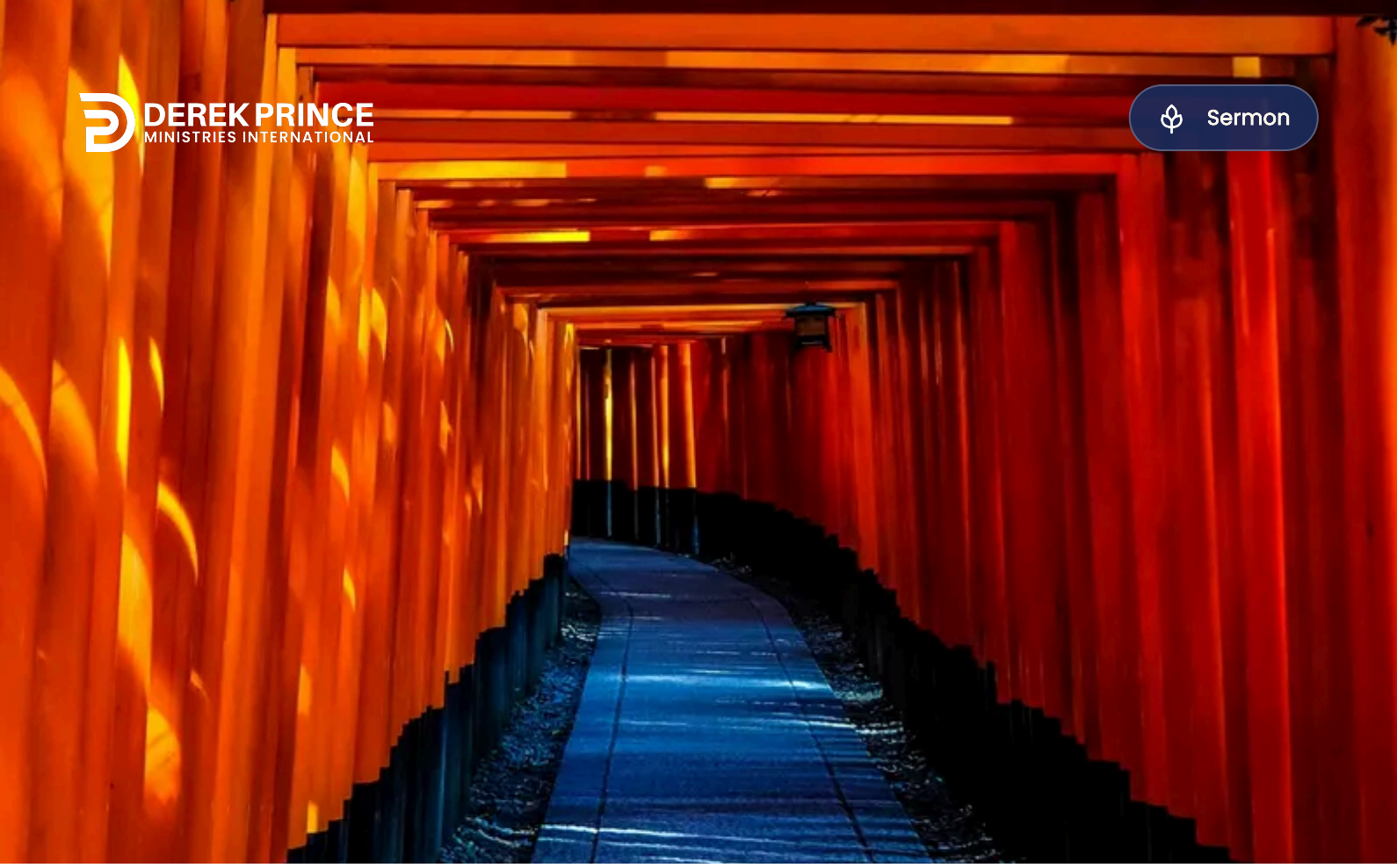


DEREK PRINCE
MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Sermon

The Roman Pilgrimage (Part 4)



Part 4/20
The Roman Pilgrimage
By Derek Prince

We closed our last session with Romans 3:19–20, which are in a sense the culmination of the first stages of our Pilgrimage, and at this point Paul has proved out of Scripture that the whole world is accountable to God for sin and no one can avoid standing before the judgment of God on account of sin.

I think I'll read those two verses again because they are so important. Romans 3:19:

> "Now we know whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God..."

