

The Gospel Without the Church

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing the gospel without the church and the need for a distinct consciousness of what people are called to, as well as the significance of the cross and the purpose of God.

Scripture: Matthew 13:47

Topics: "The Gospel", "The Church"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the critical distinction between the gospel and the church, arguing that while the gospel can be preached even amidst contention, true conversion requires a clear understanding of one's separation from the world. He warns against the dangers of worldliness infiltrating the church and stresses the importance of a heart set on heavenly things. Darby highlights that the church, in its current state, often fails to reflect the true character of Christ, leading to a loss of expectation for His return. He calls for believers to recognize their identity in Christ and to live in a way that reflects their heavenly calling, while also acknowledging the need for discernment in their relationships with other believers. Ultimately, he urges a return to the foundational truths of the gospel that elevate the believer's standing in Christ and their purpose in the world.

Transcript

J. N. Darby.

If anything has weighed on my spirit and exercised it, it has been that of which our brother has just spoken, the gospel without the church; but one broad thing we must remember is, that people preached Christ even of contention, and the apostle was glad of it. Now, if Christ be really preached, there is blessing for souls. But if I may say one thing, - though I suppose I am a coward myself, and it is a humbling thing not being more of an evangelist, - it is this, that when brethren began, and the full clear gospel did come out through their means from the word of God, a clear gospel and many important points connected with it too, it started with persons who had entirely given up the world. All those who began had broken with the world and had done with it, and therefore those who had got the church's place, and were in the vessels, naturally carried others back, by their preaching, to the source from which it really flowed. But the world is a much more treacherous thing than we are aware, and comes in by little bits.

Unless the heart is set on what is in heaven, there is nothing clear. If I have a bigger family, then I must have a bigger house, and then I must furnish it, and so the world comes in. We have to look to this as to the gospel; though many have got hold of the difference between the church and the world, they found

there was no centre for those persons, who were converted, to cling to; and there is nothing more important now than a distinct consciousness of what people are called to.

We are in the midst of a closing dispensation, but that does not alter the fact that souls have to be saved, though there is another side to the truth. Take Paul; he began dealing with heathenism, and, as he was gathering from under Satan's power, he must gather to some centre, and that centre was, in a practical sense, the church gathered to Christ. But now the church nominally is where Satan's power is. That is an immense difference. "The Lord added daily to the church," you can't say that now; that was, early at Jerusalem. One can rejoice in the preaching, for until Christ has gathered all that will be with Him in glory He can't come again. And so we all get the good of every soul that is converted as regards Christ's coming.

But the word now is, "The Lord knoweth them that are his; and let every man that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity:" we have to begin with the professing church and in a large degree, instead of seeing such as should be saved added to a visible body, leave it to the Lord's knowing them that are His. So in preaching the gospel, though I am satisfied the more we dwell on facts the more power there will be, yet we have to do with the effect and force of facts, not to announce them. You tell a Christian that Christ is risen; he knows that: what then? What is the result of it? The fact that Christ has been and is rejected by the world, and is gone to heaven, are marked and clear - and that must be made clear. But I rejoice that there is no doctrine in Scripture that is not a fact; and everybody can understand a fact, and that is the power of it.

But, to go to the Scripture that has been before us (Matthew 13:47-48), it is the net we have to deal with. We are working in the midst of a professing body with a state of things turned away from the power which God has already brought in. If a man goes out to India, or any heathen country, it is a different case. As for what is doing there, I wish there were ten thousand times as much; but what does a man who came from there tell one? "Why," he says, "some of you tell me one thing, and some of you tell me another, you must leave me to the Bible." So an old American Indian, a hundred years old, said, "Go and settle among yourselves what is right, and then come and tell me." And you have to deal with what are called churches, and can't help yourself either. Someone preaches, and "What kind of man is this that is preaching the gospel? is asked directly." "Oh, he is a brother," is the answer, and so it is and must be now; such questions do arise. Now, therefore, I have to disown all that as an entirely abnormal state of things, and go myself outside the camp. But it is there that the looseness of the gospel without the church comes in. I speak in no ill-will to anybody in saying so, God forbid.

