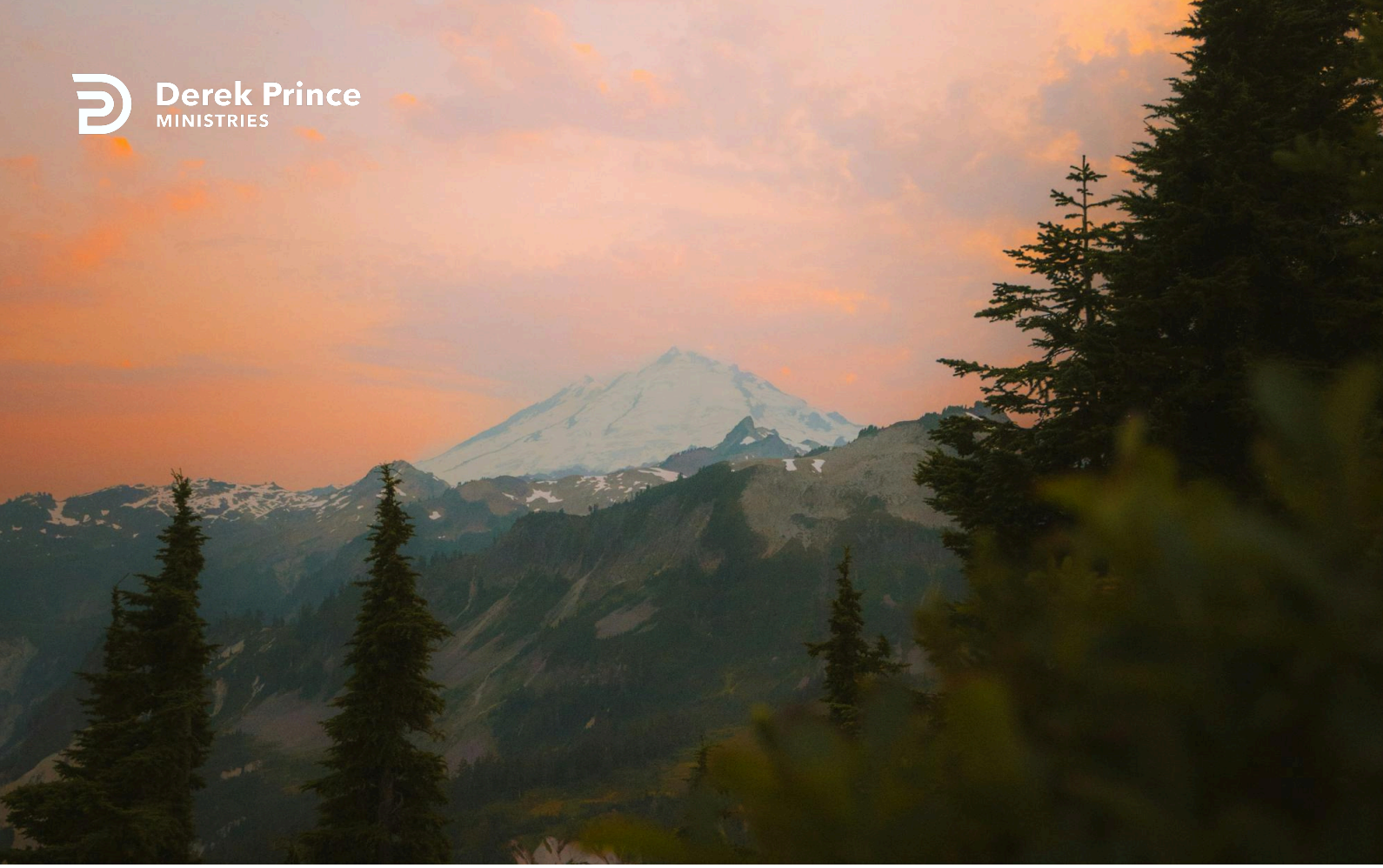

Obedience



Foundations (Day 172)
by Derek Prince

Groups of Christians in various places today are being threatened by the same kind of error against which Paul warned the Galatians. There is in many places today a tendency to impose some kind of system or technique upon those seeking the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The precise form of technique varies from group to group. In some places the emphasis is upon some particular posture or attitude. In other places the emphasis is rather upon some special form of words or the repetition of certain phrases.

