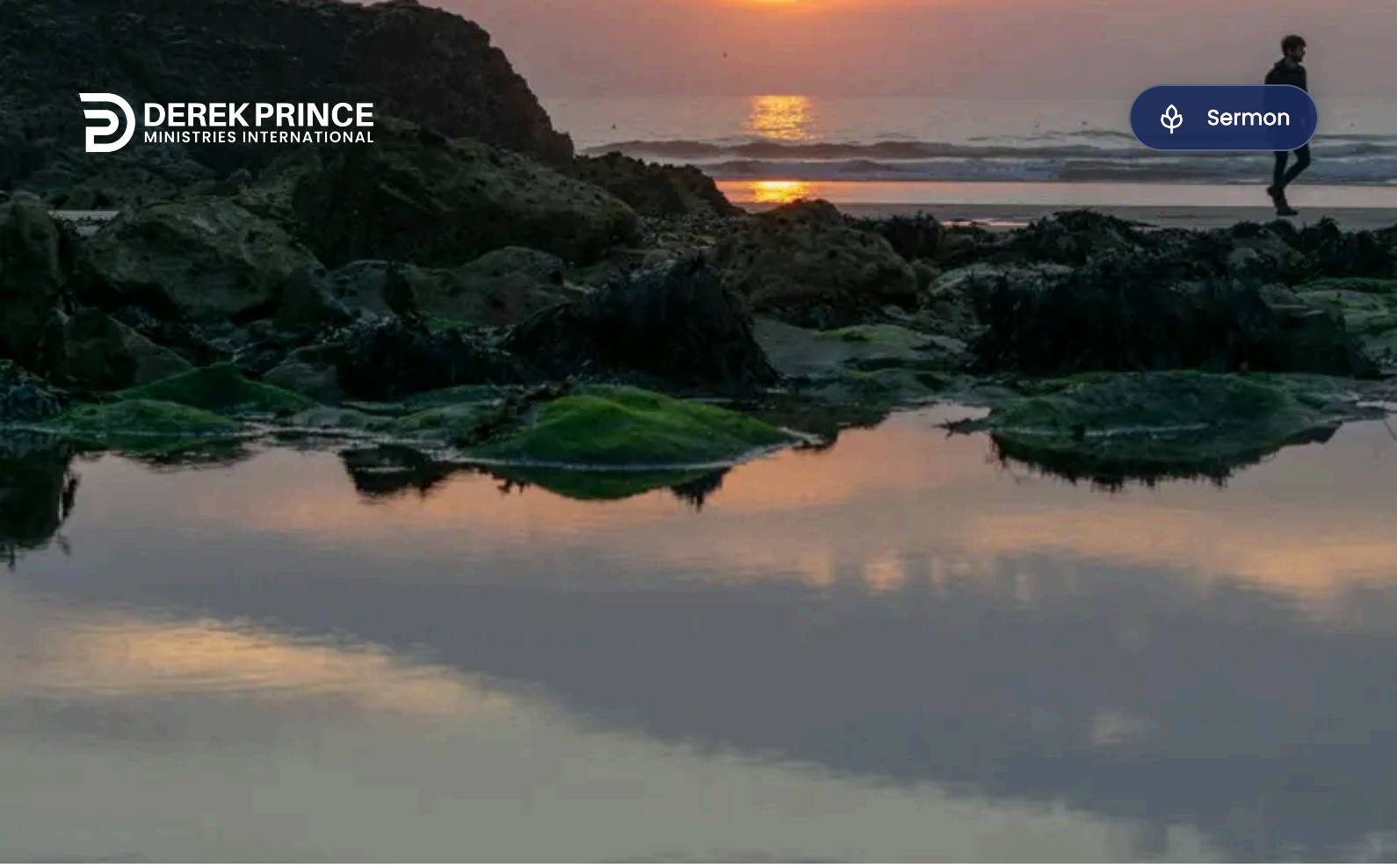

DEREK PRINCE
MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Sermon

The Roman Pilgrimage (Part 12)



Part 12/20

The Roman Pilgrimage
By Derek Prince

We're continuing now with our exploration of Romans 8. In our previous session we looked at verses 18–25 which is a marvelous revelation of God's total purpose for creation. We find that as believers in Jesus who've received the Holy Spirit, we're not to be solely preoccupied with our own little concerns or with the affairs of this age or even with the total destiny of the church. But God wants us to be so enlarged in our understanding and our responses within that we can identify with God's total program for creation.

