YOUR ETERNAL OPPORTUNITY

This is Derek Prince bringing you a message from Jerusalem. I want to speak to you about two different persons who can affect the lives of every one of us. Jesus told us about these two persons in the Gospel of John chapter 10 and verse 10. He said:

> The thief only comes to steal, kill and to destroy. But I have come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly.

So, there are the two persons—the thief, the one who comes to steal, to kill and to destroy—and Jesus, the one who comes to give life and life more abundant. The name of the thief is Satan or the devil, and we need to bear in mind, all of us, that the devil never comes to do us any good. There is no goodness in the devil and there is no badness in Jesus. Jesus is totally good. The devil is totally bad.

Jesus compares the devil to a thief. We're all familiar with thieves. At some point in our lives we've encountered or had dealings with a thief, someone who came to steal. Thieves do not advertise who they are. They do not come to the front door and say, "I'm a thief. I've come to take everything good that you own." Usually they work at night in darkness. Often they break in by force and they take things that do not belong to them while others are sleeping. Or a thief may operate in a different way. He may pretend to be a good person, a friend. He may persuade you that he has some particular business venture which you can join which will be very profitable for you. You join with him in that venture, you invest your money, and one day this partner of yours, this thief, has disappeared and taken all the money with him, and he leaves you nothing but the debts to pay.

That's how Satan operates. He comes in in the dark, at times by force, when we're under pressure through fear or terror or lust. He moves in and takes the things that are most precious in our lives. Or he may pose as a friend and offer us all sorts of inducements to be friendly with him. He may promise us money, pleasure, success—but after we've been working with him for a little while, one day we wake up to find out that he's absconded with all that was good and left us with nothing but the bad debts.

You may say to yourself, “Well, what does the devil, Satan, the thief, aim to take from me?” I want to suggest to you that he takes certain wonderful things. He takes your purity, your innocence, your sense of being free from guilt; and he leaves you feeling dirty, defiled, guilty. He takes your health and leaves you sick and weak. He takes your money and strips you of your wealth. He takes your friends and leaves you destitute without anyone to trust in, and he strips you of your family. He breaks up the closest, most intimate, personal relationships in our lives, and he leaves us alone, defiled, unhappy, without any person to turn to.

Have you ever seen somebody suck a piece of fruit—let’s say a lemon or an orange? They suck the fruit out and then they throw the skin away. That’s how the devil treats us. He sucks out anything that’s good and then he just throws us in the gutter, and we’re left helpless without any person to turn to that we know of.

But then we need to bear in mind there is another person—the life-giver, the one who came to give life—Jesus the Son of God. But He says, “I have come that they may have life and that they may have it more abundantly.” Jesus made this provision for us through His sacrificial death on the cross. He came as the Son of God and the Son of man. He became a man just like each one of us. And in the purposes of God and in the mercy of God, Jesus took upon Himself all our guilt, all our shame, all our defeat, and He died in our place. He died a criminal’s death. He was put to shame. He was unjustly treated. In a sense, all the injustice in the world came upon Him as He hung upon the cross and then He perished, He died. He laid down His life, but that’s not the end of the story. On the third day, God the Father raised Him from the dead, gave Him the position of the highest honor in the universe, the seat of all authority and power, made Him Lord and Messiah, Savior for the whole human race.

And so if you are tired of being stripped by the devil, if you’re tired of being the prey of the devil, if you’ve come to realize by now that the devil only comes to steal, to kill and to destroy, and you no longer want to be the plaything, the victim, of the devil, there is someone you can turn to. It is the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, who gave His life for you, who died that you might live, who comes with nothing but love, nothing but kindness, nothing but mercy. He’s totally opposite to the devil. As I said, I’ll say again,

there's no goodness in the devil, and there's no badness in Jesus. If you're disillusioned and weary and tired and maybe sick, you don't know where to turn. I want to tell you that there is still hope, there is a way out. You can turn to Jesus.