And we are bound to recognise everybody, who is converted, as a saint; or we sin against the very principle we go on if we don't. The thing is, how to keep two things together; thorough recognition of a brother as a saint, and at the same time never to go with that which is unfaithful to Christ. A matter of discernment, of course, - a difficulty sometimes - to have your feet in the narrow path, but keep your heart as large as you can. Many, we know, who are out of the narrow path in their walk, are in bitterness against it, while their hearts are really narrow.

I was looking yesterday at the coming of the Lord, and I quite admit those who don't see it are saved; but the Lord never recognises the putting His coming beyond the life of one alive when He is speaking; the foolish virgins in Matt. 25 are the same at the end as at the beginning; although, while they are asleep, you have centuries passed over. The servants at His departure, they are the same as those He finds at His return. What I say is this, that, in losing the expectation of the coming, the church and the Christian too

have lost their true character. Not that they are not saved, but this does affect my personal conduct in the midst of the church which has so lost its character. The virgins went out to meet the bridegroom; men were converted to wait for God's Son from heaven; but if, as in the other parable, we say, "My Lord delayeth his coming," it continues he began to beat the men-servants, and to eat and to drink with the drunken: this is the truth of the condition of the professing church at large. They have lost the idea of the true unity of the body, and worldliness and hierarchical power have characterised the state of things for centuries, and they are not losing or looking for Christ's appearing. Now Paul says, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." Now that is not intelligence of a theory or of prophecy, but the practical state of a soul. It loves Christ's appearing and waits for Him; and the world has received its character as that which rejected Him, and the heart had done with it because it looked for Christ. Its fashion was nothing for the heart. But this expectation was given up, and the church lost its character in connection with that which at once detaches it from the world.

In Phil. 3, at the close of the chapter, Paul, having given up the world as all dross and dung to him, adds of some, "I tell you weeping they are the enemies of the cross of Christ," not of Christ simply, but of the cross of Christ, of that which characterises the world, and His and the Christian's relation to it, "whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, who mind earthly things." In the French translation they had put in "only" earthly things, they could not stand the truth.

One must make allowance for our brother's estimate about care for the church and so on; by remembering also that there is a difference of gift. You may hear two men in prayer, one asks for the conversion of souls, and the other asks God to strengthen the saints; the one is an evangelist, and the other is a pastor; you must make allowance for all that, only get it in the right place.

The Scripture calls a perfect Christian one who not only knows there is forgiveness, but has known his place in the risen Christ, the new standing and condition into which he has been brought.

There are two things to be distinguished in Scripture the purposes of God and the responsibility of man; and these make all the difference. We find them fully developed respectively - Romans and Ephesians. Romans takes up the responsibility of man; Ephesians, God's purposes. The cross took up both. The purposes were before the foundation of the world. It is not merely a question of persons predestinated, but of that to which they are so predestinated, and therefore you will not find persons so spoken of without reference to the things that are purposed as to them. We are "predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son." I cite this merely as an illustration. Before the foundation of the world God had all that before Him; His delights were with the sons of men. He had His purposes, but in connection with the Second Man. Now that is not the way He began. He began with the first man - the responsible man. He fell as we all know, and then God went on with that responsibility up to the cross. Up to the Flood there was no particular institution. It was man left with God's testimony in the world, but no special dispensational dealing, and he got so bad that the flood came. The world has been judged once. Then in Noah spared in the flood the restraint of violence by human government is established, and we may follow the history of the patient goodness of God dealing with man. First, He gave a promise and called out Abram in separation from the world departed from Him, and gone into idolatry. You get there election, calling, and promise; and, just as you get the head of what is bad in Adam, so you get the head of God's family in Abraham called by grace. There the promise was without conditions, the seed was to come; there was no "If you obey my voice." Still the question of righteousness must be raised, and it was raised in giving the law, and was required from man under law. "This do, and thou shalt live," was the principle, and he went to

work directly and made a golden calf.

Then God sent His prophets, rising up early and sending them "till there was no remedy" and, at last, as the only means left, He says, "I have yet one Son, it may be they will reverence my Son." And this, too, as regards man's state in the flesh, was to no purpose at all, man would not be won, and his responsibility, its history, that is in Scripture, closed. It was finished on the cross. Not that the individual now does not go through it all for the benefit of his soul; he does, but to another end. It is not to settle the question, whether he can meet God's requirements and stand in the day of judgment, but to discern that he is already lost. And so, in Stephen's speech, he begins with Abraham, and after rehearsing their history declares that they have not kept the law, have killed prophets, crucified Christ, and resisted the Holy Ghost, and it is all over as regards man. God may save the lost and does, but the probation of man is over.

