

Our Responsibility to All Nations



God's Abundance (Part 19)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, as we continue to study together our many-sided theme: God's Abundance.

In my talks this week we've been focusing on the purposes for which God makes His abundance available to us. There is a direct ratio between what we receive from God and what He expects from us. Jesus states this principle in Luke 12:48:

> "...from everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked." (NIV)

So the more we receive from God, the more God expects in return from us. It's good to think in terms of receiving God's abundance but we always need to bare in mind that the more we receive of God's abundance, the more we have to give out of God's abundance. And as I have said already in my previous talks God's abundance is made available to us not for our own selfish end but for every good work.

And I have spoken in my two previous talks about two main areas in which we are required by God to show our good works.

The first is to the poor, especially to widows and orphans. This is a mark of pure religion accepted by God—to remember the widows and the orphans and to care for the poor.

The second which I spoke about yesterday was our obligation to the Jewish people. I pointed out on the basis of the words of Jesus and of Paul that all those of us who are Christians from other racial backgrounds owe our entire spiritual inheritance to one nation—the Jewish people. The Scripture says we are under an obligation to do what is in our power to repay our debt to the Jewish people.

Today I'm going to deal with a third area of responsibility—one that extends literally to the ends of the earth: our responsibility to all nations. I would like to begin with the final commission of Jesus as He gave it to His disciples after His resurrection at the close of Matthew's

gospel. In Matthew chapter 28 verses 18 through 20:

> "Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.'" (NIV)

That was really the final commission of Jesus. At the end of His earthly ministry what did He ask of His disciples? He said: "Go and make disciples of all nations." But first of all He said: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." He said: "Through my death and resurrection [this is the implication of His word] I have obtained back for you the authority which was forfeited by man's transgression and fall. Now you are in a position to exercise that authority on my behalf and in my name." And He said: "The way in which I want you to exercise this authority is to go and make disciples of all nations and then baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and then teach them to obey everything I have commanded you." And then He closed with these words: "Surely I will be with you always to the very end of the age." There is a promise. But I do believe that promise really only applies to those who obey the command. He says: "Go and make disciples, and I will be with you." His continuing presence with us is really dependent on our being willing to go and do what He said.

At the end of Mark's gospel we have a similar commission. Perhaps just a little wider in its wording. Mark chapter 16 verses 15 and 16 Jesus said to His disciples:

> "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. [That's a tremendous commission.] Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." (NIV)

You see, the destiny of all souls in all the earth is in the hands of us as the disciples of Jesus. We have to go and present them with the opportunity to be saved. What they do with that opportunity is their responsibility but our responsibility is to make the opportunity available to them. The way they respond to the gospel message will determine their eternal destiny. But how can we answer to God if we never give them the opportunity to make that commitment to the gospel.

The early disciples clearly understood what Jesus meant and they acted on it. The last two verses of Mark 16 read like this. Mark 16 verses 19 and 20:

> "After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it." (NIV)

It's significant, I think, that Jesus sat down. He sat down because He'd finished His task. This is emphasized also in the epistle to the Hebrews. After He had offered one sacrifice for sin forever He sat down. He sat down because His responsibility was fulfilled. Then the responsibility of the disciples came into operation. When Jesus sat down, it was their turn to go out and begin to do what He told them to do. He had obtained for them, and for all mankind, the possibility of eternal salvation—forgiveness of sins, eternal life, acceptance with God. That was His responsibility; He had fulfilled it. Now He transferred the responsibility to His disciples and they understood what He meant. They went out and preached everywhere. And it says because they obeyed the commission of Jesus, God confirmed their words with signs that followed it.

I've heard people say the signs don't follow today. And I heard somebody make a rather pithy comment on that which I'll just quote to you. He said, "The signs don't follow because people don't go. The signs are not promised to those that sit in church pews. They're promised to those who go and preach the gospel everywhere." Then he used this little analogy "It's hard to follow a parked car." So many Christians today are parked cars. Parked in some church pew, parked in some place where they accept no real responsibility for the rest of the world, where it is as though the words of Jesus had never been spoken.

I come from a military background. I think I understand something of military orders. And I know one principle of military orders. When an order is given, it's never withdrawn, it's always enforced until it's cancelled or it's replaced by another order. And Jesus said 19 centuries ago, "Go into all the world, preach the gospel to all creation." Those orders have never been withdrawn, they have never been cancelled. They are just as valid for us today as they were for the first disciples who heard them. And if the first disciples had not done what Jesus said, they would have been guilty of direct disobedience. If we do not do what Jesus says, we are guilty of direct disobedience just as much as they would have been.

