

Reckoning of Faith (Reading)

by Watchman Nee

Watchman Nee emphasizes the importance of knowing our identity in Christ as the basis for reckoning ourselves dead to sin and living in the reality of that truth.

Duration: 28:31

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 6:6-7, Romans 6:11, 1 John 3:9

Topics: "Faith And Doubt", "Spiritual Deliverance"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of believing in the intangible facts of the spiritual realm rather than relying solely on the tangible facts of the natural realm. He explains that deliverance from sin does not mean that sin is eradicated completely, but rather that it is rooted out as a principle within us. The preacher uses examples from everyday life, such as painting a landscape or telling a story, to illustrate that complete accuracy is often difficult to achieve. However, he highlights the reliability of arithmetic as a fact that remains consistent regardless of location or time. The sermon concludes by addressing the temptation to doubt the divine facts and emphasizes the need to hold firm to the truth revealed by God's word.

Transcript

We now come to a matter on which there has been some confusion of thought among the Lord's children. It concerns what follows this knowledge. Note again, first of all, the wording of Romans chapter six, verse six.

Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him. The tense of the verb is most precious, for it puts the event right back there in the past. It is final, once for all.

The thing has been done, and cannot be undone. Our old man has been crucified once and forever, and he can never be uncrucified. This is what we need to know.

Then when we know this, what follows? Look again at our passage. The next command is in verse 11. Even so, reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin.

This clearly is the natural sequence to verse six. Read them together. Knowing that our old man was crucified, reckon ye yourselves to be dead.

That is the order. When we know that our old man has been crucified with Christ, then the next step is to reckon it so. Unfortunately, in presenting the truth of our union with Christ, the emphasis has too often been placed upon this second matter of reckoning ourselves to be dead, as though that were the starting point, whereas it should rather be upon knowing ourselves to be dead.

God's word makes it clear that knowing is to precede reckoning. Knowing this, reckon. The sequence is most important.

Our reckoning must be based on knowledge of divinely revealed fact, for otherwise faith has no foundation on which to rest. When we know, then we reckon spontaneously. So in teaching this matter, we should not overemphasize reckoning.

People are always trying to reckon without knowing. They have not first had a spirit-given revelation of the fact, yet they try to reckon, and soon they get into all sorts of difficulties. When temptation comes, they begin to reckon furiously.

I am dead, I am dead, I am dead. But in the very act of reckoning, they lose their temper. Then they say, it doesn't work.

Romans 6, verse 11 is no good. We have to admit that this verse 11 is no good without verse six. So it comes to this, that unless we know for a fact that we are dead with Christ, the more we reckon, the more intense will the struggle become, and the issue will be sure defeat.

For years after my conversion, I had been taught to reckon. I reckoned from 1920 until 1927. The more I reckoned that I was dead to sin, the more alive I clearly was.

I simply could not believe myself dead, and I could not produce the death. Whenever I sought help from others, I was told to read Romans chapter six, verse 11. And the more I read Romans 6, 11 and tried to reckon, the further away death was.

I could not get at it. I fully appreciated the teaching that I must reckon, but I could not make out why nothing resulted from it. I have to confess that for months I was troubled.

I said to the Lord, if this is not clear, if I cannot be brought to see this, which is so very fundamental, I will cease to do anything. I will not preach anymore. I will not go out to serve thee anymore.

I want first of all to get thoroughly clear here. For months I was seeking, and at times I fasted, but nothing came through. I remember one morning, that morning was a real morning, and one I can never forget.

I was upstairs sitting at my desk, reading the word and praying, and I said, Lord, open my eyes. And then in a flash I saw it. I saw my oneness with Christ.

I saw that I was in him, that when he died, I died. I saw that the question of my death was a matter of the past, and not of the future, and that I was just as truly dead as he was, because I was in him when he died. The whole thing had dawned upon me.

I was carried away with such joy at this great discovery that I jumped from my chair and cried, praise the Lord, I am dead. I ran downstairs and met one of the brothers helping in the kitchen and laid hold of him. Brother, I said, do you know that I have died? I must admit he looked puzzled.

What do you mean, he said. So I went on, do you not know that Christ has died? Do you not know that I died with him? Do you not know that my death is no less truly a fact than his? Oh, it was so real to me. I longed to go through the streets of Shanghai shouting the news of my discovery.