It is not merely that man is a sinner - he was that in Paradise, but all the means at God's disposal as to man are exhausted, and, instead of the question, "Can I stand in the day of judgment?" the present fact is learned, that I am lost. Now, have I that conviction? and that is God's dealing with man alike, guilty and lost? That is what Romans treats of; it takes up both Gentiles and Jews, shews that all have sinned, and are guilty first; and then takes up the second point, all are lost by one man's disobedience. But you will find many a man who has owned he is guilty, but does not own that he is lost. Guilty refers to judgment and works; lost, to our state, and is a present thing.

You do not get the unity of the body in Romans, neither do you get, save a word, anything of the purposes of God. In the 8th. chapter you get "no condemnation for me in Christ," and the justification of the guilty sinner, and so far purpose, that it is said, we are also "predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren," but it is all individual still. You have the purpose and fact just stated that you may get a link on, and that is all, between the responsibility of man and the purpose of God.

I have often referred to that statement, in 2 Tim. 1:9, "Who hath saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest;" you get a concise statement of its revelation after the ground of its accomplishment was laid in righteousness in Christ's work, and He was glorified. So in Titus 1:2, 3, as to eternal life Christ, in dying, not only met the responsibility in which we all were as men, but He glorified God so that God put a man into the glory of God.

This is an immense thing. If I owed £10,000, and some person paid it when I was penniless; well, I am clear, but I have got nothing still, I can't even go and get a bit of bread. And, as a person merely forgiven, why should I have the glory of God? Why should my being clear of my guilt put me into the same glory as the blessed Son of God? This was the purpose of God, and its accomplishment is righteously grounded on the cross where also my responsibility was met. Now a perfect Christian has got hold of the intention and purpose of God about him, and does not merely know how Christ has met his responsibility; but that is what the church has lost, and the gospel is preached accordingly.

The result is that such a gospel does not get a person out of what our brother called "downstairs;" he does not get into the place entirely in heaven. The purpose of God was that the Second Adam should have joint-heirs in the same glory as Himself; and so the Lord says "Not as the world giveth give I unto you." He gives by bringing us into the place where He is. Forgiveness is not all, He gives glory also; but not only so, but Christ's way of giving is not the world's. If I give, I give away - if I have a loaf and give half, I have half

left, but Christ never gives so.

He gives and has all the same. He introduces us into all He enjoys Himself and gives nothing away. It is His own peace He speaks of when He says it, and so His joy, so the words given to Him, so His glory, so even the Father's love, we are brought into all. We have then in Romans the full meeting of our responsibility and state being added as completing our portion. But, "whom he justified, them he also glorified." They are with Christ in His glory, and this is another element not only meeting my responsibility, but bringing me into the result of God's purpose as to us.

Christ has borne my sins, and if they are not all put away they never can be; and it is further of the essence of the Christian's walk, and thus of all importance, that we should be clear as to our deliverance, that it is from our being dead with Christ, and not only that Christ died for our sins. So far the Romans. We die with Him. But the teaching of the word goes further; we are raised with Him, and so I am associated with Christ.

Ephesians begins with the purpose of God, then you get "quickened together with Christ," and raised up together (i.e. Jew and Gentile), and sitting in the heavenly places in Him, the purposes of God and the power of God by which I am associated with the Second Man already living in Him, though not there as to my body. And so you get no justification in Ephesians, but a new creation, "created in Christ Jesus" unto good works and to glory. God has not to justify His new creation. That is the difference between the two. And the one who is perfect is the one who has not only seen the justification but also the intention of God wrought out in quickening us together with Christ.

I was touching this morning a little on what Scripture says as to being perfect.