Now let me go on to the very last words of Jesus spoken on earth before He was taken up to heaven. These were found in Acts chapter 1 verses 6 through 8. So it says about His

meeting with the disciples:

> "So when they met together, they [the disciples] asked Jesus, 'Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?' [Of course that was a very important question to Jewish believers.] He said to them: 'It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. [He said you are busy with something that isn't your business. But He said] You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'" (NIV)

And then it says when He was speaking those words, He was taken up and a cloud received Him out of their sight. What were the last words He spoke—"to the ends of the earth." I believe He intended those words to be imprinted on their minds with special force. They very last words they ever heard from His lips before He was taken out of their sight were "to the ends of the earth." That's where the heart of the Lord was. He was concerned that the entire world should hear the good news that He had died and risen from the dead and made salvation possible. They were busy with prophetic themes. They wanted to know if this was the time for the kingdom to be restored to Israel. He said: "Don't be too worried about that. You do what I tell you. You attend to your business; the Father will attend to His business." Those words, again, are just as valid for you and me today as they were for the first disciples as we consider our obligation as Christians to carry the message of the gospel to all nations and to the ends of the earth.

In closing I want to focus for a moment on the example of the words of the apostle Paul. This is what Paul says in Romans chapter 1 verses 14 and 15:

> "I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome." (NIV)

Paul said, "I am obligated. In other words I have a debt. I have a debt to Greeks, to the educated, to non-Greeks, to people who aren't educated, who can't read or write, to the wise, the sophisticated, the cultivated, the talented, to the foolish, the people who have nothing." Paul was saying, "It doesn't matter what kind of people they are. I don't have to decide whether they are worthy or unworthy, whether they're the kind of people who are likely to respond or not to respond." He said, "That's not my business. My business is to communicate the gospel. What they do with it is their business."

Now, again, I don't believe those words apply only to Paul. I believe they apply, in a measure, to every Christian. Every one of us is under an obligation. The Greeks, the non-Greeks, the wise, the foolish. It doesn't matter what kind of people. That is not our responsibility. It's not our responsibility what they do with the gospel. That's their responsibility but it is our responsibility to convey the gospel to them.

Now we cannot all be evangelists. We cannot all go to the utmost parts of the earth, but we can all have a commitment to be involved. It's a collective responsibility of the entire church of Jesus Christ.

As I close my talk today, I want to ask you—what is your objective in living? What are you living for? Are you desiring God's abundance? Are you praying for God to supply all your needs? Do you realize why abundance is given to you—that you may share with others.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. I'll be bringing my closing talk on this theme of God's abundance.

Radio Program

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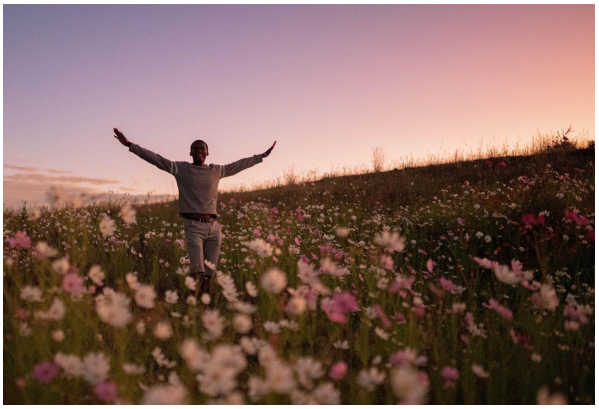

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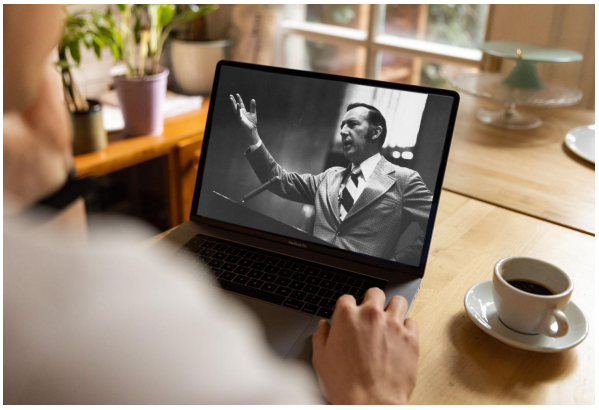

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