That's the destination Paul has brought us to—the whole world is accountable to God. Both Jews and Gentiles. Both religious people and nonreligious people are accountable to God. And then he goes on to say keeping rules or the Law never changes the fact that we are still accountable to God. And he says in verse 20:

> "Because by the works of the Law [by the keeping of rules] no flesh [no human being] will be justified in [God's] sight [will be reckoned righteous or achieve righteousness in the sight of God]; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin."

Now that's a startling statement for religious people. Through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. And I've learned from experience, many, many Christians find it very hard to comprehend why Paul should say the Law is what causes us to recognize sin. And then to wonder why God would give the Law if all it can do was make us aware that we're sinners and it cannot make us righteous.

So I'm going to devote this particular section to the parenthesis which you will find in your outline. Six purposes for which the Law was given.

I've learned by experience that if I don't deal with this there'll be a whole string of unanswered questions in your mind and you'll never really be able to give attention to the

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positive which Paul is building up to. So I want to suggest to you out of Scripture six purposes for which the Law was given.

First of all, to show men the reality and power of sin. First the diagnosis, then the medicine. And this is very true psychologically. It's no good explaining to people God's way of salvation if they haven't realized they have the disease of sin. A person has to first be convinced that he's a sinner before he will recognize and receive God's plan of salvation. God does the same. He doesn't offer us the plan of salvation until He's shown us how desperately we need it. But we're sick with an incurable disease which is sin and there's only one remedy.

Let me give you some Scriptures now. We'll read again Romans 3:20:

> "By the works of the Law no flesh will be justified [will achieve righteousness] in God's sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin."

That's the first purpose for which God gave the Law—to show us the disease of sin. The Law is God's diagnostic to make us aware of the condition of sin which prevails in our lives. And apart from the Bible and books based on the Bible, I do not believe there is any book in the world that reveals the nature of sin. This is one of the priceless benefits of the Bible.

I was a student of one of the greatest philosophers of old—Plato. And Plato was really interested in the issue of righteousness. He called it excellence or virtue. And his conclusion was that knowledge is virtue. And I mean he worked this thing out—it didn't come to it lightly. And he said if people know what is right they'll do it. Well, that's flat contrary to human experience. We're continually confronted by people who know what is right and don't do it and know what is wrong and do it. And know also that doing wrong will cost them dearly and still they do it, you see, because only the Bible diagnosis this force within us which is called sin, which causes us to do things against our own best interest; even when we know what we're doing. So knowledge by itself is not the solution. The only solution is the gospel.

Let me read you just a few other passages on this theme from Romans chapter 7; and we'll be dealing with Romans chapter 7 in good detail later on, so let me just pick out a couple of passages there. Romans 7:7:

> "What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! [What do we say for that? Perish the thought!] On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, 'You shall not covet.'"

So how did he come to know about sin? Through the Law, that's right. And again in verses 12 & 13:

> "So then, the Law is holy, and the and the commandment is holy and righteous and good."

Paul is very careful to point out there's nothing wrong with the Law. The fault isn't in the Law. Verse 13:

> "Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! [What do we say? Perish the thought!] Rather it was sin in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful."

The purpose of the Law is to bring into the open the total sinfulness of sin. To show it in all its ugliness, all its real colors. There's no other source of this revelation but the Bible.

The second purpose of the Law is to show men that they're unable to achieve righteousness by their own efforts. And Paul gives us his own experience again in this same 7th chapter of Romans, verses 18–23:

> "For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh..."

I have to point out to you—and we will see this again—the word "flesh" is sometimes used in a technical meaning. It doesn't mean my physical body, but it means the nature which I have inherited from my decent from Adam. My old Adamic nature. We'll come back to that further on. So I know that in my flesh nothing good dwells,

> "For the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. [I wonder how many of you are going to be able to identify with these words as we go on. Verse 19:] For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish. [Verse 20:] But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me."

See what its done? Pinpoints sin. Shows that there's a power at work in us which even works contrary to our own sincere will and intention.

> "[Verse 21:] I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good. [Verse 22:] For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, [Verse 23:] but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members."

And the word for "prisoner" there is not a criminal who has broken the law, but a prisoner of war—someone who has been taken prisoner and is made to fight against the side he is really on. So that's Paul's description of his own experience.

For my part, I say "Amen, Paul" I understand you. Because it the age of 15, while I was still at Eton, a decree went out to the college that all the boys of 15 were to be confirmed in the Anglican church. Well, I didn't really feel like being confirmed, so I wrote to my father, who was serving with the British Army in India, and said, "I don't really want to be confirmed." I was surprised at my father's response. He wrote back and said, "You will be confirmed." What surprised me was that my father thought he was doing well if he went to church twice a year—Christmas and Easter—so I didn't see why he wanted me confirmed.