These questions arise out of the low state in which Christians are. The Spirit of God is working in them, and there is a craving after something, though what it is may not be defined in the mind. Christians are so entirely below the real thing set up by the Holy Ghost; the word is that to what we must turn, and then there is guidance. We were speaking of what a perfect Christian is; and this connects itself with what our brother was speaking of. In Phil. 3 and elsewhere the word perfect means a full-grown man; so in the end of Heb. 5, solid food, not exactly strong meat, is for them that are of full age, it is the same word. If I do not go beyond the question of my responsibility as a sinner and getting my guilt forgiven, that is not "full age," for it does not touch the purpose of God about us at all; all quite right though it is, so far as it goes. I may be low down and merely see forgiveness of sins, so that, as regards responsibility, I am looking at God as a judge, like Israel, when God passed through Egypt and saw the blood on the door post, and did not destroy them. I am speaking not of the value of the blood now, but of its application; as to its value the whole glory is founded upon it. But you will find many that stop there, and who have not an idea beyond being safe; while of course they will be happy hereafter, and I am not questioning that.

But in Phil. 3, when Paul speaks of those who are perfect, he says he speaks of running on to the prize of our calling above in Christ Jesus, and adds, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto ye have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." You find one, who knows he is forgiven, all right so far, and I walk with him joyfully, for the highest love I enjoy, the source of the glory, is what has reached him in his sins, but there is much more than that; not that the blood loses its value, we shall know it best in heaven, but its effect in full is to be sought here, and the question is how far that is produced in us; it is that that I speak of.

The cross stands alone in the history of eternity, there is nothing else like it whatever, except the heart of Him who died on it. There I get all Satan's power arrayed against God, and all the enmity of man's heart, and the perfect love of God meeting this very enmity; nowhere else but in the cross is this so brought out. All good and all evil, perfectly expressed at this one point, and that where Christ is "made sin;" then it is in Him that perfect love and perfect obedience are shown out.

He stands, the sinless One, as sin before God, but it is the very place where obedience is perfected, and in virtue of perfect love. "But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do." The majesty of God is made good in this place where Christ is made sin, in this place of His perfect obedience to God, and of perfect love in man, more than man of course, but man, - all is seen in this place of the cross. God perfectly glorified in man, in whom he had been utterly dishonoured.

But, when I come to God by the cross as a sinner, what do I measure the cross by? By my own wants. Sovereign goodness has met those wants, and that is perfectly right; we can go, in truth, in no other way, for the sins are there; but I go with my sins and find them all on the cross and gone. But my value for the cup is measured by my wants, not that I can exactly measure all my sins; but God knows them and has laid them on the cross, and that is my thought of it, and rightly.

When I get to God's side of the cross, passing through that rent veil, then there is a new scene opened; I see God glorified in it in all that He is, His majesty, His righteousness, His holiness against sin, His perfect love. Christ has verified them all there; now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in Him. Until I get Christ I never get God come out and I never get man gone in, for man could not go in. The law put the impassable veil between God and man, the high priest just going in once as a figure of Christ.

But Christianity is just the opposite. God did come out in love, and man is gone in and righteousness. But how often you find that a person rests there, as to its application to his need, and gets his happiness there, his mind dwelling on the contrast of where he had been, instead of living in the present blessed enjoyment of what he has got into. Of course the cross and the forgiveness always remain true, true even when you get to heaven, for we shall know good and evil better then than we do now; but what will occupy us is the living presence of the Father and of the Lamb in love, not merely the fact of having got in and the contrast with our once lost state, true as that may be.

But we don't want contrast when we get there. Even in worship down here, when the soul is on the threshold, having got in, and occupied only with having escaped the storm, it is not the highest thing that is occupying me. I have not got "upstairs." I am in, and out of the storm, therefore inside the door, but have I nothing to enjoy there, nothing in His own love who has brought me in? We are, thank God, in from the storm, the wrath in which we should have perished; but so far it is not the highest thing that is occupying me.

As to result, the highest thing is now only in the purposes of God. Of course we never could have them without redemption; and the love of Him who has redeemed is more than the glory which is in purpose; and we have seen how this puts the highest joy of the saint on the same ground as that known in the salvation of a sinner, so that they walk together in it. But we are associated with Christ, the last Adam, in the purposes of God. You get an example of what I mean at Christ's baptism.

The moment His people, under the influence of His word, took a first right step He associates Himself with them. He, of course, had no need of repentance; still He goes there, takes His place with them. For them,

it was repentance; for Him, fulfilling righteousness. As John therefore resists, and when He has taken that place, had taken His place with the remnant on whom the word had wrought, and comes up out of the water, then heaven is opened. It never was opened before, for there never was till then an object which heaven could look down upon with perfect complacency, never one, though saints through grace all along.

