

Spiritual vs Material



From Time to Eternity (Part 4)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, sharing with you precious insights out of Scripture that have made the difference between success and failure in my life, and can do the same in yours.

Our theme this week is: "From Time to Eternity", a theme which will help you to extract joy out of tragedy and purpose out of that which seems purposeless.

In my previous talks I've explained that there is an eternal element in man, breathed into him by God at creation. Through man's rebellion, he was cut off from God's eternal being, he became spiritually dead in transgressions. But, through receiving Christ he can be spiritually reborn. This spiritual rebirth in man can only take place through Jesus Christ. This was the reason that Jesus came to seek and to save that in man which had been lost to God. And that was the reason that Jesus died on the cross. He paid the penalty for man's transgressions.

And then in Christ, God offers back to man eternal life. The Scripture says, "Those who received Him were born of God." Speaking to Nicodemus, Jesus said, "You must be born again, or born from above." He said, "Flesh gives birth to flesh, but spirit gives birth to spirit." So a Spirit from God recreates the spirit in man through faith in Jesus Christ.

From rebirth onward, we are subjected to that ongoing inner tension of which I've spoken about. Our regenerated spirit reaches out toward God and spiritual things; but our fleshly nature still binds us to this world and to material things. So in my talk today I'm going to share with you what the Bible has to say about this tension and how God uses it to wean us from time to eternity. It's very important for all of us to understand that this tension is something that God uses. We may find it, at times, very painful very frustrating. But we have to see with the eye of faith that God is using it for His gracious purposes in our lives.

There's a beautiful message of comfort that's found in the prophet Isaiah chapter 40, where God comforts His people, but He does it in a way that doesn't immediately appear to be very comforting. He does it by turning us from the temporal to the eternal. This is the passage in Isaiah chapter 40:1, 6-8:

> "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. A voice says, 'Cry out.' And I said, 'What shall I cry?' [The prophet has been told to comfort God's people, but he doesn't know what to say. He waits for God to give Him the message of comfort. Now this is the message that's given him. I want to point out to you that at first it doesn't appear to be the least bit comforting.] 'All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the Lord blows on them. Surely the people are grass. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever.'"

Now you might well say, as I've said in the past, "What comfort is there in that? That's a sad message." We're all like grass. We bloom for just a brief moment and then the breath of God, or the Spirit of God, Himself, breathes on us and that beauty, that enjoyment, that exhilaration, all withers and dies. What comfort is there in that? None! That's not the message of comfort. That's just facing us with facts. It's bringing us face to face with reality. A reality that most people try to go through life avoiding the fact that we're just here for a little while and we're withering. But the message of comfort is in the last phrase, "but the word of our God stands forever." There's eternity through the Word of God. We can get back in touch with eternity. We can receive eternity. We do not need to be merely creatures that wither like grass and die. There is a way back. It's through the eternal word of God.

Now, I'm going to explain something that I've learned myself, out of painful experience. This is not just a theory, believe me. I've proved it in my experience.

God allows us to enjoy the beauty of the temporal. Then He, Himself, causes it to wither. Why? To direct us to the eternal, His word and its promises. He lets us get a glimpse of beauty and then it withers. Why? Because that beauty is transient. It's not permanent. God doesn't want us rooted in this world. He doesn't want us hung up in the things of time. He shows us the beauty in those things, but His purpose is to turn us from the temporal to the eternal, and this happens in the lives of all of us. I'll give you just a few quick examples. Think of a rose in bloom. Could anything be more lovely that its sight and its fragrance. And yet we know that in a few days it will wither.

I remember I had an examination once at the University of Cambridge, in which, of all things, I had to translate a French poem into an English poem. I can't remember the French poem, but I can remember the English translation that I gave. It went like this, "It budded and grew as roses must do, and died at high noon." I can't remember the rest, but you see that's it. "It budded and grew and died at high noon." That's the way roses are. Just at the peak of their beauty they die. What are we to learn from this? That there's another kind beauty of which the rose is just a faint reflection. This is the beauty of the eternal.

Or take something like an animal. I'm a great lover of dogs. I'm not quite the same in my attitude about cats, but take something like a kitten or a puppy. What is more interesting, you want to fondle them, you want to play with them, you want to enjoy, and yet let 12 or 14 years pass and you come to that point of decision, the poor creature is sick, it can hardly walk. Is it more merciful to keep it alive or to have it put away. And I've had to do this myself. I was a great lover of poodles. I had two of my poodles put away. That's a wrench on your heart. Why does God permit that? He's weaning you from the temporal to the eternal.

And something on a totally different level, a human relationship with a friend or spouse. Thirty or forty years of happiness and fellowship and then one is taken. What is left? In the natural, nothing but loneliness and sorrow. I've passed through that experience, but I learned the lesson. God permits us to have these temporal enjoyments, but He wants to turn us from them, even by disappointment and frustration, to the eternal. And I thank God I came out of that experience, the death of my first wife, with my mind focused on the eternal only through the Word of God. If I had not turned to the Word of God, I could have become sad, lonely and embittered. I want to commend you to that eternal Word of God.