From that day to this, I have never for one moment doubted the finality of that word. I have been crucified with Christ. I do not mean to say that we need not work that out.

Yes, there is an outworking of the death which we are going to see presently. But this, first of all, is the basis of it. I have been crucified.

It has been done. What then is the secret of reckoning? To put it in one word, it is revelation. We need revelation from God himself.

We need to have our eyes open to the fact of our union with Christ. That is something more than knowing it as a doctrine. Such revelation is no vague, indefinite thing.

Most of us can remember the day when we saw clearly that Christ died for us. And we ought to be equally clear as to the time when we saw that we died with Christ. It shall be nothing hazy, but very definite.

For it is with this as basis that we shall go on. It is not that I reckon myself to be dead and therefore I will be dead. It is that because I am dead, because I see now what God has done with me in Christ, therefore I reckon myself to be dead.

That is the right kind of reckoning. It is not reckoning toward death, but from death. What does reckoning mean? Reckoning in Greek means doing accounts, bookkeeping.

Accounting is the only thing in the world we human beings can do correctly. An artist paints a landscape. Can he do it with perfect accuracy? Can the historian vouch for the absolute accuracy of any record or the map maker over the perfect correctness of any map? They can make at best fair approximations.

Even in everyday speech, when we try to tell some incident with the best intention to be honest and truthful, we cannot speak with complete accuracy. It is mostly a case of exaggeration or understatement of one word too much or too little. What then can a man do that is utterly reliable? Arithmetic.

There is no scope for error there. One chair plus one chair equals two chairs. That is true in London and it's true in Cape Town.

If you travel west to New York or east to Singapore, it is still the same. All the world over and for all time, one plus one equals two. One plus one is two in heaven and earth and hell.

Why does God say we are to reckon ourselves dead? Because we are dead. Let us keep to the analogy of accounting. Suppose I have 15 shillings in my pocket.

What do I enter in my account book? Can I enter 14 shillings and sixpence or 15 shillings and sixpence? No. I must enter in my account book that which is in fact in my pocket. Accounting is the reckoning of facts, not fancies.

Even so, it is because I am really dead that God tells me to account it so. God couldn't ask me to put down in my account book what was not true. He could not ask me to reckon that I am dead if I am still alive.

For such mental gymnastics, the word reckoning would be inappropriate. We might rather speak of misconning. God tells us to reckon ourselves dead, not that by the process of reckoning we may become dead, but because we are dead.

He never told us to reckon what was not a fact. Having said then that revelation leads spontaneously to reckoning, we must not lose sight of the fact that we are presented with a command. Reckon ye.

There is a definite attitude to be taken. God asks us to do the account, to put down I have died, and then to abide by it. Why? Because it is a fact.

When the Lord Jesus was on the cross, I was there in him. Therefore, I reckon it to be true. I reckon and declare that I have died in him.

Paul said, reckon ye also yourselves to be dead under sin, but alive unto God. How is this possible? In Christ Jesus. Never forget that it is always and only true in Christ.

If you look at yourself, you will think death is not there, but it is a question of faith, not in yourself, but in him. You look to the Lord and know what he has done. Lord, I believe in thee.

I reckon upon the fact in thee. What is faith? Faith is my acceptance of God's fact. It always has its foundations in the past.

What relates to the future is hope rather than faith. Although faith often has its object or goal in the future, as in Hebrews 11, perhaps for this reason the word chosen here is reckon. It is a word that relates only to the past, to what we look back to as settled and not forward to as yet to be.

This is the kind of faith described in Mark 11, verse 24. All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them and ye shall have them. The statement there is that if you believe that you already have received your requests, that is, of course, in Christ, then you shall have them.

To believe that you may get something or that you can get it or even that you will get it is not faith in the sense meant here. This is faith, to believe that you have already got it. Only that which relates to the past is faith in this sense.

Those who say God can or God may or God must or God will, do not necessarily believe at all. Faith always says God has done it. When therefore do I have faith in regard to my crucifixion? Not when I say God can or will or must crucify me, but when with joy I say praise God in Christ, I am crucified.