Then the Holy Ghost comes down too, and seals the person on earth; then the Father's voice says, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Until then you do not get the Trinity thus fully revealed, though you get intimations of it in the Old Testament, but here you have the Holy Ghost, the Father, and the Son. When man is put into his place, then the whole glory of the relationship of the Trinity comes out.

Thus man's place through and with Christ is revealed in His person. For us to enter into it no doubt redemption must be accomplished; hence it is only when that was accomplished and the Lord was risen, that He says, showing how he had now put them into the same place with Himself, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." But you get the place and relationship, and standing of a man, as son with the Father; you get Christ in it when He has associated Himself with His people. Son He ever was; even as man, you have the testimony of it when He went up to Jerusalem at twelve years old, in Luke, but the place and standing of Son there here first fully received, and the purpose of God was to bring us into that same place, finally in the same glory; only wherever their place is shown as one and the same with Christ, the more you see the Divine Person distinctly manifested. It is that indeed that gives its full blessedness. In the transfiguration, Moses and Elias are in the same glory with Christ, talking in intimacy with Him, but when Peter would put them all on one level Moses and Elias disappear, and the Father's voice proclaims Jesus as His beloved Son in whom He is well pleased. Take another most touching instance at the end of Matt. 17, just where Jesus has shown that His mission to Israel is over, and forbidden His disciples to say He is the Christ, though thus working in Divine patience in Israel.

They came and asked Peter, Does your Master pay tribute? It was the Jewish tribute paid yearly for the Temple services. Peter answers, Yes; eager to show His Master was a good Jew. On entering, the Lord anticipates him asking of whom do the kings of the earth take tribute, of their own children or of strangers?" Peter says "Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, then are the children free." You and I are children of the great King of the Temple, made free and need not pay. Still He remained subject as long as He was in this world, and says, Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, i.e., puts Peter in the same place with Himself, while showing He has Divine knowledge in anticipating Peter, knowing what had passed; and now Divine power over creation too, Go thou to the sea and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up, and, when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money; that take, and give unto them for me and thee.

And, while shewing who He was, His Divine power puts Peter in the same place with Himself; they were sons of the great King of the Temple. The first Adam is set aside and the saints are brought, in grace, into complete association with the second Adam - "me and thee." What a word is that! if I hear Christ saying to me, poor worms as we are, "me and thee." That is not mere forgiveness. We must have forgiveness and cleansing, and God shows it to us in every shape. We are guilty and are justified, we are defiled and are cleansed, we are offenders and are forgiven; but clearly too we are associated with the second Adam, and where?

Where? The world has entirely rejected Him, and so it says we have put off the old man and put on the new, we are not debtors to the old. There is a difference between the part of Romans which speaks of this, and Ephesians. Romans gives deliverance by death with Christ, we have done with flesh for faith;

Ephesians goes further and puts us quickened also together with him, sitting in the heavenly places; Colossians shows us quickened with Christ, but not sitting in heavenly places.

In Romans I have gone down into death, as regards sin in the flesh, and hence am delivered from the law also; in Ephesians I am viewed as dead in sins and am found there, and Christ is seen as having come down and putting all my sins away on the cross, so that I am clear. (Compare Col. 2:13). Then God comes and raises us up together, and there we are, put into one place with Christ. That is not forgiveness and cleansing, though that must be done and has been done through death by faith; but we have died with Him, and as once dead in sins, and He come down into our place, there in grace we have been quickened with Him and raised up again into a new place, where we are sitting in heavenly places.

And what is the consequence in practice? As now come out from God, I am to manifest God's character; walk in this world in the same spirit in which Christ walked. "Be ye followers of God as dear children and walk in love as Christ has loved us, and given himself for us, a sacrifice and an offering to God for a sweet smelling savour." So John, "Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us, and, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." So of the other essential name of God, for God is love and God is light, with Christ as our measure and pattern in life.

"Awake thou that sleepest," and there are plenty of Christians asleep, "and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light," such is Ephesian teaching. What I get in Romans at all parallel to this is on the way more to get at this, as leaving flesh, and having to be dead, and so he says there, "offer your bodies living sacrifices to God." I am rather there going to God than coming from Him to show Him to the world; and therefore you do not get in Romans, "raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places." Still we have liberty in Romans, and are set free to serve God as those that are alive from the dead.

