christ, and He is in the presence of God for me, and I am in the world for Him. That is where God has set us. The old man is reckoned dead. "Ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him."

And yet as a matter of fact we have the flesh to contend with, and we have to go through a scene where everything is temptation; consequently the character we take is that of overcoming and realising the presence of God in the midst of evil. Uniform, constant, unvarying superiority over the evil is the striking characteristic of the apostle's path in this epistle.

200 Now look at your own hearts, and you will find that in the course of this very day, in many things, looking within it has not been the life of Christ. You could not say as to them, "To me to live is Christ." I assume that it is the purpose of your heart to do so, but from hour to hour during the day there have perhaps been heaps of things travelling over the road of your soul that Christ never let in there and that the Spirit of God could not approve.

The leper in the Old Testament was first cleansed by water, and then the blood was put on the right ear, the thumb of the right hand, and the great toe of the right foot, afterwards being anointed by the oil put upon the blood. This is a beautiful type - every avenue of the soul guarded, all under the watchful care of the Spirit. But in looking within ourselves we shall find there is that which had passed the blood. We had forgotten "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus."

There is such an occupation of heart with Christ, such a fear of God, and such a walking in the practical guardianship of the Spirit, that a man is able to say, like the apostle, "For me to live is Christ." There is the power of the Spirit of God to lead the Christian through the race, that he may apprehend that for which he is also apprehended of Christ Jesus. Now in every respect you are called upon to have the mind which was in Christ Jesus, always willing to go down - humble - for it is graciousness, the grace of Christ, we get here.

201 In Philippians 1 he is determined that Christ shall be magnified in his body; in Philippians 2 there is the humility; in Philippians 3, energy; in Philippians 4, superiority to circumstances.

The apostle never mentions sin. Christ has run the race, and is set down to show us where the course leads to, that we may have the eye and heart where He is - on the end. That is what we are called to. "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." Christ has set Himself apart in the glory, and the Spirit of God takes Him and unfolds Him to us, that we may be like Him, expressing the same mind which was in Him.

There is positive progress growing up in Him, but no such thing as growing meetness for heaven. Growth is pressed upon us, but you will never find Scripture mingling the two things, meetness and growth. The thief on the cross was as meet for heaven as Paul was. Not that God will overlook Paul's labours. No! but it is that in Christ we are always meet for the glory of God.

We have to get the perception that we are taken clean out of the place we were in. Christ is our life and Christ is our righteousness. We are called to walk (with the blood on the ear) with Him, watching against every inconsistent thing. "He which hath begun a good work in you shall perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." It is not merely that we are perfect in Christ, but He has begun a work; and the moment it speaks of the path to the glory, the wilderness path, there are "ifs" of every kind. You get the wanderings, the failures, the murmurings, but with these the faithfulness of God.

202 The armour is there for us, the strength is there also, to lead us to the end. We want that armour, we want that strength; there is danger, and yet I have the consciousness of being in Christ and Christ in me. It is not the path I have to run, but the dangers I have to meet. God says, You must be dependent on Me. You will need to be kept, but, do not mix up the two things, and because you have conflict in Canaan say that you are still in Egypt. There was no conflict in Egypt. God suits Himself so blessedly to His people. In Egypt, in their bondage, He comes as their Deliverer. In the wilderness He is with them to guide them night and day by the fiery cloudy pillar, and feed them with manna when they longed for the fleshpots of Egypt. When they have to turn back on the borders of the promised land, through want of faith to enter it,

God turns back with them and dwells in a tabernacle. After forty years, when they get to the land and are to have conflict, there is the angel with the drawn sword; and when they are settled in the land He builds a house like one of the palaces of the great ones of the earth.

When I think of redemption it is no question of conflict, it is a delivering God who can completely deliver us out of the place we were in, but He will go through the wilderness with you, He will humble you, He will prove you; you will have to learn what you are, but also prove what He is. That is a different thing from redemption. If we have passed the Red Sea we have done with Egypt; and if I do not see this it may be with me as with Israel, who said, "Because there were no graves in Egypt hast thou brought us to die in the wilderness?" But God said, "I bare you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself." Have you not found the need of grace? He feeds with manna; He provides the garments that wax not old, He meets the need, and He carried the children of Israel through the wilderness for the double purpose, so to speak, to learn what they were and to learn what He was. He was always faithful. There is the discovery of what we are (with correction of course), but always the blessed discovery of what He is. I shall find conflict, and I shall have to go back to Gilgal, where the reproach of Egypt was rolled away, for that is the true circumcision of the flesh. Thus we learn in this way, whether in the wilderness or in conflict, what we are and what God is.

203 While we are going through the path here we have all the infirmity of the flesh, the dangers and the temptations, but we have the power of God. We get heaps of warnings and "ifs" when it is a question of our getting to the end, but never such a word as "if" applied to the faithfulness of God: "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." The very process is to take us off ourselves back practically to absolute dependence upon absolute faithfulness, so that there is growth.

Paul was not perfect; no one is. He had been four years in prison, chained to a soldier, but he was making request for the Philippians, with joy and with the confident sense that they had him on their heart, acknowledging the love that led them to send help to him a thousand miles away, and he was persuaded that God would accomplish His work in them.