For us then, the two greatest facts in history are these, that all our sins are dealt with by the blood and that we ourselves are dealt with by the cross. But what now of the matter of temptation? What is to be our attitude when after we have seen and believed these facts, we discover the old desires rising up again? Worse still, what if we fall once more into known sin? What if we lose our temper? Or worse, is the whole position set forth above proved thereby to be false? Now remember, one of the devil's main objects is always to make us doubt the divine facts. After we have seen by revelation of the spirit of God that we are indeed dead with Christ and have reckoned it so, he will come and say, there is something moving inside, what about it? Can you call this death? When that happens, what will be our answer? The crucial test is just here.

Are you going to believe the tangible facts of the natural realm, which are clearly before your eyes, or the intangible facts of the spiritual realm, which are neither seen nor scientifically proved? Now we must be careful. It is important for us to recall again what are facts stated in God's word for faith to lay hold of and what are not. How does God state that deliverance is effected? Well, in the first place, we are not told that sin as a principle in us is rooted out or removed.

To reckon on that will be to miscalculate altogether and find ourselves in the false position of the man we considered earlier, who tried to put down the 12 shillings in his pocket as 15 shillings in his account book. No, sin is not eradicated. It is very much there and given the opportunity will overpower us and cause us to commit sins again, whether consciously or unconsciously.

That is why we shall always need to know the operation of the precious blood. But whereas we know that in dealing with sins committed, God's method is direct, to blot them out of remembrance by means of the blood. When we come to the principle of sin and the matter of deliverance from its power, we find instead that God deals with this indirectly.

He does not remove the sin, but the sinner. Our old man was crucified with him and because of this, the body, which before had been a vehicle of sin, is unemployed. Sin, the old master, is still about, but the slave who served him has been put to death and so is out of reach and his members are unemployed.

The gambler's hand is unemployed. The swearer's tongue is unemployed. And these members are now available to be used instead as instruments of righteousness unto God.

Thus we can say that deliverance from sin is a more scriptural idea than victory over sin. The expressions freed from sin and dead unto sin in Romans chapter six, verses seven and 11 imply deliverance from a power that is still very present and very real, not from something that no longer exists. Sin is still there, but we are knowing deliverance from its power in increasing measure day by day.

This deliverance is so real that John can boldly write, whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin. He cannot sin, which is however a statement that wrongly understood may easily mislead us. By it, John is not telling us that sin is now no longer in our history and that we shall not again commit sin.

He is saying that to sin is not in the nature of that which is born of God. The life of Christ has been planted in us by new birth and its nature is not to commit sin. But there is a great difference between the nature and the history of a thing.

And there is a great difference between the nature of the life within us and our history. To illustrate this, though the illustration is an inadequate one, we might say that wood cannot sink, but it is not in its nature to do so. But of course in history it will do so if a hand holds it under water.

The history is a fact, just as sins in our history are historic facts, but the nature is a fact also and so is the new nature that we have received in Christ. What is in Christ cannot sin. What is in Adam can sin and will do so whenever Satan is given a chance to exert his power.

So it is a question of our choice of which facts we will count upon and live by, the tangible facts of daily experience or the mightier facts that we are now in Christ. The power of his resurrection is on our side and the whole might of God is at work in our salvation. But the matter still rests upon our making real in history what is true in divine fact.

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen, and the things which are not seen are eternal. I think we all know that Hebrews 11 verse one is the only definition of faith in the New Testament or indeed in the scriptures. It is important that we should really understand that definition.

You are familiar with the common English translation of these words, describing faith as the substance of things hoped for. However, the word in the Greek has in it the sense of an action, not just of something, a substance. And I confess I personally spent a number of years trying to find a correct word to translate this.

But the new translation of J. N. Darvey is especially good in regard to this word. Faith is the substantiating of things hoped for. That is much better.

It implies the making of them real in experience. How do we substantiate something? We are doing so every day. We cannot live in the world without doing so.

Do you know the difference between substance and substantiating? A substance is an object, something before me. Substantiating means that I have a certain power or faculty that makes that substance to be real to me. Let us take a simple illustration.

By means of our senses, we can take things of the world of nature and transfer them into our consciousness so that we can appreciate them. Sight and hearing, for example, are two of my faculties which substantiate to me the world of light and sound. We have colors, red, yellow, green, blue, violet, and these colors are real things.

But if I shut my eyes, then to me the color is no longer real. It is simply nothing to me. With my faculty of sight, however, I possess the power to substantiate.