It is not to an unconverted man in the world it is said, Yield yourselves unto God - but you who are alive through grace, who reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin but alive to God, alive from the dead; do you as such yield yourselves to God? For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made one free from the law of sin and death; God, having in Christ a sacrifice for sin, having condemned sin in the flesh: but it was in Christ's death it was condemned, while the condemnation is gone, I have died as in the flesh with Him. This sets me free. But, as risen with Him, I get man in a new place, where Adam innocent never was, the consequence of redemption of Christ going down into death, as to His state, as sitting in heavenly places in Him puts Him in a new place and scene.

That is where I get the difference between those two epistles. In one I am forgiven all the old man would be guilty of, and get rid for faith of the old man itself, and cleared of the old thing and alive in Christ, though in this world, and here it is the power of life in Christ; whereas in the other is a Man, Himself raised by God from the dead, and sitting in heavenly places, and we raised by the same power and set in Him there, in the purposes of God head over all things to the church. Perfection to us in the word does not take in this general purpose of God naturally, but is individual referring to our state; it means literally that a man is of full age, but Christ, the second Adam, the last Man, is the measure and standard of that. Hence we must look at it when He is made perfect, and that is in glory and consistency with this, is the standard of our walk according to this rule, not merely what becomes man towards God and his neighbour, which is law, but the manifestation of God in the flesh, the grace in which Christ walked in this world, the absolute giving up of self in love, and light in the midst of darkness. Take the sermon on the Mount, there you will find the same thing, Christ's mind and spirit contrasted with legal righteousness, and "be ye therefore perfect as your Father which is in heaven is perfect;" given in Luke. Be ye therefore merciful as your Father which is

in heaven is merciful. He forgave you, an enemy. Do you forgive? Yes. He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Do you be so, and so on.

God has awakened the feeling which is abroad that something more real, something better is demanded than what passes for Christianity about us. Everybody is awakened all around us, and the question is, What is the real path in which we have to walk? Now, I know of no perfection presented to the Christian in Scripture but being like Christ; but it is Christ in glory. We are predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son, that He may be the first born among many brethren. It is "when he shall appear we shall be like him, and he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself as he is pure." We have borne the image of the earthly, and we shall have the image of the heavenly. But where? Is it down here? No. Desiring conformity to Christ sounds and is very nice. The renewed heart cannot but desire it, but He had no sin in Him. Have you no sin in you? You have, and therefore there is not the likeness to Christ in that condition; and the only perfection that Scripture presents is conformity to Christ in the glory when He shall appear and we shall be like Him. And this as we have seen leads to purifying ourselves as He is pure, but not to saying we are pure. It says the contrary, but gives a higher standard that acts in changing us unto the same image from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord. Whenever any one says he is pure he lowers the standard, and his judgment of what sin is too. There are two sides to the operation of grace in thus forming us after Christ, renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created us. First, the bright side, "We all with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord are changed into his image from glory to glory;" and the darker side, "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory, and every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." We have, while looking at his perfection, to judge that which is inconsistent with it, but this keeps us humble and dependent, and that is the only right position. I am sitting in the heavenly places in Christ, and I have no object before my mind but Christ in the glory, and, if Christ there be my only object, I walk like Him down here. As far as being like Christ is concerned, I cannot be what He was, without sin, but I walk then down here as He walked, for I have never to let the flesh act, though the flesh be there. But Christ in glory and conformity to Him there is the only thing the Christian can own as an object before him, and that is his perfection, and where that is not the case the standard is lowered.

If you want to meet the difficulty that has been raised in the sense of bondage to evil which has been attempted to be met by a false perfection, you must have the real thing or you cannot meet the false. Just so, if you have a Christian staying in the 7th of Romans, which is not the Christian state, it is just the same, you can't help him in any other way, than death indeed with Christ where sin in the flesh was condemned, and so the law of the spirit of life in Christ through redemption.