One reason for this is that we, the human race, are responsible for all the trouble that's come upon creation because God made Adam steward over the creation and Adam was unfaithful and failed in his stewardship and this brought disaster not only upon Adam and his descendants but upon the creation over which he was steward. God in his limitless wisdom has ordained that the redemption of creation will be closely tied in with the redemption of the Adamic race. Creation will not be redeemed until our redemption is complete. So because our sin brought corruption and disaster upon creation, it will be our redemption that will bring back redemption to creation.

So Paul speaks about praying not just for our own petty concerns but being concerned with creation for that wonderful, glorious day of redemption; sharing the longing of creation for the return of righteousness to this earth. You'll notice that in the two psalms we read, 96 and 97, all creation is longing for the Lord to come and restore righteousness and judgment to the earth. You see, the whole earth is in a mess because of righteousness being rejected and evil taking its place.

As I contemplate this I say to myself, "Well, God, my little mind and my limited heart really can hardly take in what you're saying to us." So I believe this is the reason for what Paul says next in verses 26–27. He talks about the part of the Holy Spirit in our prayer. Actually, until this very time I haven't appreciated why verse 26 follows verse 25. But I see what Paul is saying is don't try to attain to this in your own limited understanding, your own limited emotional capacity, but let the Holy Spirit come in and do it for you. In a certain sense, what Paul is saying in these verses which we'll read in a moment is just offer yourself to the Holy Spirit and let him set up a prayer meeting inside you.

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Again, I referred to my first wife before, but one of the most precious lessons that I learned from her is just letting the Holy Spirit pray. She prayed the most remarkable prayers and she would say, "I don't know what I'm going to pray when I open my mouth. I just open my mouth and it comes out." And another thing about her, she never had to change gears to pray. She was a very practical woman, she loved to be in the kitchen and make food and change babies' diapers and all those things, but she would be praying while she was doing them. She didn't have to get into a special attitude to pray. Prayer just was bubbling up inside her all the time. Two things I'd like to mention about her because I think they're so important. There wasn't a day that she didn't thank God she was saved. She never ceased to appreciate the miracle of salvation. I don't think there were many days that she didn't thank God for speaking in tongues. She believed in speaking in tongues. She knew what it was to come to the end of her own understanding and just hand the wheel to the Holy Spirit and say, "You take over now."

So let's read these verses. Romans 8:26–27.

> "And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness..."

You see what our weakness is? We're not enlarged enough in our understanding and our feelings to respond to this challenge.

> "...for we do not know how to pray as we should..."

And I think when we consider what Paul had been saying about groaning for the whole creation, it's perfectly true. We just don't know how to do it. But that's all right.

> "...but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words..."

See? The Holy Spirit is a person. When he comes in, if you know how to relate to him, you can release that person to pray in you and through you. Going on in verse 27:

> "...and he who searches the hearts [I believe that's God the Father] knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because he [the Spirit] intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."

So we don't know how to pray as we ought. Many times we don't know what to pray for and sometimes when we know what to pray for we don't know how to pray for it. Isn't that true? But we don't need to remain helpless and incapacitated because the Holy Spirit, as a person, comes in and takes control.

I could relate many experiences but I'll just relate one. Many, many years ago when I was conducting street meetings in the center of London, a young Catholic girl from Ireland who was serving as a maid in some hotel came and got wonderfully saved and baptized in the Holy Spirit. She really got set free. She was sharing a room in this hotel with another girl who was also a maid and after awhile this other girl came to her and said, "Look, I don't understand. Tell me what is that language you talk every night after you seem to have gone to sleep?" That was the first time this young woman knew that she was speaking in tongues while she was asleep. You see, the bride of Christ says in the Song of Solomon, "I sleep but my heart waketh." And you can have something inside you that never goes to sleep, never gets tired, never is perplexed, never is baffled; always knows how to face the situation and to give the right prayer. So that's God's provision through the Holy Spirit. We could preach for weeks just on that.

But I want to move on to the next passage, verses 28–30.

> "And we know..."

Again, we ask ourselves do we know?

> "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose..."

That's a wonderful scripture and we thank God for it but we notice it does set certain parameters. You can't just say anything that happens is God working everything together for good because it only applies to those who love God and those who are called and who are walking in God's purposes. You see? Then everything that happens to you is the outworking of God's plan no matter what may appear to be the case.

