

From Poverty to Prosperity



Identification (Part 8)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we continue to explore together all the treasures contained in our special theme for this Easter Season: Identification.

We've been studying together various aspects of the divinely ordained exchange that took place when Jesus, as "the last Adam," died on our behalf, in behalf of our whole fallen human race. I've explained very simply and very basically that on the cross, this divinely ordained exchange took place. That all the evil that was due to our rebelliousness was visited upon Jesus. God made to meet together upon him the rebellion of us all, rebellion and all its evil consequences, that in return, because of this, all the good that was due by divine eternal right to Jesus, as the obedient son of God, might be made available to you and me as believers through our faith.

In my two previous talks this week, the two specific aspects of this exchange that I shared with you were: from curse to blessing. Jesus was made a curse; He hung there on the cross, the evidence of the curse that we might receive the blessing. He endured the curses of the broken law that we might receive the blessings due to obedience. And, specifically, the second aspect of the exchange, He made it possible for us to be healed of our sicknesses. The exchange is between sickness and healing. On the cross He took up our infirmities, He bore our sicknesses, and as Peter said, "With his wounds, we have been healed." I just want to emphasize that perfect tense, "we have been healed." As far as God's concerned, healing has been provided. It remains for us to appropriate what God has provided and that's why it's so important that we really know the basis of God's provision and we have understanding and faith to appropriate it. That's the real purpose of my talks this week.

Today I want to share with you yet another way in which Jesus endured the curse that we might receive the blessing, another aspect of the curse and the exchange that I'm going to speak about today is the exchange between poverty and prosperity. Poverty is one of the curses of the broken law. Jesus endured that curse that we might have the blessing which is prosperity.

Let's look again at the list of curses in Deuteronomy, chapter 28 and I want to keep emphasizing, you need to read this chapter for yourself. It's a long chapter. It's got something like 66 verses I believe, or 68, I forget, but whatever it is, you need to read those verses and you need to say to yourself, "This is a blessing, but this is a curse," and then ask yourself, "Am I enjoying a blessing or am I enduring a curse?" because if you are a redeemed child of God, the curses do not belong to you, but the blessings do.

Alright we'll look now at the curses listed and we'll focus particularly on those which relate to poverty. Going to Deuteronomy 28, beginning at verse 15 again:

> "However, if you do not obey the Lord your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: You will be cursed in the city and cursed in the country. Your basket and your kneading trough will be cursed. The fruit of your womb will be cursed, and the crops of your land, and the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks. You will be cursed when you come in and cursed when you go out. [Every aspect of your life will be cursed, and then specially, in relationship to poverty, verse 29]. You shall grope at noon, as the blind man gropes in darkness, and you shall not prosper in your ways." (NIV; v.29 NASB)

Notice, not prospering is a curse. Not being able to find your way, being confused, perplexed, uncertain, groping, and groping almost inevitably leads to not prospering. That's a curse. And then, a little further on in the same chapter, verses 47 and 48:

> "Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joy and a glad heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the Lord shall send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in the lack of all things; and He will put an iron yoke on your neck until He has destroyed you." (NASB)

Notice the will of God for his people. The will of God is expressed in verse 47, that we should serve the Lord our God with joy and a glad heart for the abundance of all things. Abundance is a beautiful word. It occurs many times in the Bible. In essence, abundance means you've got all you need and something over for others, and the will of God is that we, as his people, should serve him with joy and gladness for the abundance of all things. You see, Jesus said, "It's more blessed to give than to receive." If you're always receiving and never giving, you're not enjoying the greater blessings and God wants all his people to enjoy that greater blessing so he wants us all to have abundance: more than enough for ourselves that we may share with others. That's his will that we may serve him with joy and gladness for the abundance of all things but the alternative, the curse, is this, "You shall serve your enemies whom the Lord shall send against you," and let me remind you, if the Lord sends enemies against you, you have no option but to serve them. There is no other way. "You shall serve your enemies in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in the lack of all things." That's the curse. Sum up that, hunger, thirst, nakedness, lack of all things. What is it? It's absolute, total poverty. You can't have greater poverty than hunger, thirst, nakedness, and lack of all things and that's the curse, the poverty curse. Christ has redeemed us from the poverty curse.