Anyhow, in order to be confirmed in the Anglican Church, as many of you know, you have to go to be instructed. Well, I was instructed by a history tutor, not by a religious professor, and you have to learn how to answer certain questions. And those of you who have been in the Episcopal church, what is the first question? "What is your name?" Well, that's pretty easy to answer for most of us.

The next one is, "Who gave you this name?" And the answer is, which I really don't believe, is "My Godparents at my baptism," etc. But I won't go into all that. But in studying these questions, I became aware of the fact that I wasn't really nearly as good as I thought I was. I thought, "I really need to be better." So I concluded that, "Confirmation has come at the right time and from now on I'm going to be a lot better."

In due course the Bishop of Oxford came along and laid his hands on the heads of about 50 Eton boys, of whom I was one. So I said, "That's it. Now I'm going to better."

Well, I was totally disillusioned, because instead of getting better, I got steadily worse, and the harder I tried to be good, the quicker I got bad. Now I was perfectly sincere. I really meant it. Well, my way of thinking was, "This thing doesn't work." I said to myself, "I might as well not try to be good because I don't get so bad that way." So I concluded this thing doesn't work, you see, because I'd had the diagnosis, but I hadn't had the remedy. It was 10 years later that the Lord met me and I was born again, and immediately a change took place in my life. But I can so well identify with the words of Paul.

All right, the next reason for which the Law was given is to foretell and foreshow the Savior, the Messiah. And in this context, Paul calls the Law a tutor. If you turn for a moment to Galatians 3:24:

> "Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ the Messiah, that we may be justified by faith."

Now the word that's being translated "tutor" there is actually the word from which we get the English word "pedagogue." And it describes a senior slave in the household of a wealthy man whose job was to give the wealthy man's children the first basic instructions in right and wrong and then when they became old enough to leave them every day to the school or to the tutor who was going to teach them. So this man was not the teacher but he was the one who took them to the teacher. And Paul says that what the Law did for us Jews. It gave us the first principles of right and wrong, but it couldn't teach us the whole thing. But it became our slave to lead us to the Messiah who could teach us. So the purpose of the Law was to direct Israel to the Messiah, to reveal Him and foreshow Him. And this it did in two ways. By foretelling and by foreshadowing. There are many prophecies in the Law clearly predict the Messiah. We'll just look at one. Deuteronomy 18:18–19. The Lord is speaking to Moses and he says:

> "I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you [like Moses], and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. [Verse 19:] And it shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him."

So there's a clear prediction that God was going to raise up to Israel, from amongst their own brothers a prophet who would be like Moses. And I have written a study years ago called, "A Prophet Like Moses." I think I found 26 points in which Moses and Jesus are parallel. There's no other prophet that even approaches that number of points. This prophet was to have unique authority because he was going to tell them all that God commanded and if they didn't listen, God was would require it of them. And all the apostles of the New Testament unanimously concur that this promise of the prophet like Moses was fulfilled in Jesus. So there was a foretelling of the Messiah.

But the Messiah was also foreshadowed in the Law. In many of its ordinances and sacrifices. In fact, I believer every sacrifice in the law in some way or other foreshadows Jesus. There's not a single sacrifice that doesn't tell us something about Jesus if we can see it. But just to take one example, the Passover lamb which was slain in Egypt and whose blood protected the Israelites' households against the wrath and judgment of God that came upon the Egyptians who were not protected. And let me point out to you that it's not a question of nationality or race. There was just one issue. Is the blood on the house, or is it not? And this is perhaps as clear a picture of Jesus, the Lamb of God, as you can find anywhere in the Bible. We'll just look up two passages in the New Testament in which this picture of the Passover lamb is applied to Jesus.

The first is in John 1:29. The introduction of John the Baptist who was sent to prepare the way for the Messiah. John 1:29:

> "The next day he [John the Baptist] saw Jesus coming to him, and said, 'Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'"

He was the one who fulfilled the type of the Passover lamb. And then very specifically in 1 Corinthians 5:7, Paul applies this to Jesus. He says—and he's referring now to the ordinance of the Passover in which every Jewish home had to be purged of leaven:

> "Clean out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed."

So there he states specifically that Christ was the true Passover lamb. And we of course bear in mind that His sacrifice, His death, took place at the Passover season.

So the Law pointed those who were under it to the true solution—the Messiah who was to come. Then the 4th reason for the Law which is not always understood—especially by Gentiles—is to keep Israel as a separate nation to which Messiah could come. Kept in custody—or shut up. And Paul says this again in Galatians 3:23:

> "But before faith came, we [we Jews] were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed."