There is a deliverance, and Romans 7 is not the Christian but the renewed man captive and under the law not married to Christ risen from the dead. I feel it is all important this; "in many things we all offend;" it is a delusion to think we have not the flesh in us. On the other hand, we are not in our right state as Christians unless we are walking in the full present sense of Divine favour. The flesh is there, but, "If I bear about in my body the dying of the Lord Jesus," beginning by reckoning myself dead, the power of Christ is there to keep us looking at the things which are not seen.

I have to keep the flesh down. But, if I let an evil thought into my heart, I have no kind of excuse, that thought is evil; I did not abide in Christ or He would have abode in me. There has been neglect of Christ, being with Christ for His own sake, so that I have not His power with one if temptation comes, nor my heart full of Him; so that Christ does not rise up within. How came Peter to yield? Because he was asleep when Christ was praying. If we would live above sin, though it be there, we must live not looking at the things

that are seen but the things that are not seen; and for this there must be lowliness, the sense of dependence, and diligence in seeking Christ.

This last will bring the consciousness of the evil in us that hinders, but it will be judged evil in grace, and not evil, having power in us so as to impede communion or bring failure. I am brought into a place where Christ is, and the Holy Ghost shows me all that is there, and I feed on that. "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him," and there so many stop. Wonderful! So wonderful, we cannot conceive it, they say; and so it is wonderful, but they have not what follows, "but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit;" "but we have received the Spirit of God that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God;" His statement is that what eye hath not seen, nor is entered into the heart of man, God hath revealed unto us by His Spirit.

He is stating that the case of the Old Testament saints was such, but that it is not our case, for we now have received the Holy Ghost, that we might know these things. And, again, at the end of the same chapter, still quoting from Isaiah, he asks, "For who hath known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ." We have got God's wisdom, for Christ is the wisdom of God. Such too is the object before us. Consequently, the progress of the Christian is that he grows up to Him who is the head in all things. Having put off the old man and put on the new, we are changed into the same image as we look at Him who is perfect in glory.

We are the object of the Father's favour just as Christ is; I speak of consciousness now (John 17). When we appear in the glory it is that the world may know that the Father sent Christ, and has loved us as He loved Him; but we do not wait till then to know it. He says in John 17:25, "I have declared unto them thy name and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them; this latter is where you get it now, when the world does not see it.

But I would repeat this, that wherever you get our being put into the same place with Christ, you will find the most careful maintenance of the Divine glory. If Moses and Elias are with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration in the same glory, talking familiarly of His decease, then the moment Peter says "Let us make three tabernacles," Moses and Elias are gone, and the Father says "This is my beloved Son, hear him." So in the case in Matt. the difference of the blessed Lord is shown in the most striking and beautiful way. The heaven is as open to Stephen as to Christ, he was full of the Holy Ghost. It is open to us, the veil rent; but, when heaven is opened to Christ, heaven is looking down at Him. In Stephen's case Stephen is looking up, and is changed into the same image. Was Christ changed into any image? Certainly not; He was in Himself the delight of God.

Now, when freed and walking in the Spirit, I need not think of myself any more, only of Him.

Beloved friends, I think we must all feel how all that, as a full blessing, has disappeared in the church of God. Individuals have laboured to be dead to sin in a monkish way very sincerely, but wrongly; but from the earliest time it was not merely that the individual did not reach up to the thought of God in making him like Christ, but the church having given up the full acceptance which is ours in Christ and the knowledge that we are justified by faith, at peace with God, had given Him up as an object, seen and sought in glory, so as to be changed into His image, and every effort at holiness was not only legal but asceticism, and an effort in the flesh to get rid of flesh. But we may go further - you find many a soul owning the forgiveness of sins who remains there; if it escape from the fear of the judgment to come, and that often not without

misgivings, it still remains connected with this world. But now see in Colossians, what are ordinances for? They are for a living man; he is still alive in this world, he has not died with Christ, does not reckon himself dead, and so it is not merely that the false righteousness of ordinances is sought but the whole course is in connection with the world in various shapes. It is not things above which are sought. But the apostle is making out that he is dead and risen again, and his eye, as so risen, is on all that forms the man and his character, is on Christ at the right hand of God. What was the meaning of Israel's history? It was God dealing with man in the flesh to see if He could get any good out of it. But there was none but evil.