Now if you love God and you're called and you're not walking in his purposes, the Holy Spirit and God will intervene and they'll do something to stop you. That's also working for your good even if it doesn't appear so. Like God said about Israel, "I'll hedge up her ways, she won't be able to find her ways." I think many times when God's children

begin to go astray, God builds a hedge in front of them and there's just no way through. That's also God working everything for good to you but the ideal is that we are sincerely and in faith walking in the purposes for which God called us.

And then, no matter what happens, and it may appear to be a disaster, we know that God is making it happen for our good. When I look back on my own life, you know one thing I thank God for? It's some of my prayers he didn't answer because I realize now if he'd have answered those prayers, I'd have had a lot of problems. Even prayers that don't get answered can be part of God's provision and care for you.

I want to go on to this tremendous statement that follows in verses 29–30 because this explains why we know everything is working together for good. And it tells us God's total plan for us from eternity to eternity. I want to take this session to outline that plan because I believe if we really grasp that plan and believe it and align ourselves with it, we'll have total security. I find many of God's people are insecure today. They're troubled, they're kind of like a drowning man grasping for straws, they don't know what to hold on to. God keeps them afloat but they're not secure. I believe the real basis for security is understanding God's eternal plan. The first thing we need to understand is it didn't start with us. It started with God and God never took on anything that he was not capable of completing. Once we know God initiated this, then we'll have confidence that he'll complete it.

So let's read now what Paul says here in Romans and then we will amplify it and supplement it from other sources to get a full picture of God's plan from eternity to eternity. We read then in Romans 8:29–30.

> "For whom God foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son [Jesus], that he might be the first born among many brethren..."

I want to pause and point out to you that predestination can be presented as a very twisted doctrine. We are not predestined to be saved, we're predestined to be conformed to the image of Jesus. If somebody tells me that he's predestined to be saved and I see no evidence in his life, I can question it. But if I see somebody really being conformed to the image of Jesus, I believe the only explanation is God predestined it. So don't let predestination become the stumbling block to you. It's sometimes taken and twisted and used almost to beat God's people with. But it is a glorious truth if we accept it in the right way.

Verse 30:

> "Whom he predestined, these he also called; and whom he called, these he also justified; and whom he justified, these he also glorified."

There's a kind of outline but I think it's not in that one case complete. I think you have to look at a number of different passages of scripture to get the total plan complete and in the right order. And so I want to do that and you can follow with me if you wish to in the outline. The first stage in this program of God is that God foreknew us, he knew us in advance. This is stated by Paul in Romans 8:29, "for whom he foreknew." It is also stated in 1 Peter 1, the opening verses. 1 Peter 1:1–2. He addresses his epistle to the aliens scattered throughout various places and then he says:

> "...who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father..."

The origin of everything is God's foreknowledge. He didn't act in ignorance, he didn't experiment; he knew in advance what kind of people we would be, how he would deal with us, how he could work out his plan for us. We begin with God's foreknowledge which was before creation ever took place. That's a staggering thought. Before anything was ever created, God foreknew each one of us. I tell people, "You're not an accident looking for a place to happen." Everything has been foreknown and planned by God from eternity.

And then the second stage is God chose us. We've already looked there in 1 Peter, we are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God. It's important to see that God's choice of us is based on his knowledge of us. He chooses us because he knows us in advance. He knows what we're like, he knows what we can make of us.

This is also stated in Ephesians 1:3–4.

> "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world."

God foreknew us and on the basis of his foreknowledge he chose us. You aren't where you are because you made the choice, you are where you and you are who you are because God made the choice. That makes a lot of difference to your attitude toward yourself and to your situation. It initiated with God. You didn't set it all in motion, God did.

Then the next stage is he predestined us. Some people are afraid of that word predestined. I want to suggest to you that it merely means that God arranged in advance the course that our life would follow. We see this stated in Romans 8:29–30.

> "For whom he foreknew he also predestined..."

And verse 30:

> "Whom he predestined, these he also calls..."

So the next stage is God worked out in advance the course that our life was to follow. He predestined us.

This is also stated in Ephesians 1:5. We've looked at verse 4, "just as he chose us in him." And then it says:

> "...in love he predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will..."

He worked it all out in advance.

Then in Ephesians 1:11:

> "...also we have obtained an inheritance [in Christ], having been predestined according to his purpose who works all things after the counsel of his will."

