

The Second Barrier: Unbelief



Identification (Part 18)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, as we continue to explore together all the treasures contained in the special theme that we've been studying together over this Easter season: the theme of Identification.

For the past three weeks my talks have focussed on the divinely ordained exchange that was accomplished through the death of Jesus, how God made to meet together upon Jesus as He hung on the cross the whole rebellion of an entire fallen race and all the evil consequences of that rebellion. How Jesus as the last Adam took them upon Himself, exhausted that evil inheritance and terminated it. So that through His death, by the opposite side of the exchange, we might enter into all that Jesus entered into after death, burial, resurrection and ascension. That we might follow Him through the womb of death into a new birth, into a new inheritance, into a new life, lived not only on the plane of resurrection on this earth, but even lifting us up to the plane of the throne of God to share the authority and the rule of Jesus as kings and priests.

Well, this week I'm focusing on the practical application of these truths: just how you can make them work in your own daily living.

Yesterday I said that there were two great barriers: ignorance and unbelief. And I showed you how to overcome the first barrier: ignorance. I showed you that the key is in the Word of God, in knowing the Word of God, in giving yourself without reservation, in crying aloud, in praying, in seeking God, in letting God write the truths of His Word on your heart until they're so real that they're more real than the things you see around you.

Now today I want to deal with the second great barrier which is unbelief. It's not enough to know the truth. We must also believe the truth. This is what the apostle John says in his first epistle, chapter 4 verse 16:

> "And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us..." (NASB)

Notice, we have come to know, but that's not enough. We have also believed the love which God has for us. There are many people who know in theory that God loves them, but they've never really believed it as a reality for them personally. So, through knowledge we must move on into faith. We must not merely know, we must believe. If I could express it this way, knowledge puts the key into your hand, but it's faith that turns the key in the lock and opens up the treasure house of God's riches in Christ.

So first you need knowledge, but together with that to make knowledge work, you need faith. And when this message of the divine exchange was first given through the prophet Isaiah, chapter 53 of Isaiah which we studied together in earlier weeks, the very first phrase of the message is a warning against unbelief. Isaiah begins that 53rd chapter, "Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Jesus is the arm of the Lord. He's God's strength. He's the way God comes to our help and provides for us. But to whom has that arm been revealed? Only to those who believe. So the barrier there is unbelief. And Isaiah warns us, "Who has believed our message?"

You see, we need to understand that unbelief is a sin. So many Christians accept the condition of unbelief as if it's something a little unfortunate a little regrettable, but after all I'll get by anyhow. You may, I don't promise you that you will. That's between you and God. But I want to tell you that God's Word tells you that unbelief is a sin. It's not just a harmless weakness. It's not just a failure of religious people. There are two passages in Hebrews chapter 3 that deal with this. In Hebrews 3:12:

> "Take care, brethren lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God." (NASB)

What kind of a heart is an unbelieving? It's an evil heart. It's not just a little weakness that we can accept. It's an evil that keeps us from what God has ordained for us. The same chapter of Hebrews, chapter 3 verse 19 speaking about Israel and their entrance into the inheritance that God had promised for them in the promised land, speaking about the generation that came out of Egypt, that never entered the promised land, Hebrews sums up the reason why they didn't enter in one very short, terse phrase:

> "And so we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief." (NASB)

What kept them out? Unbelief. What can keep us out of our inheritance in Christ? Precisely the same barrier: Unbelief. We have to overcome that barrier of unbelief. And today I'm going to explain to you very simply, and on the basis of personal experience, how you can overcome the barrier of unbelief.

What then is the remedy for unbelief? It's contained in one brief verse of the epistle to the Romans, chapter 10 verse 17:

> "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." (NASB)

Note, the opening phrase, "Faith comes…" If you don't have faith, you can get it. I learned this from personal experience. In World War II as a soldier serving with the British forces in North Africa, I contracted a disease which the doctors in that climate, apparently were not able to heal. And I lay in British military hospitals in Egypt as a patient just about one year. One year is a long time to spend in hospital. And as I lay there I wrestled through many spiritual battles and problems. One of the main problems was unbelief.

