

From Punishment to Peace (Forgiveness)



Identification (Part 4)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, sharing with you precious truths and insights out of Scripture that have made the difference between success and failure in my life, and can do the same in yours.

This week I'm sharing with you on a theme that is at the very heart and core of the whole message of the Gospel, the theme of Identification. By identification we mean making yourself one with someone else. The essence of the identification that we are speaking about in this series of messages is the identification of Jesus with the human race, how he became Son of Man, how he became truly man without losing his divinity, how he became identified with man, and how on the cross that identity came to it's climax when the Lord laid upon him the iniquity, the rebellion, the guilt of us all. And we spoke very briefly about the other aspect of the exchange, that which is made available to us and I summed it up in the one word, peace, shalom, completeness, wholeness, harmony, well being, spiritual, mental, physical, being totally what a person ought to be, that's what offered to us.

I emphasized particularly in my last talk the sixth verse of Isaiah chapter 53 where Isaiah says:

> "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him [on Jesus] the iniquity [the rebellion] of us all."

I emphasized that the root problem of the human race is self will, it's going our own way. It's not necessarily committing some dramatic sin like murder, or adultery, or stealing. But turning from God's way, and going our own way, turning our back on God, doing our own thing, living by our own standards, pleasing ourselves, making ourselves the center of the universe.

Well, in my talk today, and in the talks that will follow, both this thing week and next, until Easter, I will be pointing out to you in succession various specific aspects of this divinely ordained exchange that was accomplished through the death of Jesus. I don't know of any theme better suited the Easter season, or more helpful in enabling us to enter personally into

all that was obtained for us through the death of Jesus.

The aspect of the exchange that I want to focus on today, is contained in Isaiah 53, verse 5:

> "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed." (NIV)

I want to focus particularly on that statement, "the punishment that brought us peace was upon." Jesus was punished for our sins because he became our substitute. You see, man's sin and God's mercy together created a problem that only God himself could solve. God longs to be merciful. He longs to forgive. But at the same time justice is the very foundation of His throne, and God cannot on any other basis but that of perfect justice. He cannot compromise his own justice to forgive. This paradox, this tension is stated in a revelation that the Lord gave to Moses. In Exodus chapter 34, verses 5 through 7, Moses have cried out to God. He said "let me see your glory." And the Lord came down and gave him a personal revelation of himself. And these are the words in which it's described there in Exodus 34:

> "Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him [that's with Moses] and proclaimed his name [the Lord proclaimed his own name, and he said this] the Lord. And then he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, 'The Lord, [that's the sacred name] the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished…'" (NIV)

Notice the tension. God forgives wickedness, rebellion and sin, but because of his justice he cannot leave the guilty unpunished. So there's the great, if I may call it, the great problem for God. He wants to forgive the sinner, but he cannot condone his sin. His justice demands the punishment of the sin, his mercy longs to offer the sinner forgiveness and pardon. How could that problem be resolved? Only one person could resolve that problem, God himself. There was only one way that he could resolve that problem. It was through the sinner substitute, through Jesus, the Son of Man, the last Adam, who became legitimately and totally identified with the sins that we committed and then suffered their full penalty so that God's justice was satisfied and he was free without compromising his justice to offer forgiveness.

Paul states this in Romans, chapter three verses 25 and 26 speaking about the substitutionary death of Jesus:

> "God presented him [Jesus] as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood."

That word sacrifice of atonement is also used to denote the mercy seat that covered the ark in the tabernacle of Moses. Now that mercy seat was the only place where God appeared to man in the tabernacle and where God could offer man peace where the blood was sprinkled each day, each year and that mercy seat was over the ark, which contained the ten commandments, which was the law that the sinner had broken. So the mercy was the covering of God's mercy that hid the broken law. But Jesus on the cross became that mercy seat, that sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. And then he goes on to say:

> "He [God] did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished, he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just the one who justifies the man who has faith in Jesus." (NIV)

So God had this problem, he had passed over sin in past generations where there had been true repentance, but the sin had never been finally dealt with. It was God's forbearance, it was his longsuffering. It says about the sacrifices that were offered under the old covenant, they could not finally take away sin. But in them there was a remembrance of again made of sins every year and each day of atonement for the Jewish people, their sins were covered for one more year, but never finally dealt with. The only way that sin could be finally be dealt with was by the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus on the cross where God demonstrated his justice, he demonstrated his total uncompromising hatred for sin even in the person of his beloved Son, but at the same time having demonstrated his justice he made the way open for Him to offer his pardon, his forgiveness, his peace.

