

Spiritual Rebirth



From Time to Eternity (Part 3)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we continue with our theme for this week: "From Time to Eternity." I trust you've been finding it helpful. In my previous talks, I've referred to the two different realms: Time and eternity. I've pointed out that eternity is not just a long period of time, it's another mode of being in which the categories that we use to describe time do not apply. And then I went on to say that God is an eternal being. So whenever we come in contact with God, we come in contact with eternity. God does not indwell time, He indwells eternity, but out of eternity He operates in time.

And then we looked, yesterday, at the account of man's creation. We saw there that eternity and time came together. Man has two sources of his being, from below, dust, temporal, carnal, material, from above, God's breath breathed into Him, an element of the eternal. This explains the continuing tension we all experience. There's something in us that belongs below, that draws us down. But there's something in us that doesn't want to go down, that says, "I belong in the other direction. I've come, somehow, from above." I mentioned Plato's allegory of the two horses that draw the chariot of the soul. The black horse that's always pulling downward, the white horse that's always drawing upwards. That's a little allegory, but it pictures that conflict in man because of his origin, because of the two opposite sources, earth from below so that he's of the earth, earthy. But that's not the whole story. Many men today just want to say, "Well, I am just earth, I am just dust and that's all there is to it." But in their hearts they know that that isn't true. There's another element, it's the eternal element breathed into man from God.

Now man turned away from God, but God did not abandon him. God jealously longs for that spirit which He's caused to dwell in us. So God sent Jesus to draw man back to Himself.

In my talk today I'm going to explain what takes place when man responds to God's drawing. First of all, we need to see that, separated from God in rebellion, man is spiritually dead, not physically dead, though physical death is an ultimate consequence. You see, man's nature is, if I may use a simple analogy, is like a battery that's been disconnected from the source of power. So it can go on for a time, but ultimately it will run down, that's physical death. But spiritual death took place instantly when man was cut off from God. God said to Adam, "The day you disobey Me and eat of that tree in the

middle of the garden, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, that day you'll die." Now Adam lived more than 900 years, but he died spiritually the day he rebelled against God. This is what Paul says in Ephesians 2:1-3, speaking about all of us in our condition of rebellion, cut off from God:

> "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. [You see, when we are disobedient we open up to another spirit that is not the spirit of God, the spirit of the enemy, the spirit of Satan, the spirit of rebellion. And then Paul goes on to say, and he's very honest about himself…] All of us also lived among them at one time [Jew or Gentile, religious or non-religious, all of us at one time were in that category, spiritually dead, cut off from the life of God. We lived among them at one time…] gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath."

That's a picture of the entire human race cut off from God by it's rebellion. However, as I've said already, God did not abandon man, but He jealously longed for that which He had breathed into man, His own Spirit and breath, and He sent Jesus to draw man back to Himself.

Now, through receiving Jesus Christ man can be reborn spiritually. He can receive back the spiritual life that he lost through his transgression. Here's an account of what happens when we receive Christ in John 1:10-13:

> "He [Jesus] was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ['His own' was creation, but especially the Jewish people. But even His own people did not receive Him. Thank God that's not the end of the story…] Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."

Notice that last phrase, "…born of God." How does this come about in our experience? It comes about through receiving Him, through repenting of our rebellion, acknowledging that Jesus paid the penalty on the cross for our rebellion, turning back to God in faith, receiving Jesus. In Jesus we receive eternal life. A new life begins in us. A rebirth takes place. We are born of God and being born of God we become the children of God.

Jesus spoke also of this experience in John 3, talking with Nicodemus, a learned Jewish teacher and ruler:

> "Jesus answered, 'I tell you the truth, unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'"

There are no options. If we desire to regain contact with God and with eternity, there is only one way, You must be born again. That's not physical birth, that's spiritual rebirth. Nicodemus couldn't understand that, so Jesus explained. He said this, "Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to Spirit." So this is a spiritual rebirth. As we turn back to God in repentance and faith, the Spirit of God revives that spirit which was dead, which was cut off in transgression and rebellion, and we are reborn, we become children of God. This is God's remedy. This is the way that man can satisfy that desire in him for the eternal. You must be born again.