So the Jews were shut up by the law in a special situation to keep them ready for the Messiah. And if you like to turn to the words of Balaam—a prophecy concerning Israel—in Numbers 23:9. This is prophetic vision of Israel.

> "As I see him from the top of the rocks, and look at him from the hills; behold, a people who dwells apart, And shall not be reckoned among the nations."

The word "nations" is Goyim the word for Gentile. So even after they were dispersed—driven out of their own land for 2,000 years, that prophecy has been fulfilled concerning the Jewish people. A people who dwell apart who shall not be reckoned amongst the nations. It's one of the most remarkable facts of history that that Jewish nation could be dispersed from their own land in the year 70 AD and 19 centuries later, after spending 2,000 years amongst at least 100 other nations, could still be a separate identifiable people.

My first wife was Danish. She often used to say to me, "If you scattered the Danes amongst the other nations and came back at the end of 100 years, you wouldn't find a single Dane." It's unique that it is true only of Israel. And the thing that kept them separate primarily was the law of Moses. And one particular ordinance—the sabbath. That

always separated them out from other people. And they kept that at tremendous personal cost and sacrifice to themselves. You see, God had to have a people to whom the Messiah could come.

I was speaking in Singapore a few years ago to a crowd of about 3,000 people nearly all of whom were Chinese. And as I looked at them, and I was preaching on how to be delivered from the curse, I said to myself, "There's hardly one of these Chinese persons here today who doesn't have an ancestor three generations back who was not an idol worshiper. "And then I thought to myself, "God could never have sent His Son to such a nation, because if He had obeyed His parents, he would have been worshiping a false god." See? So God had to prepare a nation very carefully and specially to whom He could send His Son, Who could obey His parents, keep the ordinance of His nation and still be faithful to God. It's a tremendous miracle in a way that God was able to do that.

All right, we're going on with the purposes of the Law. To provide humanity with a pattern of a nation governed by just laws. We look just for a moment as Nehemiah 9:13–14. This is part of a tremendous prayer which was prayed after the return from the Babylonian exile. And they rehearse all the acts of God on behalf of Israel. And then they say:

> "Then Thou didst come down on Mount Sinai, and didst speak with them from heaven; Thou didst give to them just ordinances and true laws, good statutes and commandments, [verse 14] so Thou didst make known to them Thy holy sabbath, and didst lay down for them commandments, statutes, and law, through Thy servant Moses."

That is a true statement. Basically, in our world today, nearly all the nations that have a code of law that preserves human integrity and morality can trace those laws back to the law of Moses. So the law established a pattern to which all other nations could look to see what it would be like to be a nation governed by just laws.

Finally, this is very important, and not usually taken into account, a purpose of the law was to provide inexhaustible material for spiritual meditation. How many of you can quote the opening words from Psalm 1? The first three words are:

> "Blessed is the man who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, or standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. [Verse 2:] But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night. [What is the result? Verse 3:] And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf shall also not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

If you want to be successful, the key is what you meditate in. The successful man meditates in the law day and night, and that's the key to his success. And I want to say, when you know Who the Passover lamb is, the meditation of the Lord becomes infinitely richer, but it's still an inexhaustible source of material for meditation.

Let us just quickly glance through these purposes for which the law was given. I want to review them and we'll close this session.

First of all, to show men the reality and power of sin. The diagnostic—and the only diagnostic—there is nothing else in human experience that can diagnose sin but the law.

Second, to show men they are unable to achieve righteousness by their own effort. How many of you would agree to that? You're unable to keep the law by your own efforts. Even your own church law you really don't keep if you are honest with yourself.

Number three, to foretell and foreshadow the Savior the Messiah. Foretelling him in prophecy and foreshadowing him in type and picture.

Number four, to keep Israel as separate nation to which the Messiah could come. And in the words that Paul uses are in custody or shut up—a nation set apart.

Number five, to provide humanity with a pattern of a nation governed by just laws. And at least in our western world, in our Protestant inheritance, every one of our nations has derived the greater part of its laws in one way or another from the laws of Moses. And when we really get into trouble, brothers and sisters, is when we depart from that principle which is just what's happening to us today.

And finally, the sixth purpose of the law to provide inexhaustible material for spiritual meditation. And I want to

emphasize there's a matter of practical application. The key to success in life is right meditation.