I'm speaking from personal experience. More than fifty years ago I was a professor of philosophy at Cambridge University in Britain, but I hadn't found what I was looking for, the answer to life's problems. And in the middle of the night while I was serving in the British Army in World War II, Jesus revealed Himself to me. I had a direct, personal encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ, and He totally changed my life in that one encounter. In one hour in the middle of the night I was changed by the power of God. I received a revelation of Jesus Christ. I came to know that He is the Son of God, that He is the Savior, that He has the power to save and to cleanse and deliver and to make us different. I wasn't made perfect that night, but I was radically and permanently changed, and that change has lasted in me now more than fifty years. So I can say to you from personal experience: if you're weary of a life that isn't satisfying, that's frustrating, that leaves you empty and uncertain and perplexed, then there is an alternative. There is another way to turn. You can turn to the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, the One who died on the cross for you and rose again. You need to understand what He did for you on the cross. This is the most important message that you can ever hear. Listen carefully.

On the cross Jesus took your sin. He took your guilt. He took your shame. He also bore your sicknesses and your pains. He became a curse in your place and He died in utter darkness alone—abandoned by man, forsaken by God. Why? Not because He had done anything evil. He had never done any evil, but He took our place, the place of the sinner, the place of the rebel, the place of the one who has been alienated from God. He died in our place. Because of God's mercy, God made a provision. We could not save ourselves. We had no way out of our problems, but Jesus made that provision in our place and for us. He took our place. This is something that we'll never fully understand. We'll never understand why God loved us so much. But the Bible says:

> God loved the world so much that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Now the devil will do everything in his power to deceive you, to hold onto you, to keep you under his control. But there is another thing that you can do. You can turn away from the devil. As God speaks to your heart, as God inclines your heart toward Him—maybe He's doing that right now, then this is your opportunity to turn away from the darkness, from the frustration, from the misery, from the sense of being unworthy and unloved and rejected. Men may have rejected you. Sometimes your own family may have rejected you. People in authority may have rejected you, but there's One who will never reject you, that is the Lord Jesus. He loved you so much that He died in your place, and then when He paid the full penalty for all of our sins He rose again from the dead. And now He says:

> Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him, and will have dinner with him and he with Me.

So there's your great eternal opportunity. It may only come to you just once in a lifetime. Only once in a lifetime may you be confronted with the Lord Jesus, but if you are confronted with Him as you hear this message, then open your heart to Him.

When I was confronted with Jesus, when I heard the truth about Jesus for the first time in my life, I realized that I had no right to expect that I would ever hear again. I realized then that I had to make a decision either for or against, either to receive or to reject the Lord Jesus. And by the grace and mercy of God, I made the right decision. I decided to let Jesus come into my life and take control of it and change me wherever I needed to be changed. And I want to testify to you that He's faithful. He hears our cries. He answers our prayers.

Later on, I was sick with a disease which the doctors in Egypt (where I was at that time) could not heal, but I turned to the Scriptures, I turned to the Bible, and I read words in the Bible that told me that God's Word could be life to me and health to all my flesh. And I decided to take God at His word. I decided I would take God's Word as my medicine. And I did that in simple faith. Still in the Army, still a hospital patient, I began to take God's Word, the Bible, as my medicine three times daily after each meal,

as patients take their medicine in hospital. Within a few months in a very bad climate, extremely hot in the Sudan, I was permanently healed of that infirmity. So I testify to you that God is good. There's no badness in God. There's no goodness in the devil. If you remain in the hands of the devil he'll treat you like that piece of orange or that lemon. He'll squeeze everything he can get out of you and then he'll throw the rind away and you'll be abandoned.

But you do not need to take that wrong route. You do not need to remain under the devil's influence. Remember he's a thief. He only sneaks in, he only comes in secretly. He doesn't advertise who he is. It's only after he's done what he wants to do in your life that you discover how evil he is. But remember, there is an alternative. I want to say that again and again. I want to impress upon you there is an alternative. You do not have to remain a slave of the devil. He may have taken many precious things from you, but if you will turn back to Jesus, He will restore them. He'll restore your innocence, your purity. He'll deliver you from that sense of guilt and shame. He'll restore your health. He'll give you new relationships, people who really love you and care for you and are faithful to you. And, more important than all that, He'll give you eternal life, the very life of God Himself. When you have received Jesus and He has become your life, you can say, "I'm going to live as long as God Himself lives, because God is my life. I can no more die than God can die." That's eternal life. It's the gift of God. You cannot earn it.

