

A Father's Privilege



You and Your Household (Part 1)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you gain at the beginning of anew week, sharing with you Keys to Successful Living which God has placed in my hand through many years of personal experience and Christian ministry.

My theme for this week is: You and Your Household. It's a message of comfort and encouragement, especially for those of you who have members of your family who are not saved and living for God.

I frequently meet fellow Christians who are concerned about members of their family who are not saved. It may be a husband, a wife, parents, children, brothers or sisters, or other family members. Often I find that Christians who have this kind of concern become dispirited and discouraged. Sometimes they are in danger of losing their own faith and with it the joy of their salvation.

To all of you who are struggling with this kind of situation I want to offer, first of all, some words of warning and counsel. First, never let the devil use this means to rob you of the joy of your salvation. As long as you continue to radiate the peace and joy of salvation, your life is an ever present testimony and challenge to other members of your family. But if you become discouraged and lose your joy, then in a certain sense, instead of you drawing your unsaved family members into salvation, they are drawing you down out of it. So don't let that happen.

Second, do not give way to discouragement. This does not come from the Holy Spirit. It's very important to know that. The Holy Spirit is the Comforter, He's the Encourager, He does not discourage the children of God. If you are fighting discouragement you need to bear in mind that it does not come from the Holy Spirit.

Third, when everything around you seems to give way, you can still turn to one great, unfailing source of encouragement, the Scriptures. Here is what Paul says about the Scriptures in Romans 15:4:

> "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the

> encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."

Isn't that a beautiful statement? Everything that was written in the Bible in the past was written to teach us so that we might have encouragement from the Scriptures.

The next verse calls God the God of endurance and encouragement. So let God help you by imparting to you endurance and encouragement. Take encouragement from the Scriptures. It's to this source of endurance and encouragement, the Scriptures, that I am now going to direct you.

The first example will be the Philippian jailer. We need briefly to review the background of this situation. Paul and Silas had been preaching the gospel for the first time in Philippi. Paul had cast an evil spirit out of a young woman who was a fortune teller. The whole city had been thrown into an uproar, the magistrates had siezed them, had them beaten, and then put them in the maximum security jail with their feet in the stocks. So there they were, about midnight, but instead of moaning and complaining it says they were singing hymns and praising God and the other prisoners were listening. That always blesses me. I am sure they had never heard prisoners like that in that prison before.

And then God intervened, supernaturally, with a tremendous earthquake which shook the foundations of the prison, opened all the doors and loosed everybody's bonds. The jailer awoke, thought the prisoners had escaped and was about to commit suicide because he was answerable with his life for the security of the prisoners. But Paul saw what he was doing, called out to him to stop, and told him all the prisoners were still there. Now we will read on this account in Acts 16:29-31:

> "The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, 'Men, what must I do to be saved?' They replied, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.'"

Now I want you to notice that the jailer's question was only for himself. He said, "What must I do to be saved?" But Paul and Silas, as the spokesmen of God in this situation, gave him a much wider answer than he had asked for. They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household." He hadn't even asked for his household, but they promised him if he would he believe, not only would he be saved, but all his household. So, God's answer went much further than his question. God assured him of the salvation of his whole household.

Now, it's important to understand that this expresses the very nature of God. That's why God gave him that assurance. You see, God cares for families. Bear that in mind. He does not just care for individuals. He has a special fatherly care for families because families are the expression of His own Father nature. Let me quote these beautiful words of Paul, a prayer in Ephesians 3:14-15:

> "For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name."

Notice that, every family, both in heaven and on earth, derives it's name from the name of God the Father. The Greek word for family there is directly connected with the Greek word for father. So every family in heaven and on earth, derives its name from God the father. God is a God of families. God has compassion on the lonely. He doesn't like to see people lonely. In Psalm 68:5-6, the Psalmist says this:

> "A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families."

You see, God wants everybody to be part of a happy family. That's the nature of God and God's provision of salvation expresses His nature. It's not merely you, it's you and your household.

Now I want to look briefly at the example of two men in the Old Testament, who enjoyed this family salvation which is what God offers to us. The first of these men was Noah. We'll read the background of Noah and of the time in which he lived, and then we'll see God's specific and particular provision, not only for Noah, but for his family. We will read now from Genesis 6:5-8:

> "The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. So the Lord said, 'I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth, men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air, for I am grieved that I have made them.' [But the next verse says,] But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord."

Noah was a different man from all the other men of his generation, and God looked on Noah with favor, with mercy, and prepared to save Noah. But he did not prepare to save Noah just on his own. It was Noah and his household. In the next chapter of Genesis, chapter 7:1, this is what the Lord says to Noah:

> "Then the Lord said to Noah, 'Enter the ark, you and all your household; for you alone I have seen to be righteous before Me in this time.'"

That's an important statement. "Enter the ark, you and all your household; for you alone I have seen to be righteous before Me in this time." It was Noah's righteousness alone that caused God to spare him. But He did not spare him alone, he spared him and his household. That's the Father nature of God. "I've seen you to be righteous. Come into the ark, the place of safety and salvation with all your household." I want to impress upon you that is the very nature of God. We do not have to argue or plead with God to care for our families. God already cares for our families.

And here's another example from the Old Testament, Joshua. This is what Joshua said to Israel near the close of his own earthly life. Joshua 24:15:

> "And if it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your father served which were beyond the River, [that's the Euphrates] or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Note those last words, "...as for me and my house, my household, my family, we will serve the Lord." You see, as a father, Joshua had both the privilege and the responsibility to make the decision for his household, just like the Philippian jailer. The Philippian jailer said, "What must I do to be saved?" The answer was, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household."

Joshua understood the nature of God. He realized that as father and leader of his home, he was given the God-given privilege of making a salvation decision for his whole household, and he did. He said, "As for me and my household, we're going to serve the Lord."

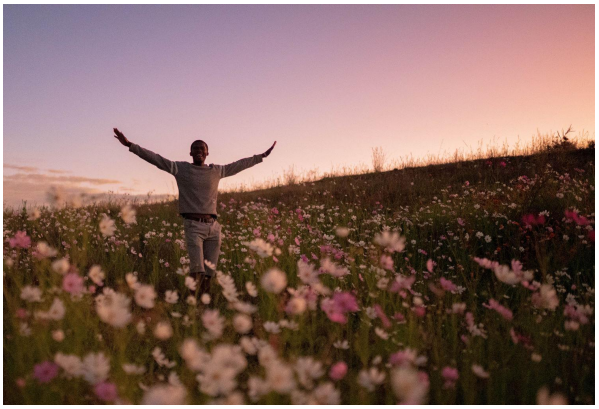
We need to bear in mind that in each of the three cases we've looked at today, it was the choice of the father that was decisive for his whole family. A father has the privilege to choose salvation, not merely for himself, but for his household, his family.

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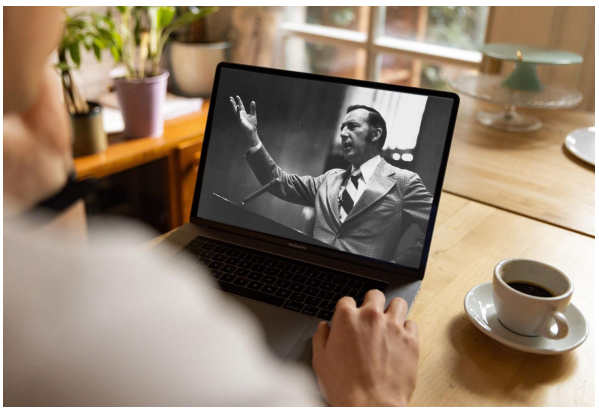
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