

The Rest, the Word, and the Priesthood

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding our place before God, the work of Christ, and the priesthood of Christ, and how these relate to our rest and relationship with God.

Scripture: Hebrews 4:9

Topics: "Rest in Christ", "The Priesthood of Christ"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the three key elements for believers: the rest that remains for God's people, the power of the Word of God, and the priesthood of Christ. He explains that while believers have not yet attained the heavenly rest, they are called to rest in God's love and grace, having their sins fully dealt with through Christ's sacrifice. Darby highlights the importance of understanding one's position before God, free from the burden of sin, and the role of Christ as our High Priest who provides grace in times of need. He encourages believers to open their hearts to God, ensuring that nothing hinders their communion with Him, and to strive for spiritual growth and maturity. Ultimately, he calls for a deep understanding of the finished work of Christ and the assurance of being perfected forever in Him.

Transcript

We get three things spoken of here: one that we have not got, and two that we have.

The thing we have not got is rest: There remaineth a rest for the people of God. The prophet says, "Arise ye, and depart, for this is not your rest, for it is polluted." (Micah 2:10.) We are partakers of the divine nature, and we must rest where He rests.

The other two things are the word of God and the priesthood of Christ. Also I wish, in speaking of this help by the way, to refer to that in which all is absolute perfection, to show the difference between our standing before God, and that which is a help more for infirmity than for sin. We have to learn - if we have not yet learned - the place in which we are set through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The first exercises of the heart do not come in in this portion at all, those which we have when we do not know our place, when we try to do good, and do it not; but that is not the path of the people of God as such. It may be the way into it, but the place of the Christian is in perfect acceptance before God, with every question of sin perfectly settled. Just as with Israel: they were delivered from the place they were in, God's judgment met by the blood upon the doorpost, and they brought through the Red Sea to Himself: "I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself." (Ex. 19:4) That is where the Christian is; the veil

is rent, and we are now before God without any veil at all, though it may be on our hearts through unbelief. I do not speak of that now.

272 As far as God's government goes, all are in relationship with Him, but I speak now of the relations of the heart. Every possible trial of man has been made, and it only came out that those who are in the flesh cannot please God. Christ has been rejected, and the world has no place before God at all, though His love goes out towards it, for He has had His purpose and thought of grace ever since Adam fell, and souls get into a place in which they are in relationship with God. We have to see where we are, when the whole world is lying in wickedness. Men own Christ outwardly, that He died on the cross, etc., and go on just as they did before. You cannot call that relationship - there is none.

There remains a rest even for God's people, just as Israel were journeying on to Canaan; they cannot have rest in a world which is contrary to Christ. We are exercised in the wilderness, we are in conflict, too, with wicked spirits in heavenly places; and that is not rest. Israel will get their rest in time; but I drop that for the moment, and apply it to ourselves. It is a blessed thought, that there will be rest and joy for this poor sin-stricken world, but for us it is a heavenly rest - we are blessed in heavenly places in Christ. Where God can rest in His love, we can rest. If God rests in His love, there is nothing wanting. He is active now in His love, seeking to save that which was lost; but that is not rest; He rests in His love when those whom He has brought by His love are there, and no single thing is lacking to their enjoyment. It is ours, that rest, but we are not there yet. Christ is waiting too, He does not yet see the full result of the travail of His soul, but He will do so, and be satisfied. That rest, of course, is according to God's nature. He brings us now, "holy and without blame, before him in love," having the adoption of children, knowing God as our Father, and the blessed rest of God's people is also according to His nature. And it is all revealed now, the veil is rent, and all that is revealed which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard. The Father fully revealed in the Son, the essence of all the blessing. The more spiritual we become, the more we learn what it all is. We get the figures of it in Revelation, where the spiritual apprehension lays hold of it, so that we can live in it, but it is clear we have not come to it.

273 It is a mistake to speak of this rest as rest of conscience. "We that have believed do enter into rest" only means the character of those who enter; as I might say, Men come in by this door, and women by that. I do not say that any are coming in now. We have rest in the sense of ceasing from our own works for righteousness, but not in the heavenly sense.

But then, beloved friends, all has been completely brought out now - they are not promises, the grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared. The work is all completely finished and revealed. The moment the Son of God was rejected, all that could be done to test man's heart had been done, and He says, "Now is the judgment of this world." For when Christ was there, in perfect love and goodness, revealing the Father, He had to say, "The world hath not known thee, but I have known thee." He appeals to the righteous Father to judge between them.