So that should give you security. You've been predestined, the course of your life has been arranged in advance by the one who works everything the way he wants it. He works all things according to the counsel of his own will.

And then in Ephesians 2:10, I always like to put this together.

> "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

You understand? We don't have to make our own decisions as to what to do, we have to find out the works that God has planned beforehand for us to do them. We're not required to make those decisions for ourself. We are only required to find out the plan, the pattern that God has for us. That relieves us of a whole lot of anxiety if we can only see it. God created us to do things which he created us to do. We can do the things that he has ordained for us to do because he created us for that purpose. Do you understand? If you are continually frustrated and feel unable to do what you're trying to do, you're probably trying to do the wrong thing. You're probably trying to do your own thing and not God's thing. You need to change.

The next stage is he called. We go back to Romans 8:30.

> "Whom he predestined, these he also called..."

The word call also means invite. This is the point at which God's plan comes out of eternity and into time. This is the point in our lives when we're confronted with eternity, when God calls us. It's a very solemn and sacred moment.

Then looking on in Romans 11:29, a short but very powerful verse.

> "For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable."

God never changes his mind, he never withdraws his gifts, he never changes his calling. You're set in something that is totally secure. The creator of the universe is the author of it and his authority is behind it all.

Then we could look in 2 Thessalonians 2:14 for a moment. Speaking about sanctification and faith Paul says:

> "And it was for this he called you through our gospel."

You are called by the presentation of the gospel to you. The gospel is God's invitation. It's actually an invitation to share the fellowship of the Father and the Son. You find that in 1 John 1:

> "These things write we unto you that you may have fellowship with us; and truly our

> fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son."

So you are called by an invitation to share the fellowship of the Godhead in heaven. That's a pretty lofty invitation, isn't it? I mean, most of you, if you had an invitation from the President at the White House, you'd get excited about it. But think of what this is. This is an invitation from the Almighty, Eternal God to share fellowship with him in heaven forever. That's exciting.

Having called us, when we respond, he saves us. Let's look at 2 Timothy 1:9, one of my favorite verses. It says there:

> "God has saved us and called us with a holy calling."

So when you are saved you are also called, do you understand? Every person who is saved is called. You may not know it but you are called. Called to a certain task.

And then in Titus 3:5:

> "He saved us not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to his mercy by the washing of regeneration, and renewing by the Holy Spirit."

There is a definite moment in time when you respond to the call, God saves you. You pass out of death and into life, out of condemnation into the righteousness of God. It's the greatest single translation that can take place in the life of every person. It's our response to God's call. It's our becoming plugged in to God's eternal plan. That's why the calling of God is so tremendously important. It's sacred.

You'll notice that Paul said to Timothy "he's called us with a holy calling." Brothers and sisters, your calling is holy. It should be the first priority in your life, to fulfill your calling. A lot of Christians don't sufficiently appreciate their calling. God called me in l944 specifically to be a teacher of the scriptures and I've had many problems since that time but I can say one thing, I think, truthfully. I have consistently sought to be the best teacher of the scriptures that I can be. Not comparing myself with anybody else, but I have treated my calling as sacred and I still treat it as sacred today. Everyone's calling is sacred no matter what you're called to be. Whether it's a housewife or a physician or a missionary or whatever, whatever your calling is, it's sacred. God planned it all in advance. You don't have to work it all out, you have to walk in the good works which God has before prepared for you to walk in.

After calling comes justification. You're getting familiar with that word now. Do you remember what that means? Shall we review it for a moment? Acquitted, not guilty, reckoned righteous, made righteous, just as if I'd never sinned.

Romans 8:30.

> "...whom he called, these he also justified..."

When they respond to the call, you understand. When you accept Jesus and his propitiatory sacrifice on your behalf, you're not only saved, you're justified, you're reckoned righteous. You're clothed not merely with a garment of salvation but you're covered with a robe of righteousness, God's righteousness.

But don't stop there, there's one more stage in this journey. We look again in Romans 8:30.

> "Whom he justified, these he also glorified."

Notice it's in the past tense. It's not something that's going to happen after we die, it's done now through our faith in Jesus. This is to me so exciting and so few Christians seem to realize it. Look for a moment in 1 Corinthians 2. This is one of my favorite chapters because it's speaking about God's wisdom as opposed to human wisdom which was philosophy which was what I was studying. Paul says we don't speak the wisdom of men. Thank God we don't. But in chapter 2:7 he says:

> "We speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden mystery which God predestined before the ages to our glory..."