The 3rd verse of Psalm 1 is an astonishing verse. In the New International Version of the Bible it says "Whatever he does succeeds." Very simple. What's the key? Right meditation. What's the great source of meditation? The law. You could just read almost any of the five books of Moses and find inexhaustible lessons to guide you and guard you and warn you. Do you want to succeed? There's no one here today who doesn't want to succeed. Remember, that meditating on the law of God is the root cause of success in the Christian life.

Session 2

We'll be moving on again in Romans 3. Our previous session was a kind of parenthesis in which we dealt with the purposes for which the law was given. I want to say that I am not suggesting that that's all the purposes, but at least it is six of them.

Now we're going to go back to Romans 3:20, which is a kind of milestone. It tells us we've come so far in this pilgrimage and it says that:

> "By the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in God's sight; for through the Law come the knowledge of sin. [Verse 21:] But now..."

And here we are beginning God's solution. See, in His great wisdom, God didn't offer the solution till He's shown the problem. Now He has wonderfully, in great detail, very systematically outlined the whole problem and has shown us the Law is not the solution. What is the solution? Now, he unfolds it to us. We'll read verses 21–26. These are some of the most compact verses in the Bible. To analyze them could take us a whole day, but we don't have a whole day so we're going to have to be content with what we have. Romans 3:21:

> "But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested..."

But you'll notice that the "the" is in italics. Did you notice that? I think it's better to say "a" righteousness of God—a different kind of righteousness.

> "But now apart from the Law a righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets."

Again, you see Paul is very careful to say, "I am not innovating. This is all contained in embryo in the Old Testament. All I am doing is explicating what was implicit in the Law and the prophets."

> "[Verse 22:] even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ..."

And again, the message of Romans is there's no way to righteousness except by faith. There's no alternative. You cannot receive righteousness any other way.

> "Through faith in Jesus the Messiah..."

At this point I really want to say Messiah because it so much better represents the continuity of Scripture than to use this Greek word, Christ. I think I'm a little prejudiced as a matter of fact.

> "For all those who believe..."

So this righteousness which is by faith is offered to all those who believe. The word "all" is important. It's not something now that's restricted to the Jewish nation. It's for all who need it. What kind of people need it? All. But what all people? Sinners. That's right.

> "Even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus the Messiah for all those who believe; for there is no distinction..."

In what respect? In respect of sinfulness. There are many distinctions. Different races, different colors, different cultures, different languages, different religions, but there's one thing we all have in common. We are all guilty of sin. We're all accountable to God for our sin. In that respect there is no distinction between Jew or Gentile, Protestant or Catholic, black or white, they're all the same. Verse 23:

> "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..."

How many have sinned? (Response: "ALL") Are you sure? Does that include you? Does that include me? It certainly does. All have sinned.

Now the word for "sin" is a word that means really to miss the mark—to come short of the mark. You see, there are a number of words in the Bible for wrongdoing and each one is specific. There's another word, "transgression." Transgression means walking across a line that's marked. Transgression is disobeying a known commandment. Now the Jews were guilty of transgression. In most cases the Gentiles weren't. They didn't have a known commandment, so they were different in that respect true, but the same in the respect of sin which is coming short of the purpose for which we were created. What were we created for? The glory of God. That's right.

I remember a young Jewish man who came to the Lord years ago in London when I was ministering there and he became what I would say was pretty fervent. And I remember he said once he was preaching in a street meeting and he said, "A person has no right to exist who doesn't exist for the glory of God." I said, "That's true." That's the only justification for existing in God's universe when God has created us; that we exist for His glory. What is sin? It's coming short of the purpose for which we were created.

Now there's another word, which is translated "iniquity," but a better translation is "rebellion." That's another aspect of wrongdoing. Rebellion is in the heart of every one of us, but rebellion is primarily an attitude—not an act. We'll deal with rebellion in Romans chapter 6. That's where the old rebel is dealt with. So we'll keep that for Romans 6. But we're all alike in the respect that we have sinned and in sinning we have come short of the glory of God. We have missed the purpose for which we were created. That's why sinners are always in some respect frustrated, you see? Because they are not living for the purpose for which they were created. It's like if you take a Cadillac and use it to move furniture it'll not do well, see? Or you take a truck and use it as a taxi, you'll have a problem. The reason being that the thing was made for one purpose and it's being misused. Well, that's true of every sinner. Every sinner is failing to fulfill the purpose for which he was created, and somewhere deep inside, there's inner frustration because of that.

All right, going on then in chapter 3. We come now to the solution. Verse 24:

> "Being justified..."

I would prefer to say "having justification offered to us," because we are only justified when we respond.

> "Being justified as a gift..."