It is most important how we respond when disappointment or tragedy or frustration or loss come in our lives. If we focus on the temporal and the material, the result will be cynicism. And there's a very vivid example of this actually in the Old Testament in the person of none other than King Solomon, the wisest of men. And yet he wrote one book, Ecclesiastes, in which he had turned his eyes away from the eternal. And he was a man who had everything, as they say, in this life. And yet this book of Ecclesiastes is a book of cynicism and disillusionment. Why? I'll tell you the reason, it's because he had turned his eyes away from the eternal and focused them only on the things of time. And he had the best and the most beautiful of everything and yet he was not satisfied. These are the opening verses of this book of Ecclesiastes 1:2-3:

> "'Vanity of vanities,' says the Preacher, 'Vanity of vanities! All is vanity.' [And that opening verse, the word 'vanity' or 'futility' occurs five times. The next verse.] What advantage does man have in all his work

Five times in one verse we have that word “vanity” or “futility.” The word actually occurs 36 times in the whole book which only has 12 chapters. Why is that? Because there’s another phrase in the book that occurs 29 times. It’s the phrase, “under the sun.” Solomon had taken his eyes away from the spiritual and the eternal, and he focused only on things under the sun, that is, in the temporal, transient, material world. And there he could find no ultimate satisfaction, in spite of all his riches and all his privileges. He was at that time a cynic, a despondent man.

You see, everything depends on how we respond to life’s difficulties and disappointments. We can turn purely to the material and the temporal, and we’ll be like Solomon, we’ll be cynics. We’ll be embittered. Or we can let life’s disappointments and life’s tragedies, the withering of that which is beautiful, we can let that turn us to the eternal. We can hear God’s word of comfort in which He says to us, “I created all these things. I created everything beautiful in its time. But it’s only in its time. It’s temporal. It doesn’t last.”

God says to you and to me, “There’s something in you, My son, My daughter, which will never be satisfied with the things of time.” In the things of time you get a glimpse of satisfaction, but not the reality. And so there has to come a moment or moments in your life where you turn away from the things of time to the eternal, to God’s Word and its eternal truth and eternal comfort.

Now I may be speaking to some who are right in that crisis. Some bitterness, some disappointment, some tragedy, some bereavement. I beseech you. Don’t just look at the material. Hear God’s Word of comfort. Receive it. Turn your eyes from the material to the eternal. Believe God’s Word and you will find everlasting comfort.

Our time is up for today. I’ll be back with you again tomorrow at this same time. Tomorrow I’ll be sharing about the ultimate satisfaction which God has provided for man’s reborn spirit.

Radio Program

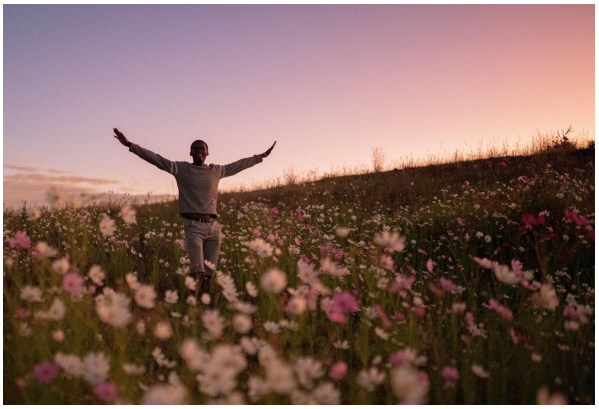
Transcript: TS-R124-104-ENG
Last Updated: 12 Apr 2023
Website: derekprince.com

Bible Teaching Resources



Books

Illuminate and expand your understanding of the Bible with the Derek Prince collection of Christian books.



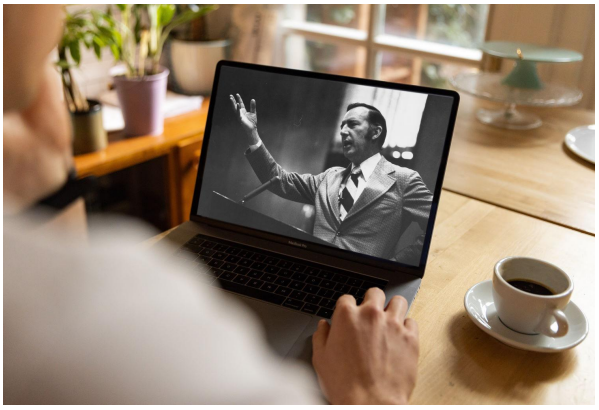
Daily Devotionals

Browse free biblically inspired daily devotionals by Derek Prince for practical teachings to uplift your Christian faith.



Legacy Radio

Listen to inspiring 10-minute messages and connect faith to life with the Derek Prince Legacy Radio podcast.



Sermons

Watch original and digitally remastered sermons by Derek Prince. Includes full message transcripts (free download).



Official App

Available free, download the official Derek Prince Ministries app and equip your faith, anywhere, anytime.



Proclamations

Declare life and experience the transformative power of God's Word with our bible-based Proclamations.

Copyright © Derek Prince Ministries