And by that power, yellow becomes yellow to me. It is not only that the color is there, but I have the power to substantiate it. I have the power to make that color true to me and to give it reality in my consciousness.

That is the meaning of substantiating. Of course, we cannot substantiate divine things with any of our natural senses. But there is one faculty which can substantiate the things hoped for, the things of Christ, and that is faith.

Faith makes the real things to become real in my experience. Faith substantiates to me the things of Christ. Hundreds of thousands of people are reading Romans 6.6, our old man was crucified with him.

To faith it is true. To doubt or to mere mental assent apart from spiritual illumination, it is not true. Let us remember again that we are dealing here not with promises, but with facts.

The promises of God are revealed to us by his spirit that we may lay hold of them. But facts are facts. And they remain facts whether we believe them or not.

If we do not believe the facts of the cross, they still remain as real as ever. But they are valueless to us. It does not need faith to make these things real in themselves.

But faith can substantiate them and make them real in our experience. Whatever contradicts the truth of God's word, we are to regard as the devil's lie. Not because it may not be in itself a very real fact to our senses, but because God has stated a greater fact before which the other must eventually yield.

I once had an experience which, though not applicable in detail to the present matter, illustrates this principle. Some years ago I was ill. For six nights I had high fever and could find no sleep.

Then at length God gave me from the scripture a personal word of healing. And because of this, I expected all symptoms of sickness to vanish at once. Instead of that, not a wink of sleep could I get.

And I was not only sleepless, but more restless than ever. My temperature rose higher, my pulse beat faster, and my head ached more severely than before. The enemy asked, where is God's promise? Where is your faith? What about all your prayers? So I was tempted to thrash the whole matter out in prayer again, but was rebuked.

And this scripture came to mind, thy word truth. If God's word is truth, I thought, then what are these symptoms? They must all be lies. So I declared to the enemy, this sleeplessness is a lie.

This headache is a lie, this fever is a lie. This high pulse is a lie. In view of what God has said to me, all these symptoms of sickness are just your lies.

And God's word to me is truth. In five minutes I was asleep, and I woke the following morning perfectly well. Now of course, in a particular personal matter such as the above, it might be quite possible for me to deceive myself as to what God had said.

But of the fact of the cross, there can never be any such question. We must believe God, no matter how convincing Satan's arguments appear. A skillful liar lies not only in word, but in gesture and deed.

He can as easily pass a bad coin as tell an untruth. The devil is a skillful liar, and we cannot expect him to stop at words in his lying. He will resort to lying signs and feelings and experiences in his attempts to shake us from our faith in God's word.

Let me make it clear that I do not deny the reality of the flesh. Indeed, we shall have a good deal more to say about this further on in our study. But I'm speaking here about being moved from a revealed position in Christ.

As soon as we have accepted our death with Christ as a fact, Satan will do his best to demonstrate convincingly by the evidence of our day-to-day experience that we are not dead at all, but very much alive. So we must choose. Will we believe Satan's lie or God's truth? Are we going to be governed by appearances or by what God says? Whether I feel it or not, I am dead with Christ.

How can I be sure? Because Christ has died. And since one died for all, therefore all died. Whether my experience proves it or seems to disprove it, the fact remains unchanged.

While I stand upon that fact, Satan cannot prevail against me. Remember that his attack is always upon our assurance that if he can get us to doubt God's word, then his object is secured and he has us in his power. But if we rest unshaken in the assurance of God's stated fact, assured that he cannot do injustice to his work or his word, then it does not matter what tactics Satan adopts.

If we resort to our senses to discover the truth, we shall find Satan's lies are often enough true to our experience. But if we refuse to accept as binding anything that contradicts God's word and maintain an attitude of faith in him alone, we shall find instead that Satan's lies begin to dissolve and that our experience is coming progressively to tally with that word. It is our occupation with Christ that has this

result, but it means that he becomes progressively real to us on concrete issues.

In a given situation, we see him as real righteousness, real holiness, real resurrection life for us. What we see in him objectively now operates in us subjectively, but really to manifest him in us in that situation. That is the mark of maturity.

That is what Paul means by his words to the Galatians. I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you. Faith is substantiating God's facts, and faith is always the substantiating of eternal fact, of something eternally true.

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