I had just about a year previously come to know the Lord Jesus Christ in a very real and personal way. I'd come to accept the Bible as the Word of God. It was the only book I had with me. The only thing I had to read. And as I lay there I knew enough of God's power to be sure that God could heal me. And I believed that God would heal me if I had faith. And so over and over again I would say to myself, "I know God would heal me if I had faith." But the next thing I would say to myself was, "But I don't have faith." And every time I said that I was in what John Bunyan calls "The Slough of Despond", the dark valley of despair. And as I lay there in that dark valley, I think I think tasted despair and loneliness as really as you could ever taste them.

But one day a flash of light came into the darkness of that valley. That flash of light was contained in Romans 10:17: "So faith comes from hearing and hearing from by the word of Christ." As I read those words in the Bible open before me on my lap as I sat up in bed, I grasped those words, "Faith comes from hearing…" If you don't have faith, you can get it.

And I made up my mind at that moment that I would get faith, that I would hear, that I would focus on the Word of God, that I would listen to what God was saying with all my heart and with all my mind, until faith came. And I want to tell you that faith did come. Faith came through another passage of Scripture that I want to quote to you. It's the passage that got me out of hospital. It's the passage that got me out of that "Slough of Despond. And it's such a perfect example of how faith comes, I want to quote it to you. It's in Proverbs chapter 4, verses 20 through 22:

> "My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. For they [that's God's words and sayings] are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh." (KJV)

And I saw as I read those words, "...health to all their flesh." That's the answer to my need. That's a promise of complete healing and health for every part of my body. And I looked back and I saw the promise was in the words and sayings of God. If I could receive them aright they would provide healing and health for my whole body. And God showed me what it meant to receive them aright. He said, "Attend to my words; incline thine ear to my sayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart."

There are four instructions: attend; incline or bow down your ear, listen, be humble, be teachable; let them not depart from thine eyes, focus your eyes on them, don't look at anything else but the promises of God; and keep them in the midst of your heart. That's hearing. That's what Paul calls hearing in Romans 10:17: "Faith comes by hearing, hearing by the word of Christ." As we really hear the word of Christ, the message of what Jesus has done, as we close our ears to every source of unbelief, to everything that questions, to everything that criticizes, to everything that undermines, and as we listen with focussed attention to what the Bible is saying to us about what Jesus has done on the cross, faith comes.

Now the good news is that God has no favorites. He didn't do something special for me that he wouldn't do for you. I simply discovered and met the conditions. God in His mercy showed me how faith comes. Faith comes to anyone who meets those conditions. Faith will come to you just as it came to me. If you will make up your mind that you're going to fasten your thoughts, your attention, your eyes, your ears on what God says in His Word, that's the source of faith. It's the word of Christ. It's what God has done for us through Jesus Christ, "faith comes by hearing..." Don't be discouraged. Get out of that lonely valley of despair. Don't give way to unbelief. "Faith comes by hearing."

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be explaining how our faith must be expressed.

Radio Program

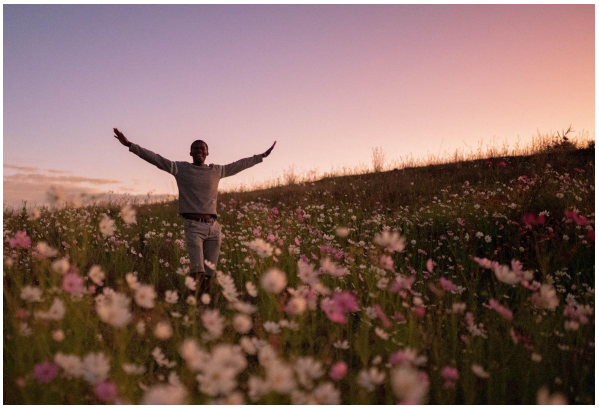
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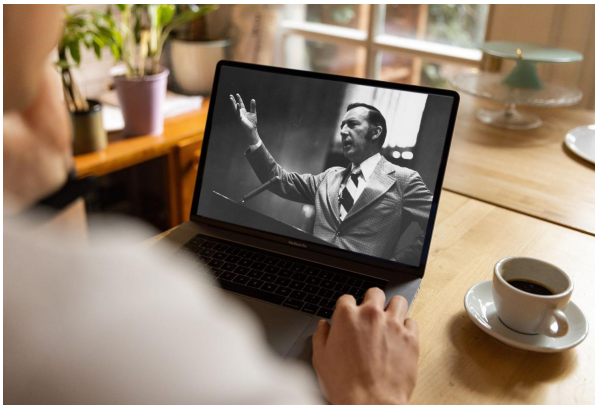
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