Being made righteous as a gift. I think I'd better give you some of my definitions of justified at this point. Justify is a sort of dry theological word for so many people. But it is the glorious word. And I'll give you a series of possible translations. To say that I'm justified means I'm acquitted—my case has been tried before the court of heaven and they've handed down a verdict—not guilty. Isn't that wonderful? Because there is no higher court than the court of heaven. When heaven says you're not guilty, it doesn't matter what your neighbor says about you, it doesn't matter what other people think about you. You are not guilty. That's part of being justified. And then it means being reckoned righteous. God reckons righteousness to you on the basis of your faith. But the same Greek word also means to be made righteous. So it's not just that you have righteousness reckoned to you, but as a result of that something happens inside of you.

You remember we said already God calls things and whatever He calls those things they are. There may not be an immediate obvious change, but the whole process is there in what God calls. So God chooses to call us righteous. And when He calls us righteous, we become righteous.

And then another translation—some of you I know have heard this before—justified means I'm just-as-if-I'd never sinned. Why? Because I've been reckoned righteous with the righteousness of God. Not my own righteousness, not my best efforts, but by faith I have received as a gift the righteousness of God. And if you don't receive it as a gift, dear brother and sister, you'll never get it. You cannot work for it, you cannot earn it, it's as high above the best we can do as heaven is above earth. God said in Isaiah 64:6:

> "All your righteousnesses are like filthy rags."

He didn't say all your sins. He said the best that you can do in the sight of God is like a filthy rag. And those filthy rags will never get you to heaven. I don't have this in my outline, but I feel so good about it I'm going to turn to it. Isaiah 61:10. I never preach on this subject without getting to this verse. This is describing what it's like to be justified—to be reckoned righteous.

> "I will rejoice greatly in the Lord, my soul will exult in my God..."

Exult is perhaps the strongest word you can have for being intensely happy, and telling everybody about it.

> "He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness..."

A lot of people know what it is to be saved, but many who are saved don't know what it is to be justified. First of all, He clothes you with a garment of salvation. That's wonderful. I could say that's a kind of undergarment, but then he wraps you around with a robe of righteousness. He totally covers you with a robe of His righteousness. And it doesn't matter from what angle the devil looks at you, all he can see is the righteousness of God. He has nothing he can say against you. That's justification. That's what we're talking about. You see, I feel so grieved so many times that Christians don't really get excited about their faith. I believe in the people who get excited. To me that's logical. To say you believe these things and not get excited about them is illogical. I remember when I was attending the Anglican church, and this is no criticism of the Anglican church, but as a rather critical teenager, I listened to all the words that were said and the beautiful prayers and confessions and they were glorious. Then I watched the people and I thought to myself, "If these people really mean what they say it doesn't show. They don't look like it." And I had a little mental picture in my mind of an elegant lady walking out of church one Sunday morning and she drops her beautiful lace handkerchief on the stone floor, and I run after to her and pick up the handkerchief and return it to her, and she is much more excited about getting the handkerchief back than she is about all the things she's been saying about salvation. See, people who behave like that have never really grasped what they're saying. I think if you really can comprehend that God has covered you with the robe of His righteousness, you'll have to do what Isaiah says, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord. I will exult in the God of my salvation." I'll be so happy, I'll have to tell people. I'll have to do more than just sit in the pew. I'll have to get up, shout, dance. That's not illogical. That's logical. I'm the professional logician: to say you believe all these wonderful things that are said in this epistle to the Romans and in the whole New Testament and not get excited about it. It is totally inconsistent. It means in actual fact that you don't believe what you are saying. And only the Holy Spirit can make it real to you. Brother Prince can't do that.

All right, we're going back to Romans 3:24:

> "Being justified as a gift by His grace..."

We'll come in Romans chapter 5 to the statement that we receive righteousness as a gift, so bear that in mind. We won't go any further with it now.

> "By His grace."

And you understand grace is the supernatural working of God which does things for us we cannot deserve. Grace cannot be earned. Will you say that after me? "Grace cannot be earned." If you have anything you have earned, it isn't grace. Grace starts when you come to the end of your earning. Going on:

> "Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus..."

That word "redemption" in the Greek version of the Old Testament is used for the mercy seat and the ark in the tabernacle of Moses. It's a beautiful picture. Here was the ark. Inside it was the Law which had been broken, which cried out against Israel, but God provided a mercy seat which was exactly the same dimension as the ark, which covered the broken Law. And which was the place where God manifested Himself and spoke and which was overshadowed by the cherubs of glory. And you see, as long as the ark is uncovered, you have no access to God. But when the ark is covered by the mercy seat, then God can draw near to you and you can draw near to Him and He can speak to you. You have access into the immediate presence of Almighty God. Because of the mercy seat and the mercy seat is the sacrifice of Jesus—His shed blood. It is the only basis on access to a righteous God.