274 We get Man then - Christ in the divine glory, because He had finished the work His Father gave Him to do: there, when He had finished it, and because He had finished it. And Paul says he did not know the Christ who came to be Messiah among the Jews; they had forfeited all the promises, and it was all over with Jew and Gentile, and there was no relationship that God recognized at all. Man was cast out of the first paradise, but was set in Christ in the heavenly paradise, and between the two there is nothing really that God owns. "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." (1 John 5:19.) Satan was the prince of the world before, but he was never called it until the cross, where the world proved

what it was: it was not a question of the responsibility of man, but the proof that he is enmity against God, and that he will not have Him on any terms. But in that, God wrought His own work, the work He had always had in His mind before the foundation of the world, and as the fruit of which, Christ is in heaven. (Of course, He always was there, but I speak now of Christ as Man.)

275 The more we dwell upon it, the more we shall see the whole question of good and evil definitively settled at the cross. The perfect wickedness of man was fully brought out there; the disciples run away, and all the rest were delighting in getting rid of the Lord, saying, Aha! Aha! so would we have it.

We get here, man entirely rejecting the Lord, and that is what we are ourselves, our natural state. On the other hand, when the wickedness of man's heart is brought out, then I get man perfect (in Christ, of course), absolute obedience at all cost, even to the cup and the curse, perfect love to the Father: "that the world may know that I love the Father, even so I do." That love was shown really and perfectly where He was made sin. I get man in His perfectness here, glorifying God at all cost: God revealed in His Majesty - He could not let His own Son be spared when He had put Himself in that place - His judgment against sin, the thought of which made the Lord sweat great drops of blood; and all this was done for us: He suffered, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. Morally speaking, the whole question of good and evil was resolved: Satan's power, the wickedness of man, the perfection of Man, and the nature of God all fully brought out. It is not now a question of probation, but of belief in a thing that is so settled, that God has set the One who did it at His own right hand. He was perfectly glorified in the place where Christ was made sin, and Man is sitting at the right hand of God in glory. It is all done, and that is what the Holy Ghost comes down to reveal to us.

276 Exercises of heart there will be, finding out what we are, that in our flesh dwells no good thing - that we are the very persons who were thus manifested at the cross; but I find, too, that being one of those persons, and having that evil nature, it was all met at the cross - a settled thing. He would not have the twelve legions of angels, He went on to the end. "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

When, beloved friends, I have been thoroughly convinced of sin and sins, I find then, when I get before God in the full conviction of what I am, I get Christ instead of myself; He is before God for me. Not that all the sin is nothing, but that Christ has borne it all for me; God has accepted it as meeting it completely and absolutely, not giving me a legal righteousness - it is infinitely beyond that - but giving me a place in glory, in virtue of the work which has perfectly glorified God. I do not believe we get the sense of that until we have done with all confidence in self; it is a very subtle thing. A man does not set about saying there is something in him to trust, but he goes on as if there were, and he will not get that liberty spoken of in Romans 7.

I am utterly condemned, and taking my place under the righteous judgment of God, I find Christ is not on the cross now. He is sitting at the right hand of God, after He has been on the cross. All I was as a child of Adam is done away, and I am sanctified by the will of God, "through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once." He is sitting there at rest, because He has finished the work. (I do not speak now of the grace He is daily ministering to us.)

277 If I am looking for anything to put away my sins, I do not believe in the finished work of Christ, and therefore the apostle says, in Hebrews 9, "then must Christ often have suffered." There is not a thing to be done; but it is done "no more conscience of sins." It is not that I do not fail, but when I look up to God, faith cannot have a thought that God imputes anything to me. And why so? Because Christ is sitting at the right

hand of God when He had purged our sins.

If I go in faith, I go through the rent veil - His flesh - into the holiest of all, in boldness, because He who has accomplished the work is there. I find Him there when I go. I press that, beloved friends; because you are not on the full, true ground of liberty before God, until the thought of imputation, when you put yourselves in the presence of God, has completely disappeared. It is well to put yourselves there to test your souls. Supposing I stand before the judgment seat. Why, the One who is there is the One who bore my sins! I see it more every day, that the whole question of the church's ruin hangs upon this; whether or not the worshippers once purged have no more conscience of sins. People speak of Christ bearing their past sins, but there is no sense in saying Christ bore my sins up to the 16th of July! He was there before God meeting the whole question of sin, and He sits down because it is all settled. God has made death and judgment, like the Red Sea, to be a wall on my right hand and my left.

278 What, then, comes of our present life? The first thing to get quite clear is, that my place before God is Christ's place every instant. "No condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." How can you condemn one who is in Christ? It is absurd, and the apostle says it triumphantly.

