

Crucified and Buried with Christ



Pages From My Life's Book (Part 7)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again today. I am sharing with you lessons that God taught me during the three years that I served as a hospital attendant with the British Forces in North Africa during Word War II, the years from 1941 to 1944.

Yesterday I pointed out how God sometimes uses the desert to prepare His people for their future service. The desert strips away from us the non-essentials and brings us down to the basics of life. This is true both in the natural and in the spiritual realm.

When God led Israel through the desert for forty years, He provided them with two basic forms of nourishment: the manna that they gathered every morning, and the water from the rock that they drank. In my experience I saw that God had made a corresponding provision for me. My manna was the Bible as I read it each day. The water from the rock for me was the Holy Spirit within me. It was He within me (the Holy Spirit) who made the Bible a living, up-to-date, personal message for me. I discovered that the Holy Spirit, who is the author of the Bible, also is given to us by God to be its interpreter, to be our teacher, to lead us into all truth.

Today I am going to share with you one particular way in which the Holy Spirit made certain truths of the Bible very real and personal to me.

I need to give you a little picture of our way of life. We traveled almost incessantly. Desert warfare is extremely mobile. We traveled on a three ton truck and I explained yesterday that on this truck there traveled eight men called stretcher bearers (that was the official military title); two men who were responsible for driving and maintaining the truck; myself, who was in charge of the total group; and I mentioned yesterday that the rest of our company dubbed us "Prince's Pioneers." We had a little flag with that title on that we would put up every time we stopped for the night.

When we stopped for the night, we usually slept out in the open desert and I discovered that the desert, though it's usually hot in the daytime, very, very quickly becomes cold at night. Sand gathers heat very quickly but also loses it very quickly. And so there was an art in learning where to sleep and how to keep warm. I usually used my boots as my pillow

and we would try to have one of the wheels of the truck to shelter us from whatever direction the wind was coming from. And then we were each allotted four blankets. It is almost comical, when I look back, how important those blankets were to us. Today we wouldn't think much about four coarse blankets. But I had one particular blanket which really was my most cherished material possession. I think it must have been a horse blanket originally and it was at least twice as large as any normal blanket, but it only counted as one. So I had three blankets, plus this great large horse blanket. And I learned to stretch them out on the sand and put some under me and some over me and sleep in such a way that I was almost shut off from the wind and the cold and I had a kind of little nightly home there inside my four blankets.

Well, I was just a new believer and there were many things about the spiritual life I didn't understand and I was continually questioning God. I wanted to know why we had to go on like this day after day and what good was it doing, and why couldn't God get me out of the army, and He knew that I wanted to serve Him. And really, I had a lot of questions and a lot of complaints and I was far from being restful at times.

So one night I wrapped myself up in my blankets and lay down there on the sand. We usually went to sleep just about the time the sun set, got up when the sun rose, because we had no artificial light, and as I lay there with these questions in my mind, arguing with God: Why was He allowing all this to go on? Didn't He know how useful I could be to Him if I could get out of the army? I found myself in a strange way (and I believe it must have been by the power of the Holy Spirit), pinned down on my back, on the desert sand, and the blankets were wrapped about me in a strange way so that I couldn't move. And my arms were stretched out horizontally from my body, so I was lying there on my back with my arms stretched out horizontally, the palms upwards. And in some strange way I couldn't get into another position. It was as though I was pinned down by these blankets and suddenly I realized that I was exactly in the position of a person being crucified on a cross. And next day, when I opened up the Bible, my eyes fell on Galatians 2:20 where Paul says:

> "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me: the life I live in the body I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me, and gave himself for me."

So in that very vivid way, without my really reasoning it out or working it out, the Holy Spirit showed me that in God's sight I was crucified with Christ. I didn't have anything to argue about. I didn't have any case to plead. I was a crucified person! Christ's crucifixion had become my crucifixion! He had identified himself with me in His death for my sin on the cross. Now, in turn I was to identify myself with Him and to see myself as crucified with Him. And the crucified man has nothing to argue about. He has no case to plead. He's just there. He takes his position and he's held there because that is the position that has been ordained for him.

And so I learned in that very vivid kind of demonstration by the power of the Holy Spirit working through those blankets that pinned me down on my back there in the desert sand, that I was to say, "I have been crucified with Christ. That is my position. That is my condition. Now I don't live. I have no arguments. I have no pleas. I have no claims. I have no rights. Those have been stripped from me by crucifixion. I am to see myself as a crucified person. That is how God sees me. That is how I am to see myself."