Let's go on reading verse 24:

> "The redemption which is in Christ Jesus; [verse 25:] whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith."

So God displayed to the whole universe the one sole sufficient propitiation for all the sins we've all committed. And it's demonstrated by the life laid down and the shed blood of Jesus. And God didn't do it secretly. He didn't do it in a corner. He did it very publicly. And then it goes on to say:

> "This was to demonstrate His righteousness [God's righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed..."

You see, we have a mystery that under the Law of Moses for nearly 15 centuries Israel was continually remembering their sins. To take just one ordinance—the Day of Atonement—once every year they made a remembrance of their sins, but no sacrifice that they brought did away with their sins. The sacrifices of the law merely covered those sins until the next sacrifice was due. But when Jesus came the writer of Hebrews says "He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." He didn't just cover sin, He disposed of sin. He removed it. He set it aside. And so in this demonstration God vindicated His righteousness that for 15 centuries He passed over sin which had never been properly atoned for. But God knew what He was going to do. He did it in faith on the basis of the assurance that Jesus would ultimately provide the all sufficient sacrifice. You see, everything that God did in respect of Calvary He did in faith. Jesus died in faith. There was not a single evidence of any real permanent result from His ministry. He died in faith. Thank God His faith was justified. Going on the verse 26:

> "For the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

That's the crux of Romans. That God can be just and just justify the sinner. How could God pass over sin without compromising His own righteousness? The answer is Romans. That's the key descriptive verse. That God might be perfectly righteous and still forgive sinners.

You see, As I have said before, God's problem is not punishing sinners. There's no problem about that. God's problem is forgiving sinners and He's the only one who can provide a solution. The solution's contained here in Romans.

Now we come on to some of the effects of receiving this propitiation—this atonement. We read verses 27 and 28:

> "Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. [Verse 28:] For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law."

We pointed out in the previous chapter, chapter 2, that religious knowledge produces pride. The more religious people know, the prouder they get. And pride is an abomination to God, so He's got to do away with pride. He does it by this law of faith, which leaves us nothing to boast of. We cannot claim anything. We didn't do anything for ourselves. God did it all. All we can do is receive by faith the free gift of righteousness which God offers us.

You see, I never want to become controversial, but I have had a lot of contacts with the Muslim religion, Islam. It permeates the whole Middle East. I've lived in three Muslim countries at different times, and this is my personal observation. I have never known anybody made happy by Islam. I venture to say it's never made a single person happy in the course of 13 centuries. What's the attraction? It's a religion of works. Why do people like a religion of works? Because it gives them something to boast of. It suits human pride and I don't take Muslims as the only example. It's true of Orthodox Jews and it's true of a lot of professing Christians who haven't realized that we have nothing whatever to boast of. God did it all. All we can do is receive by faith what God has done. And let me tell you this: that boasting and pride are incompatible with faith. Because the famous verse in Habakkuk 2:4 says the one who is proud, his soul is lifted up in him. It's not right. But the righteous will live by his faith. Faith and pride are incompatible. This is very important to remember because a lot of us are in danger of getting proud. We do some little thing for God. We get some success in our ministry and we think, "There you are the man with the answer." That's terribly dangerous. There's no room for pride. It's totally excluded.

It's very interesting in the course of His earthly ministry Jesus dealt with two persons whom He especially praised for their faith. The interesting thing about it is neither of them were Jewish. One was the Roman centurion, who said "I'm not worthy that you should come under my roof. Just say the word. That's all that you need." Jesus said, "I tell you, I haven't found faith like that in all of Israel." What went with his faith? Humility. "I'm not worthy. I've got no claims. Just say the word." The other—one of my favorite stories in the Bible—the Syrophenician woman who had the demon-possessed daughter. And she ran after him and cried and made a nuisance of herself and the disciples said "Send her away, she's upsetting us. We don't like this noise." But she wouldn't go away. She called Him first of all "Son of David," and He didn't respond because the son of David was His title to the Jewish people. She was not a Jewess. Then she said "Lord," and then He responded. And He said, "What do you want?" and she said, "The demon to go out of my daughter." And He really tested her humility, because he said, "It isn't right to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs under the table." What is He calling her? A dog.