I was interested in the lectures of a church professor at Berlin, who taught there were two principles in Judaism, the moral and the ceremonial, the one the law of Moses, as in Leviticus and elsewhere; the other, the Prophets; that Jesus took up the moral part and taught it, and that associated people with heaven. But that men were incapable of holding, on that ground alone, and that Christianity had gone back to the ceremonial part, while, professing to keep heaven as its object, man must be earthly, and that nothing would be right till Judaism, which connected God and earth, was re-established.

Now, have not people got under the law and under a religion formed for this world? The camp is not simply the world, but religious ordinances. And that is the camp adapted to this world. Christianity has returned to it. Christ suffered outside the gate, and Christians were to go outside the camp. They have returned into this religion arrayed for the world, established on ordinances; and, wherever you get ordinances, you get masters of ordinances, Scribes and Pharisees. Judaism has proved it, the Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all therefore that they command you observe and do, but don't you do after their works. The moment I get a camp, a religion suited to this world, I get into Judaism; and so when you get into traditions you get them connected with this world, and the washings of pots and cups were carnal ordinances which, burdensome as they are, flesh can accomplish. I don't go into all the details, but that is the principle. But the Lord judges it all, rejects it all: not what goes into the mouth defiles the man; then what does? That which comes out from the heart, evil thoughts, lusts, murder, fornication, and the like. He sets out what the heart produces, and puts man as he really is in God's sight. Had He no good to say of it, no modification of such a sentence by some good that also was found there? None. Surely, there was love in Christ's heart, He did not want to make much of the badness of man to show out Himself, He did not want that. And then when the Syrophenician woman comes to Him after blasting all the religion of man and showing what man's heart was the source of, what does Christ do? He brings her to own, that there was goodness enough in God to show mercy to those who had no goodness and no title and no claim, who were without a promise, without a righteousness, and in the place of the curse. And then I can say that will do for me. Well, then, in Christ I get God's love and mercy declared; but what did I do with Him? Crucified Him. Then what can I do? You are hopeless in yourself. But God has set Christ at His own right hand. What becomes of them who crucified Him? Where is what is commonly and vulgarly called the church? and where are the Scribes and the Pharisees called clergy now? What of them? They hope they will get to heaven. It is the camp; and the heavenly glory as a present hope, and the cross as the path to it, are refused. The friendship of this world is enmity against God, and the worldly Christian does not believe in that union with Christ that sets me up in heaven.

But, if I get the thought of this heavenly Christ, I see that the religion of man in the world and all that he adds to it to eke it out, ordinances added to human righteousness, all that was ended in the cross; and that is what Paul, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, calls the camp. If you take heaven for your place, you must get the cross down here. When the Lord told the disciples that He must suffer many things and be killed, Peter says "Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee," but the Lord says "Get thee behind

me, Satan." Don't you fancy that you will have the heavenly without being persecuted. I know it does not say that every Christian will be persecuted, but it does say, all that live godly in Christ shall be persecuted. But will it not be said, The tares and the wheat are to grow together till harvest? It does say so, but the field is the world, not the church.

I have nothing to do with the tares to pull them up, but I have to do with the wheat. If you look at what the camp is, well, it was God's religion to begin with, if you please, for God set it up in Israel. But it tested man, and he was found wanting. The cross closed that system, and the Father in that character of grace sought spiritual worshippers and set up Christianity on that ground; and what has man made of it? If I attempt to unite the world and Christianity I am denying the truth in Christ, and specially the truth of the cross of Christ.

I see beloved saints, whom I am bound to cherish as much as the dearest person to my soul, mixed up with the church world, the camp, but I am outside all that entirely. It is well that there should be no mistake or uncertainty as to this; grace to the weakest believer, to every member of Christ, holding fast faithfulness towards them, but our feet in the narrow path. Only it is of no use to take a special place without a true motive; but, if there is a thing that is of moment to us now, it is the distinctness of practical testimony; you that profess to be heavenly, partakers of the heavenly calling, to know what the church is, have to give a distinct and definite testimony; we are not of the world, as Christ was not of the world; our conversation is in heaven from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; there are those who walk otherwise, but I am not to mind earthly things (though we may slip into that), for if I did my end would be destruction. There must be no ambiguity in my path through this world.

If we want to be a testimony for the blessed Lord that loved us, it must be by holiness first of all individually, but also by unworldliness in every respect.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-nelson-darby/the-gospel-without-the-church/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net