Another night a little later, I had a somewhat similar experience. I was wrapped there in my blankets again, my head up against the wheel of the truck, huddling together so as to keep out the biting cold wind that was blowing across the face of the desert and again I found myself pinned, but I was in a different position. This time I was still on my back, but my hands were pinned right down by my side, and struggle as I would, I couldn't get free. There was some mysterious power operating through those blankets that was binding me in that position. And as I ceased struggling and just lay there, I realized I was in the position of a man being carried out for burial. That is exactly the position in which burial took place in the customs of the Bible. So I realized not only was I crucified with Christ, but I was also buried with Christ. While a person is crucified, they're still visible, they still show. But when a person is buried, they've been put out of sight, they are no longer visible. There is no longer any evidence of their life. And I saw again as I turned to the New Testament and read its pages, that that's how God saw me. I'll give you just one Scripture out of several that speak about the fact that we are buried with Christ. Colossians 2:12 says this:

> "...having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead."

So I saw that I was buried with Christ and that only through burial could I enter into the resurrection life that God had for me. I had to be first crucified, then buried, and then I could be resurrected. But I noticed there that it said "buried with him in baptism," and somehow that lodged in my mind and started a train of thought.

Nearly a year later, after I had been in the desert for almost a year and had not once seen a paved road in nine or ten months, the army gave me a brief leave and permitted me to go to Jerusalem. So in 1942 I went to Jerusalem for the first time. Going to Jerusalem from the desert sand was really like going to heaven from hell. The first time I saw Jerusalem, I fell in love with her and I have to testify now that I have been in love with her ever since. But while I was in Jerusalem, I was introduced to a Christian minister who explained to me the spiritual and scriptural basis of water baptism and God gave me the wonderful privilege of going down one day in August 1942 to the River Jordan, just by the Allenby Bridge and there, on the basis of my faith in Jesus as my Savior, I was immersed in the waters of the Jordan (baptized), probably not more than a quarter of a mile from the place where Jesus Himself had been baptized by John the Baptist.

And so I was actually buried with Christ by baptism and I discovered that that produced some important changes in me. I had had a wonderful deliverance from my old way of life. I was indeed like a dead man, but many of the old pictures and scenes and incidents remained in my mind and came up to trouble me. After I had been baptized there in the River Jordan, I realized that those pictures and scenes and memories from the past had been erased. They were no longer there, they no longer troubled me and accused me and tormented me. And so I saw that it is important no merely to be dead, but to be buried. It is not enough that we have a dead body, but for that body to be dealt with in the proper way it must be baptized, must be immersed, must be buried. And that lesson God taught me there in the wilderness, in the desert, and then in the river Jordan.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be sharing with you two more lessons I learned in the desert, the discipline of fasting and the danger of murmuring.

Radio Program

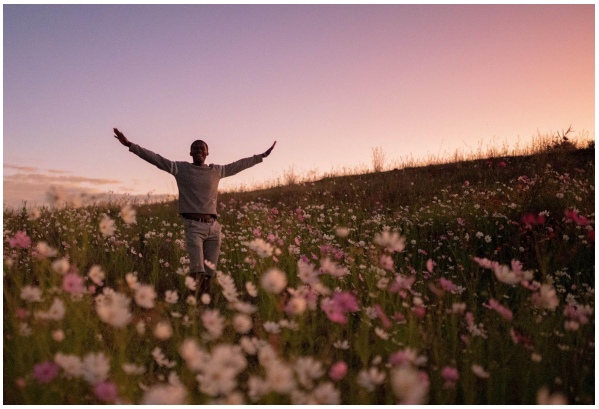
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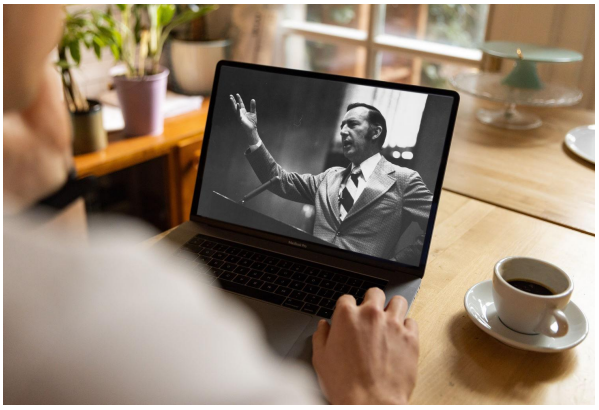
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