Now it's an insult in the West, but believe me in the Middle East to be called a dog—you couldn't have a much worse insult. But He was putting her in her place. He was saying "I'm committed by covenant to Israel. I made a covenant with them through Moses that I would be their healers, but I have no covenant with you, so you're just a little dog." You see, when God seems to be hard He's the most merciful. And her response, "True Lord, but even the little dogs eat the crumbs." What faith. "God, I don't need a slice of bread, just one crumb will get the demon out of my daughter." Jesus said, "Oh woman, great is your faith. Help yourself, take what you want." What was the conspicuous thing about her character? She was a humble person. Let's be careful that we don't become proud. Because pride and faith can't co-exist in the same situation.

Let's complete this chapter. Paul's now going to find out this message is for both Gentiles and Jews. He says in verse 29:

> "Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also—[verse 30:] if indeed God is one—[which is the great claim of Judaism, God is one] and He will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith."

The basic requirement is faith, you see that? Faith may be expressed by circumcision, or it may operate without circumcision, but whatever way it comes it's faith and faith alone that is the basis of justification. Circumcision without faith will not justify a man. And then he finishes this and this is very important. In verse 31:

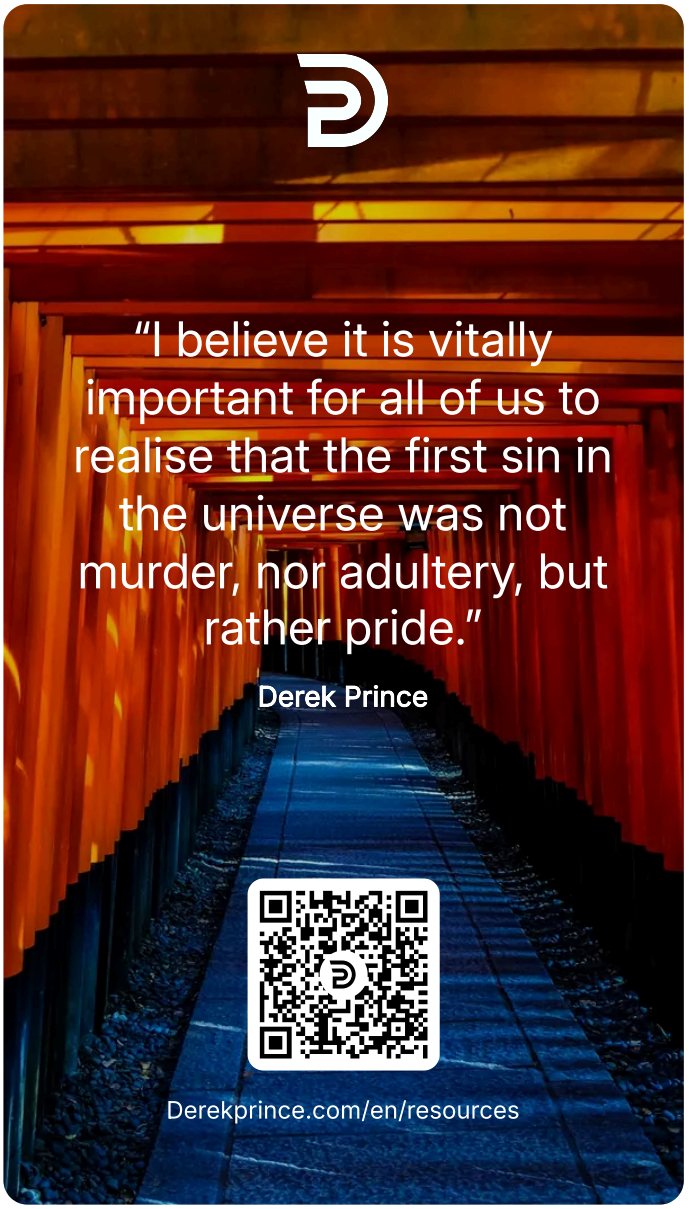
> "Do we then nullify the Law through faith? Do we set the Law aside? [What does he say? Perish the thought!] on the contrary we establish the Law."

It's very important to see that. Faith in Jesus and the New Testament does not set aside the Law of Moses. It's part of the Word of God. It's permanent. In fact, the only people who can take the Law as it's written are people who believe Jesus died in their place. Any group of people—Jews or Gentiles—whoever they may be—Mormons, Seventh-Day Adventists—who claim that they are observing the whole Law of Moses are lying. They're not. We can say we believe the whole Law. We don't set aside any commandment. Not even how to deal with a rabbit if you kill it in the field because Jesus did it in our place. So we alone of all people on earth can say, "That's right. We accept the Law in its entirety, but in its entirety it was fulfilled in Jesus and through His death we are delivered from the Law. Amen.

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Sermon

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