The apostle Paul said:

The wages of sin is death.

Your wages are what you deserve. What you deserve for all the sins that you've committed—just as I have—is death. But then Paul went on to say:

But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

You cannot earn that gift. You'll never be good enough, but you can receive it by simple faith as a free gift. You have to make the decision. I'm pleading with those of you who hear my voice now—each one of you no matter who you are, no matter what your background. God loved the whole world, He

loved every race, He loved every color, He loved every nationality. There's no respect of persons with God, there's no favoritism. The Bible says:

> Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Those are clear words that God Himself stands behind them. So think of Jesus now, no longer a thief sneaking in surreptitiously to take all that's good. But think of Him as an honored visitor who stands outside the door and knocks. He will not force His way in. The devil will force his way in, comes in whether you want him or not. But if you want Jesus in your life you have to invite Him. He said:

> Behold I'm standing at the door and knocking. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come in to him, and I will sup with him [or have dinner with him] and he with Me.

So, if you're hearing His voice right now, make up your mind. You're not just going to listen and do nothing about it, but you're going to invite Him in. You're going to open up the door of your heart. You're going to say, "Lord Jesus, I need You. I need to be saved. I need forgiveness. I need cleansing. I need healing. Come into my heart, come into my life."

And then it's interesting what Jesus says. He says, "I will have dinner with him and then he will have dinner with me." So, first of all, when Jesus comes in He takes what you have to offer Him. It may be very little, but He expects you to treat Him like an honored guest, to offer Him whatever you have to offer, to give Him your life, your talents, your time, your strength. They may seem very meager, but He expects that from you. But when you have given Him what you have, then He gives you what He has, and you become a guest of the King. You become a child of God. You become a member of a royal family. You have an inheritance in the Kingdom of God.

I've met so many people who are frustrated. They feel lonely, rejected, worth nothing. But I've been able to show them that through faith in Jesus they can become God's children. They can join the best family in the universe.

I remember years ago I was at a meeting about to preach and I was going very quickly because I was

a little late and a lady was coming the opposite way and we actually ran into one another, we collided. And then she said to me, "Mr. Prince, I was praying that if God wanted me to speak to you, we'd meet." So I said, "Well, we've met, but I can only give you two minutes because I have to be somewhere else."

So she started to tell me her story, how badly her life had gone. And I said after one minute, "Listen, I understand your problem. I can only give you just one minute. Say this prayer after me." And I led her in a prayer. She didn't know what I was going to say, but I gave her a prayer by which she began to thank God that she was a child of God, that God loved her, that she loved God, that she belonged to the best family in the universe, that she was not rejected, that she was not unwanted, she was not a second-class person, she was very, very precious in the sight of God. And when I'd led her in that prayer I said, "Now, I have to go, but you just say thank you to God."

About a month later I got a letter from that lady and she said, "Those few words that you spoke with me when we met have completely changed my life. I'm a totally different person." You see, what had happened to her is she realized what it was to be a child of God. All her life she'd felt inferior, she'd felt rejected, nobody really seemed to care for her, but suddenly, by the revelation of the Holy Spirit through that simple prayer that I prayed, she came to realize that she could be a child of God, that she belonged to the best family in the universe.

And I want to say that to each one of you who's listening to me. You have that wonderful opportunity. You have that wonderful privilege through faith in Jesus, through inviting Jesus into your heart—you can become a child of God Himself. You can become a member of the best family in the universe. You no longer need to feel guilty, unclean, rejected, unworthy, frustrated. He can deal with all that. I'm not promising that if you become a believer in Jesus you'll always have an easy life. That's not true. Christians have many problems like other people. But we have with us the Problem Solver, the one who can see us through our problem and we can have the blessed and wonderful assurance of the presence of Jesus with us in every situation, in every circumstance. No matter how difficult the circumstances may be outside, inside we have Jesus, we have eternal life, we are the children of God. That's the most wonderful possibility in the universe and it's yours today if you will just respond. Jesus is

standing at the door. He's knocking. He's saying, "Let me in. I've not come to take. I've come to give, to give life and life more abundant."