Instruction along these lines to those seeking the Holy Spirit is not necessarily unscriptural, but the great danger is that the particular posture or form of words, instead of being merely a help to faith, may become a substitute for it. In this case the technique defeats its own ends. Instead of helping seekers to receive the Holy Spirit, it actually prevents them from doing so.

As a result of this kind of technique we often meet the chronic seekers who say, "I've tried everything! I've tried praise... I've said, 'Hallelujah'... I've lifted my hands in the air... I've shouted... I've done everything, but it just doesn't work." Without realising it, they are making the same error that the Galatians were slipping into: They are substituting works for faith, a technique for the simple hearing of God's Word.

What is the remedy? Just what Paul proposes to the Galatians: to return to the hearing of faith. Chronic seekers like these do not need more praise, more shouting or more lifting up of their hands. They need fresh instruction from God's Word on the free provisions of God's grace.

As a general principle, wherever people are seeking the gift of the Holy Spirit, a period of instruction from God's Word should always precede any period of prayer. For my own part, if I were allotted thirty minutes to help believers seeking the gift of the Holy Spirit, I would spend at least half that time – the first fifteen minutes – giving scriptural instruction. The next fifteen minutes, devoted to prayer, would produce far more positive results than a full thirty minutes given to prayer without any instruction beforehand.

We see, then, that the basic requirement for receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit is defined by Paul as the hearing of faith. We must be careful, however, to guard against a false

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interpretation of what is meant by faith. Faith is not a substitute for obedience. On the contrary, true faith is always manifested in obedience. Thus obedience becomes both the test and the evidence of faith. This applies as much to the receiving of the Holy Spirit as in any other area of God's grace.

In his defence to the Jewish council, Peter focuses upon obedience as the proper expression of faith.

> "And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him." (Acts 5:32)

In speaking of the gift of the Holy Spirit, Paul stresses faith, while Peter stresses obedience. There is, however, no conflict between the two. True faith is always linked with obedience. Complete faith results in complete obedience. Peter says here that when our obedience is complete, the gift of the Holy Spirit is ours.

Devotional

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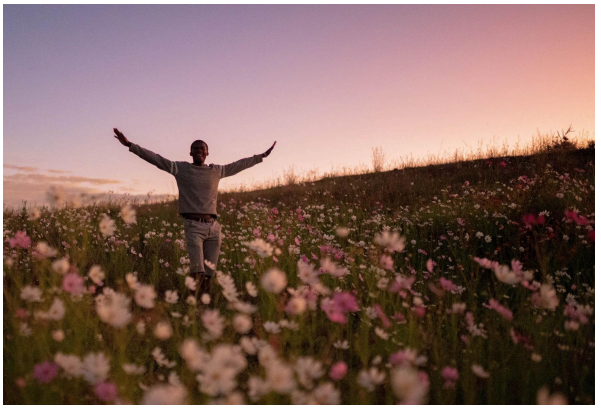

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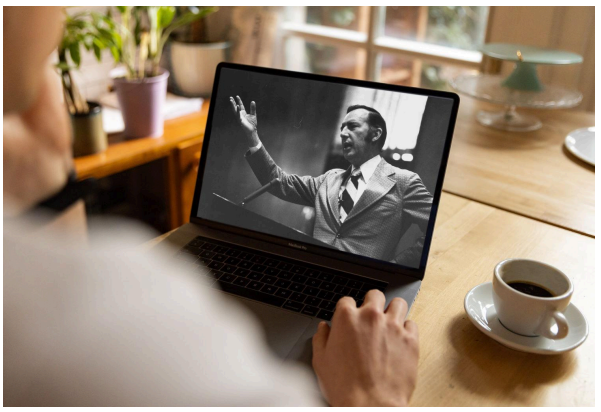

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