This was made real to me in a most dramatic way. Some years back I was speaking in the country of New Zealand and I'd been asked to speak to a group of Christians on a certain financial need so I was unfolding to them God's provision for the financial needs of his people and how we enter into them. And, I had my outline, and I was going through it, but as I was doing this, in what I would call my mind's eye, I saw something and the Holy Spirit showed me Jesus as he actually hung on the cross, no pretty religious picture, stripped of all his clothes, naked, forsaken, and as I went through the curse of poverty, the Holy Spirit, as it were checked off, each item: hunger, thirst, nakedness, lack of all things. Jesus was hungry, he hadn't eaten for nearly twenty-four hours. He was thirsty. One of his last utterances was, "I thirst." He was naked. They'd taken from him all his clothing and divided it amongst themselves. He was in lack of all things; he had nothing. He was buried in a borrowed tomb and in a borrowed burial robe. He didn't have anything left at all. He exhausted the poverty curse as he hung on the cross. And, when I saw that, something happened in my spirit. I was able to attain a greater level of faith for God's financial and material provision than ever before. When I saw it, it was all based on what Jesus did on the cross, that on the cross, on our behalf, as our representative, he exhausted the poverty curse that we might in return have the blessing of prosperity. This exchange from poverty to prosperity that I've been speaking to you about is fully confirmed in the New Testament. It's not something that's just in the Old Testament.

I want to give you two verses from the Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, the Second Epistle to Corinthians. First of all, chapter 8, verse 9, and then chapter 9, verse 8. That makes it easier to remember. First of all, chapter 8, verse 9. I want you to notice the key word is grace:

> "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich." (NIV)

But the Greek says, "might be rich," which is even stronger. So there's the exchange, very simple, on the cross Jesus became poor with absolute poverty. He was hungry, thirsty, naked, and in want of everything. Why? That we, through his poverty, might become rich; that we might have the abundance that is the legitimate blessing of obedience to the Law of God. And, Paul explains the outworking of this exchange very clearly in the next chapter, 2nd Corinthians, chapter 9, verse 8, where he says this:

> "God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work." (NIV)

That's a fantastic verse, isn't it. The word abound occurs twice. The word all, in the original Greek, occurs five times. That's God's abundance. Let me read it to you again, "God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound to every good work." All things at all times, you have all that you need. That's prosperity. Abundance is, you have more than you need so you're able to give and share with others. It's not for selfish ends; it's not to gratify materialism or selfishness, it's to enable us to enjoy the greater blessing of giving. So many Christians are just receivers, they never give. They miss that greater blessing because they haven't entered into God's abundance and understood its purpose as it's provided for us through the death of Jesus. And, note again that key word, grace. The scripture says the Law came through Moses but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. This provision of grace came through the death of Jesus on the cross. It's not something we can earn, but it's something we can receive by faith and by meeting the conditions.

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back again tomorrow at this time. I'll be speaking about yet another aspect of this exchange that vitally concerns us all.

Radio Program

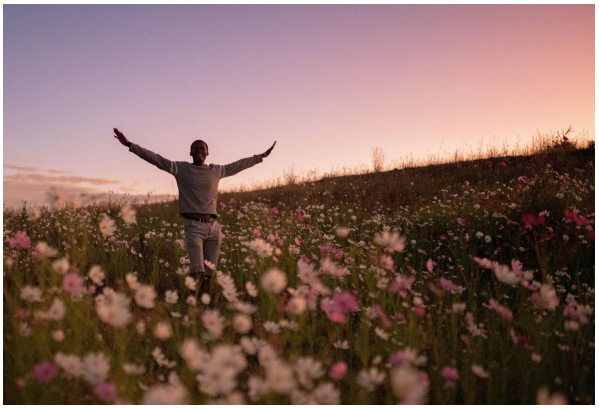
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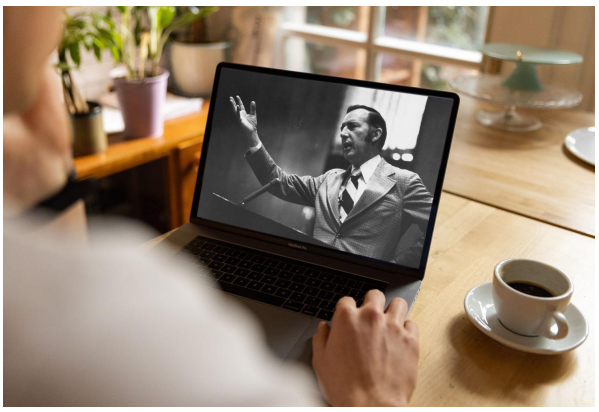
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