What then is practical result for the one, who, as a sinner, believes in this substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus, has faith in his blood as the final sin offering, where he poured out his life, this substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus, has faith in his blood as the final sin offering, where he poured out his life, his soul, and his blood? It was the guilt offering. What happens? What's the result? It's beautifully described in many passages of scripture. I will just chose two. The first one is Psalm 32, verses 1 and 2:

> "Blessed is the he who's transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sins the Lord does not count against him and in who's spirit is no deceit." (NIV)

Where it says in English "blessed is he" the Hebrew phrase is stronger, it's "oh the blessednesses, the countless blessings" that come to the man who's transgressions are forgiven who's sins are covered by that mercy seat that covered the broken law that I spoke about a little earlier. "Blessed is the man who's sin the Lord does not count against him." Notice there isn't a man who hasn't sinned, that's not the blessedness because there is not such a man. But "blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him" whose sin has been covered by the mercy seat, whose punishment has come upon another, the sinner substitute, "and in whose spirit there is no deceit." We have to bear in mind that we have to be absolutely sincere open and honest with God. It's not good trying to trick God, it's no good trying to fool God with mere external religious appearance. There has to absolute openness and honesty in our spirit toward God. We cannot cover anything up, we cannot excuse anything. We simply have to put our faith solely and totally in the sinner substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then in the New Testament in Romans chapter 5, verses 1 and 2, these words are used to describe the consequences of this transaction whereby we accept the fact the Jesus was punished for our sins that we might have peace, shalom, wholeness, completeness. I've spoken about that word. This is what Paul says there in Romans 5:

> "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, [acquitted, counted righteous] we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." (NIV)

There are some of the consequences. When we have accepted this sacrificial atoning death of Jesus on our behalf we have peace with God. God's wrath has been dealt with. He no longer counts our sins against us, we no longer need to tremble as guilty sinners. We no longer need to feel guilty and unworthy. We've been justified, we've been acquitted, we're accepted, we have a right to presence of God, we can move by faith into the grace of God in which we stand, something in we can stand in, something that's solid, that's permanent. And finally we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. So it's peace, it's joy, it's stability, it's firmness, it's assurance.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow we'll be looking at yet another aspect of this divine exchange that was accomplished through the death of Jesus.

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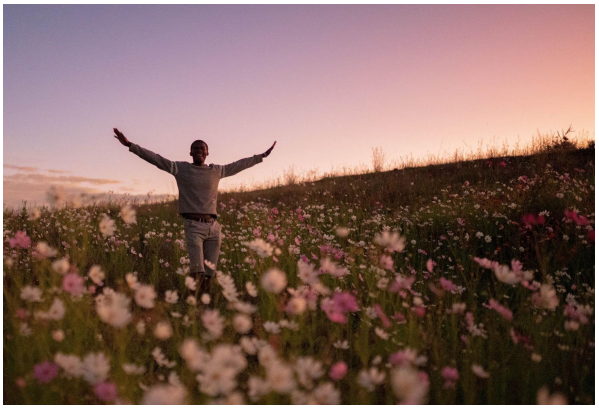

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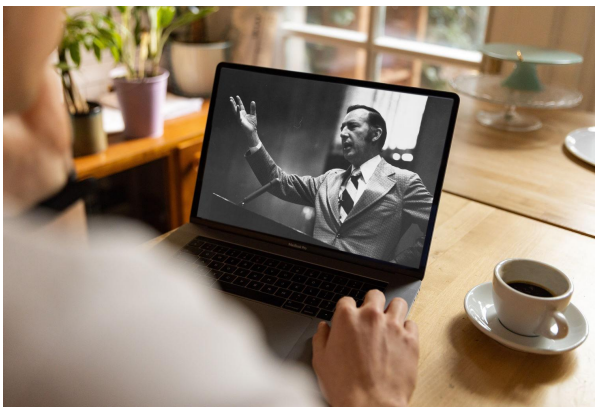

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