But what do we get as to what is going on now? It is not a question of imputation at all, but we have to do with the same Christ who is the perfect Witness to God's satisfaction.

I am here, a poor weak creature, exposed to all sorts of snares and temptations, and we have the word of God, sharper than a two-edged sword, which comes and judges; it runs right through, and says, What is this in your heart? Is that in accordance with the light? No buts, no buts, there is no excuse, you are brought into the light. It shows me things I never suspected before - all things naked and open; the word is God's eye; prying into my heart, and showing me what suits that eye, judging not merely acts, but the thoughts and intents of the heart.

But, supposing all the thoughts and intents of my heart were as perfect as possible, still I am a poor weak creature, and then I get the Priesthood of Christ. There are snares all around - the world, Christian friends who are not spiritually-minded - and I have to go through all that, all the difficulty and trial that comes from those who do not wish the cross to be quite what it is. We are in danger in passing through this world, and so I have Christ, who has met every difficulty and temptation, and ten thousand times more than we do, and understands it all, not only in the divine, but also in the experimental, way. But for the evil movements of my heart, I want the hatchet: for the difficulties, trials, etc., I have the throne of grace - God Himself, the perfect and adequate supply of all grace to overcome.

279 The Priesthood of Christ does not apply to sins. Many a one who does not quite know that he is perfected for ever, if he gets into a low state, goes to Christ, just as if he could not go to God. I have a High Priest there, and I go to the throne of grace; it is for help in time of need, not for sin.

If you go to Christ about your sins, as if He were to go about them to God, that is not what He does as Priest. The Priest is to obtain grace for me, that I should not sin; He is always there to obtain every needed grace, to help in time of need. It is impossible that a temptation can be too strong for us, for He is faithful not to suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, and we have all the strength of God. We go to the throne of grace, and get what is needed to help in time of need.

The epistle never connects the priesthood with sin; it is well you should feel it, that you may not think you may sin, and then run to the Priest to get it set straight. But supposing I fail, and sin (which we all do), then

I have an Advocate with the Father; it is not then going to God to get grace and strength, but that fellowship with the Father must be restored. Fellowship is interrupted if I even allow a sinful thought; it were blasphemy to say He could have fellowship with that. I go, then, not doubting His love, but not cheerful and happy as if nothing had happened; while the righteousness in which I stand is not touched, communion is destroyed. If I allow anything that is not of God, communion is interrupted: and "if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father;" that is about our sins. But mark how he speaks, that there may be no cloud - "Jesus Christ, the righteous." Why bring in that word? Because our righteousness is not touched, it all remains in unalterable value.

280 But it has brought me, too, to walk in the light, as God is in the light, and after communion is broken, He interferes to restore it. If I look at the sins as interrupting my standing before God, Christ is not my righteousness, but the effect of His work is to put me into the light, there to judge of everything, as He does; there is no other place for a man except that of being in his sins.

The moment there is anything inconsistent with the presence of God, in the measure in which I release it, communion is interrupted. Then do I go out of the position of grace? Not at all. He interferes to break me down about my sin, to make me judge the root, the place where I got away from the path. My soul has to go through the judgment of all that, and there I do get the question of sin raised, but then it is as Advocate with the Father.

281 If I think of the Priesthood, I am before God perfected for ever. But though this is true, I am a poor weak creature going through the wilderness and there is infinite strength for me, and He is my Priest, representing me before God. We never can excuse ourselves if we fail, because He is faithful. There may be negligence, and we may not have power at the time to overcome; negligence in prayer, and in using the means God has given, but I never can excuse myself.

Have your hearts right open before God. Do not leave any chambers locked up before Him, or you cannot have joy and liberty. You may walk well outwardly, not scandalize anybody, but if you have anything in your heart not open before God, you have lost your communion, and there is that which tends to weaken your whole path.

There are two things: the full and distinct apprehension that before God there is no more conscience of sin: if you have not reached it, never rest till you do: He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Here comes the fact that we are poor, weak, infirm creatures, and we are put through all sorts of things to exercise us; and He is my Priest where the intention is right. I have to have my will broken, things I do not suspect brought out, and, even if I fail, the advocacy of Christ is founded on His righteousness, and in that there is no progress, and no change.

282 I press upon you distinctly and definitely - for the loss of it was the very ruin of the church - and for your own souls, not to rest till you have no more conscience of sins. Then, not only watchfulness against evil, but growing up unto Him in all things. But there is no perfectness till we are like Him in glory. I press toward the mark.

The Lord give us diligence and earnestness of heart thus to follow Christ!

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