

A Reading on Galatians 2:19-21

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon explores the relationship between the law, Christ, and our new creation in Him, emphasizing the need to reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God.

Scripture: Galatians 2:19

Topics: "Identity in Christ", "Freedom from the Law"

Description

John Nelson Darby expounds on Galatians 2:19-21, emphasizing the relationship between the law, the cross, and the life of Christ within believers. He explains that the law reveals our inability to achieve righteousness and condemns us, but through Christ's crucifixion, we are freed from condemnation and can live a new life empowered by Him. Darby highlights the importance of recognizing our identity in Christ, being dead to sin and alive to God, and living by faith in the Son of God. He contrasts the teachings of Romans, Ephesians, and Colossians to illustrate the believer's new position and the fullness of life found in Christ. Ultimately, he encourages believers to focus on their new identity and the power of Christ in their lives.

Transcript

You get four things brought out in this passage: the law, the cross, Christ the life, and Christ the object.

First. It is the righteousness of the law; the rule and measure of what man as a child of Adam ought to be - loving God with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself, and doing nothing forbidden in the ten commandments.

People forget the character of the law; it comes and requires obedience, and pronounces a curse if you do not keep it. It is very different to come and exact a debt, and to come and pay it. The law only exacts; and the moment we have got a sense, not merely of being outward sinners, which a man may escape, but of the law reaching the inner man, it is all up with us: "sin revived and I died;" "I through the law am dead to the law." Just because the law is perfect, it says you must not have lusts; but I have when under it, and I like to gratify them too; and, if not, cannot get rid of them. Then it kills. And that is just what we want as to the old man.

But then there is another thing. If it kills, it condemns too; and that is why it is said to be a ministration of death and a ministration of condemnation. But the way God has set about it is this: "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live to God; " and the way to that is, He did it through Christ; He took the

condemnation, and I have got the death, and lost the condemnation.

He takes the law in its nature first, and through it I am dead. But being by Christ, and the crucifixion of Christ, I get the death, but not the condemnation; that Christ took; and then I am to reckon myself dead. Not merely Christ crucified for my sins, but I with Christ - the way of getting rid of the old man and the condemnation together. The old man condemned in Christ, and I dead: "What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh."

Very well then, I say, I am dead. - Then there's an end of you! - No, say I; "nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ." It is death for the old man, and I have got another life: "not I, but Christ liveth in me."

We have got thus three things spoken of: the law, the cross, and the life. Now there is the fourth, the object. "The life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." As it is said in Colossians: He is "all" as the object of life, and "in all" as the power of life.

It is the same thing here in other words. His only object in living was Christ.

What is "the faith of the Son of God"?

The faith which has Him for its object.

Is "the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ" (James 2) the same thing?

Yes. Some take it as if it were the faith Christ had; quite true, He did live by faith in perfect dependence; but when you say, "the faith of God" - which it is, where translated, "have faith in God" - you cannot take it as God's faith.

It is sweet to see how Paul's heart turns to what the Christ is whom he knows: "Who loved me, and gave himself for me." God speaks of my loving Him, but I must know first that He loved me: "Not that we loved God, but that he loved us."

It is a distinct thing to hold ourselves dead, knowing that we died with Christ, and to say he died for our sins. The Red Sea and the Jordan give us His death for us, and ours with Him. At Jordan the ark went down, and stayed there till all Israel had passed over, and then they were circumcised; the reproach of Egypt was never rolled away in the wilderness, it was at Gilgal.

What is "the reproach of Egypt"?

They were not dead - had not put off the body of the flesh. Worldliness is the reproach of Egypt; we are "dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world." If the world sticks to a Christian, he is going on as one who is not dead. It was a reproach for Israel to be in Egypt; he ought to be in Canaan. Till a person is dead and risen he does not get out of Egypt. If I see dress, money loving, etc., I see Egypt in people. There are plenty of other things, of course. I cannot bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, unless I reckon myself dead. Through Jesus, I have died with Him and am in Canaan; and then comes the practice. They went and won victories, and came back to Gilgal. So you will find with us; if one has been blessed in ministry, and does not come back there, he goes back in his soul.