The New Testament has much to say about this experience of spiritual rebirth and renewal. I'll read a passage from Paul's epistle to Titus in which he also speaks about this at some length and makes it so very vivid. Titus 3:3-7:

> "At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. [What a description of the world without God. Foolish and yet thinking themselves so clever. Disobedient and even sometimes religious and disobedient, deceived, slaves of various passions and pleasures, living in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another, that's a description of the world today. Full of malice, envy, passion, the pursuit of pleasure, hatred. Then thank God there's a 'but', the next verse…] But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit."

Notice the decisive description there, salvation comes through the washing of rebirth. We are born again from above

by the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God rekindles that life of God which was in us through creation. It's also a washing, it's a cleansing, it's a washing away of our guilt, our sin, our uncleanness. And then Paul also uses the word "renewal." It's a fresh start, it's a beginning again. "If any man be in Christ..." Paul says elsewhere, "he is a new creation. The old things have passed away, all things have become new."

And going back to Titus there, it's a renewal by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God. You see, God is Spirit. God moves by His Spirit. God comes into our lives by His Spirit. God breathed His Spirit or His breath into the first man there in the garden. And when we are dead in trespasses and sins, the only way that life can come back to us is by the Holy Spirit. And then Paul continues there in Titus 3:6:

> "Whom [that is, the Holy Spirit] he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, [Notice there's first rebirth, and then there's the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, the equipment with divine supernatural power to live for God. And Paul sums up the results in the next verse:] So that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life."

Notice that last phrase, "eternal life." That's what we all crave. That's what something in us is constantly telling us. There's nothing else can satisfy. You must be back in touch with eternity, with eternal life. But, we don't know how to do it until the Holy Spirit reveals Jesus and we see Jesus, and in Him the Holy Spirit makes us alive again. We are born again. And then the Holy Spirit comes upon us in His fullness to equip us for service for God.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this same time. Tomorrow I'll be explaining the ongoing tension between the spiritual and the material, and how God works through this.

Radio Program

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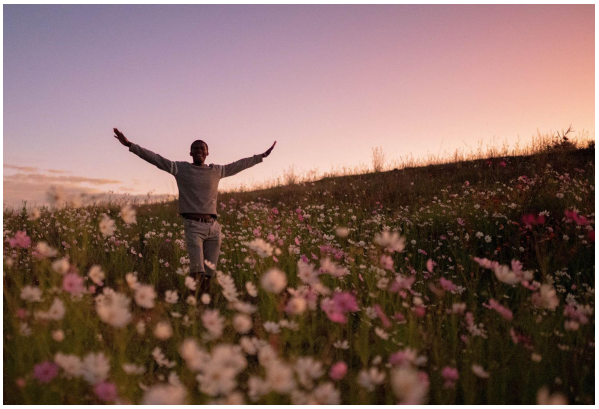

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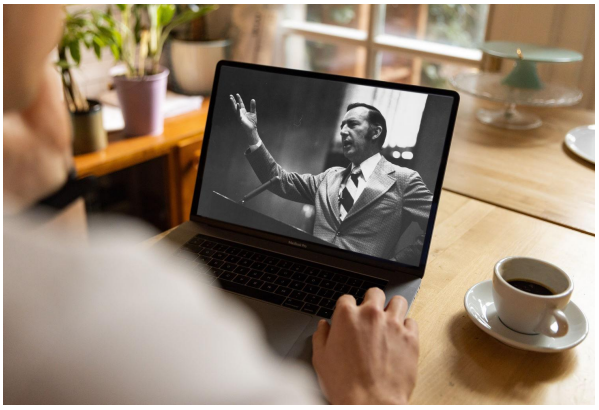

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