If you can feel your heart pounding, if you can feel that something is happening, that something new is in front of you, I want you to take this opportunity. I want you to pray a prayer after me in which you will invite Jesus into your own heart and into your own life.

Remember what I said about the reason for His death just once more. He died as a sin offering for the whole human race. He was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. All the world's sin—including your sin and my sin—came upon Him as He hung on the cross, as He died in darkness abandoned, forsaken. It was not for what He had done, it is for what we had done. He became our substitute. He took our place so that now our sins have already been punished, our guilt has already been dealt with, and we can be acquitted, we can be set free, we can become the children of God.

Why should you refuse an offer like that? I remember the first time I was confronted with the Gospel. I was sitting pondering what to do and something said in my ear, "If this is something good, why shouldn't you have it?" And I want to say this to each one of you who's listening. If this is something good, why shouldn't you have it? You do not need to stay outside in the dark. You do not need to be rejected, unwanted, lonely. You do not need to feel guilty and condemned. Jesus has dealt with all that by His death on the cross.

So now I want to offer you the opportunity to say a prayer after me. You will not be praying to me. You'll be praying to the Lord Jesus Christ, and in this prayer you will invite Him to come into your heart and to become your Savior, to give you the gift of eternal life, to forgive your sins and cleanse you in His blood. So if you want to do that, and I urge you to do it, just say these words after me. I'll say them slowly, sentence by sentence, so that you can repeat them after me. Say these words. Remember you're you speaking not to me but to Jesus.

"Lord Jesus Christ. I believe that You are the Son of God, and that You are the only way to God. You died on the cross for my sins and You rose again from the dead. I'm sorry now for all

my sins. I ask You to forgive me, to cleanse me in Your precious blood. I open my heart to You, Lord Jesus. I invite You in. By simple faith, I receive You now as my Savior, and I confess You as my Lord. Come into my heart. Give me eternal life. Make me a child of God."

Now all you can do after that is thank Him. That's the purest expression of faith. So begin to do that, no matter where you are. Don't be embarrassed, don't feel self-conscious. Just begin to say quietly or out loud, "Thank You, Jesus; thank You, Jesus. I believe You have come in. I believe You have saved me. I believe I am a child of God. I believe I have eternal life."

Now, there's certain things that you'll need to do to strengthen the life that you've received. You need to take time to read the Scriptures every day, and if you don't have a Bible, all you need to do is write in to the address of this radio station and we will send you a free Bible in your own language. Then you can begin to read the Word of God every day. And as you read God's Word you also need to take time each day to pray—not to pray something religious and complicated, but just to talk simply to God. Tell Him you love Him. Thank Him for what He's done for you. Commit your problems to Him. Ask Him to guide you and He will do it.

And then, another thing that's important is you need to confess your faith in Jesus. Nobody's asking you to become a preacher, to stand on the corner to shout to people, but in your own quiet, simple way, you need to tell people from now on that you're a believer in Jesus. You've received Him as your Savior, you're a child of God and you need to tell people just how wonderful it is to have this glorious experience in your life.

Now I'm going to close by praying a prayer for each one of you who prayed that prayer. "Lord Jesus, I thank You for every one who prayed that prayer in simple faith, and I commit them to You now. I ask You to lay your hand upon them, to guide them, to protect them, to bless them, to make Yourself real to them. Oh, Lord Jesus, we all thank You together that You are so kind, that You are so merciful, You are so faithful. You are not a thief who comes to steal, but You're the One who came to give Your life that we, in place of that, might have life and have it more abundantly. Thank You, Lord Jesus."

Now remember please again, write to this radio station. Ask for your free Bible and be sure to tell others that you've received Jesus as your personal Savior. May God bless you.