Does the Red Sea go beyond forgiveness?

Yes; it is redemption: "stand still and see the deliverance of Jehovah." He is a Saviour, and He takes them out.

As to doctrine; will it go as far as Colossians?

Not quite.

As far as Romans?

Yes. But you do not get the full result in Romans.

Is the Red Sea being risen with Christ?

Yes. The Red Sea and Jordan coalesce. The wilderness is no part of the purpose of God. It is of His ways. The wilderness is not spoken of in Ex. 3 and Ex. 6, nor in Ex. 15. The Red Sea is Christ's death and resurrection, which deliver us; Jordan our death and resurrection with Him, which brings us into a new position - into Canaan. All is complete, in a certain sense, at the Red Sea - they are brought to God; but there is a new position in heavenly places not resealed there.

Where would Colossians come in?

Colossians takes a man as risen with Christ, but does not take him into heaven. In Ephesians he is in heavenly places, just where you want the armour. People do not understand what that means. The moment the Israelites cross Jordan, the man with the drawn sword meets them. Satan says: I will not have that. - But I am the Lord's host. It is no question now of saving me, but I have to act for the Lord in spiritual service.

There are two distinct things in which the Ephesians' starting point is completely different from Romans. The starting point in Romans is man's responsibility: he is guilty, all the world is guilty. There are proofs of sin both in Jew and Gentile; man is looked at as alive in sins. In Ephesians he is dead in them; a different thought altogether. Alive in sin in Romans, but, for that very reason, dead towards God - not a movement in his heart towards God. After a man is dead he neither speaks, nor moves, nor feels. I want to be dead to sin, and alive to God, and then everything changes. The point is to get sins and sin dealt with; the fruit cleared away, and the tree dead; and this is fully brought out in Romans: "Propitiation through faith in his blood;" and then, "Reckon ye yourselves dead to sin."

In Ephesians I get nothing of the responsibility at all, nor a man being justified, but the counsels of God according to the good pleasure of His will. Dead in sins, quickened together with Christ, and so you can get all the fulness of blessing in Ephesians. Christ comes into that place for us, and having put away our sins, in coming down to death, God raises us all up together. In Ephesians you do not see Christ till He is dead: "Which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenlies." It is a new creation; there is nothing about being justified, for I am a new creation.

In Colossians you get both (Col. 2); only he does not pursue it on to put us into heavenly places. "The hope laid up for you in heaven" (Col. 1:5) - not yet in heaven: "Seek those things which are above" (Col. 3:1) - seek them.

In chapter 2 you get both things: "In him dwelleth all the completeness (I put it so to connect the two words) of the Godhead." He, all the completeness of God, and I, complete in Him. "In whom also ye are

circumcised in putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." True Christian circumcision is practically realising that I have died. "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Here I get Romans and something more. Then in verse 13 I get Ephesian doctrine as to our natural state: "You, being dead in sins, hath he quickened together with him." But it is not carried on to sitting in heavenly places. In Romans he speaks of being dead with Christ, but does not go on to show us risen with Him. The moment I am risen with Christ, I am getting into the same place as Christ; not merely justified as an individual before God, but on the way into the new place of being united to Christ in heaven.

"You being dead in your sins hath he quickened together with Christ, having forgiven you all trespasses." I was dead in my sins, and Christ dies and puts them all away, and the sins I was guilty of are all gone. He has forgiven us all trespasses because He put them away; and then God comes and takes Christ, and takes me, and raises me up from the dead; and He goes further and says: "Your life is hid with Christ in God." Now you are to have your affections on things above, not on things on earth. Ephesians takes us on from having our affections in heaven, to being ourselves in heavenly places.

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