204 All this humbles us and shows us what the world is. We may learn it slowly or quickly; if slowly we shall learn self, but if we walk with God we learn to trust Him. If we walk with self we learn ourselves and our need of Him, but we do not learn to trust Him. Like a careless child feeling the need of his father, but not knowing or trusting him. If I live with my friend I get to know what he is as my friend.

As regards the path we get every kind of warning and "ifs" on our side, but on God's side there are no "ifs." "He will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Surely what blessedness to say we are walking in the light because Christ has rent the veil, and as children of light we ought to be able to know in a higher sense than Israel that wherever we go He will be "a little sanctuary" to us. Is He to us a sanctuary? We look out on the world, what is it? Instead of its being between me and God I have got God between the world and me. We have the secret of the Lord, and go on through the world with the light that He gives. It is a comfort if we are walking with God, to be leaning on One who never leaves me. He restores my soul in failure and leads me in the paths of righteousness. If the heart is getting cold, not walking freely and simply with Him as it should do, remember there is Divine power and Divine grace. Recollect this, "He restoreth my soul." He will bring me back to Himself in the light and joy of His presence.

We get in this epistle a lively recollection of all the good that is in the saints - he enters into all the details of it. There is the power of individualising which grace gives. Now, where the soul is with God these are

constantly kept fresh; it is filled with the recollection of the grace that is in the saints. "It is meet," he writes, "to think this of you all, because you have me in your heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye are all partakers of my grace." This is the external means used by the Spirit of God to link the Church together. Instead of the wretched flesh jostling one against another, there is the lively recollection of all that is good, and a knitting together of the hearts by these means. It wakes up the grace that produces the kindness - not merely the kindness. And another thing we see, he is not afraid to express his praise of them or the feelings of his own heart towards them - a thing which I often find most difficult. He has true liberty to speak, being with the Lord in spirit and simple before Him. "God is my record, how greatly I long after you in the bowels of Jesus Christ," etc.

205 It is this, in a great measure, made me take up this chapter: "That your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment." Is that the idea we have before us? He expects not only the love and desire on their part, but that there should be also spiritual intelligence. If I were perfectly spiritual I should know what to do in all things. And this is set before us. We are set to be witnesses of Christ, and we are the epistle of Christ, not we ought to be. And just as men read in the children of Israel the law and the ten commandments, so ought men now to read Christ in us - Christ engraved, as it were, in you. It does not say you ought to be what He was then, but you ought to walk as He walked. How impossible, if I am walking with Christ, realising Him, is it that I shall not know the mind of God as to everything! Did not He walk with Him without a cloud? We should be yielding our bodies as living sacrifices to Him.

206 This is not merely that I will not do wrong, but that which is the perfect will of God. It is the knowledge of Christ and of the mind of God proving what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. If He does not expect this of us, why then does He put it? He does expect it of us, that we should have this knowledge of Him, and walk as He walked down here. (vv. 9, 10.) It is not saying, That is wrong; or, There is no harm in that; but it is knowing the perfect will of God.

He that is holy, He that is true, is the character that Christ takes in addressing the Church of Philadelphia; and in these last days nothing is more important than to see Him thus, if you care to be kept out of that terrible day of sifting. He says, I am holy, I am true; you must walk with Me like that. He to whom Christ is all will say, Well, I am not to deny His Name outwardly, nor in anything; I am knit to Him. It requires patience, a broken will, and it requires a sense of our own nothingness; but it is a path of unmixed blessing and of nearness to Christ, and it is the power of hope. He is leading me on in my path, and whatever removes the film from my eyes to see my path clear removes the film from my eye to see Him clearly. When you have the responsibility of the world or the Church, you are referred to the day of Christ. When you get the privileges of the Christian, you have the rapture of the Church - that is, the fruit of completed redemption. We shall be like Christ, and Paul cannot be better than that. But when responsibility comes in we get the reward of labour: and what He looks for is that we should be sincere and without offence. Can we say "without offence" through this past week? You have a nature which has the desires; you have the life of Christ and the faithfulness of God to keep you; now how far can you say with all that, I am walking sincerely and without offence? Paul was no better than others as to flesh or nature - the tree is bad; but there was nothing that soiled his conscience. He had not indeed already attained, neither was already perfect, but he followed after. It is not the mere existence of flesh that gives me a bad conscience, but the letting it act. It is like a mischievous madman in a house. I must keep him locked up or he will do mischief.

207 We have to be sincere and without offence "according to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I may be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death." It always had been his hope and always would be. Oh, if we could say

this - Christ magnified! The Lord give us to have the eye upon Him, discerning things (that differ) that are excellent, that we may walk so as to glorify Him in our bodies. Would it not make your heart happy to say, "Always so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body?" Well, I say, is there watchfulness to make it so? You are called to walk with that blessed object before you; is there not power in Him? You can't say, No!

208 It is a thing there will be no opportunity for in heaven. It is here He expects His people to be the living witnesses in the world of what He is to them. Would that our hearts may believe there is power in Him for that. My grace is sufficient for thee. My strength is made perfect in weakness. But we have to remember that the strength is in Him, not in us. May the living earnest desire of our hearts be to glorify Christ, and from moment to moment carrying Christ in our hearts, to do our duties to Christ and for Christ, so that His life may be manifested in our mortal bodies.

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