The New English Bible says "we speak a secret, hidden wisdom of God." Doesn't that excite you? That we have been let into the secret, hidden wisdom of God. If there's one thing that thrills me, that's it because for many years before I was saved I was looking for some kind of secret, hidden wisdom. I tried Yoga, I tried all sorts of things and ended frustrated. But when I met Jesus and came to the cross, the doorway was open to this secret, hidden wisdom of God.

But listen to the end of it.

> "He ordained it for our glory."

Just think of that. The whole wisdom of God from eternity is directed towards getting us into his glory.

Ephesians 2:4–6, we've looked there a good many times but we'll look once more.

> "But God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved us..."

And the Bible never explains why he loved us.

> "...even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ... raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavenly places."

So we're made alive, we're resurrected, and what's the next thing we are? Enthroned. That's God's plan. Let me go through it very quickly and close. God foreknew us, he chose us, he predestined us, he called us, he saved us, he justified us, and he glorified us. What have you got to worry about?

(end session one)

Session 2

This is now the final session in this rather lengthy Romans pilgrimage. We're coming to the end of the journey. In our previous session I dealt with the passage in Romans 8:28–30 and I outlined God's total plan for us from eternity to eternity in seven stages. I'll just briefly recapitulate those seven stages. God foreknew us, he chose us, he predestined us. All that happened in eternity. Then in time he called us, he saved us, he justified us, and he glorified us. He invited us to share the throne of glory with him right now in this present age. And I suggested that if you really can grasp God's plan, there can be no further room in your life for insecurity. Everything is taken care of.

I want to now go with you to the closing verses of Romans 8 and I just look to God for grace to be able to say the right thing because I feel so inadequate to express in my human words the majesty and the glory of what closes Romans 8. But you'll notice as we turn to it that Paul returns again to this theme of no condemnation with which he began this chapter. You remember the first verse, "There is therefore now no condemnation..." You see, our greatest enemy and the greatest tool of Satan against us is condemnation, being made to feel guilty.

I need to tell you there's a great difference between being made to feel guilty and conviction of sin. The Holy Spirit convicts of sin. He's specific, he's practical, he says, "You did this, you should have done it, this is what you've got to do to put it right." And the moment you put it right, it's all over.

But guilt is something you can never fully define. "Did I say the right thing? Maybe I didn't say the right thing. Maybe I haven't done enough. Maybe I didn't treat her right. Maybe what she said about me was right. Maybe I'm not really true or sincere or..." You see, there's no end to guilt. The further you go into it the deeper you sink. It's totally different. Guilt comes from the enemy, conviction comes from our friends. There's a Portuguese proverb which says, "The friend is the one who shows you the danger." That's what the Holy Spirit does. He shows us the danger to get us out of it.

Let me say to you, and I can't go into the reasons, be very cautious about anybody who makes you feel guilty because very seldom what they say is from God. God is not in the business of making people feel guilty. As a young and ardent preacher, I used to tell my small congregation how bad they were. I mean, I did a good job of it. Every Sunday I would just put them down and they'd walk out and say, "Thank you, wonderful message." I'd think to myself did they really hear what I said? How could they call that a wonderful message? But one day, God in his mercy spoke to me and he said, "I want you to understand you're doing the devil's work for him. I didn't call you to make people feel guilty, I called you to show people how they could be made righteous." I realized that the devil and his aides were doing the job well enough without my help and I ceased to become one of the devil's little helpers.

So let's look now at verse 31.

> "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?"

It doesn't say nobody is against us but what he says is what does it matter who is against us. You've probably heard that simple little saying, one plus God is a majority. In any circumstance, one plus God is a majority.

> "He who did not spare his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how will he not also with him freely give us all things?"

What a tremendous verse! If you want to know how committed God is to you, look at the cross. God gave his only son to die in agony and shame on your behalf. Paul

says very logically, if God did that, there's nothing good that he'll withhold. When you're in times of darkness and temptation and doubt, don't try and reason it out, just turn to the cross and say that's the measure of God's love and God's commitment to me. I may not understand what's going on but I know that God is totally committed to me. That's what he is. Once God has accepted you as his child he's totally committed to you.

I remember my first wife saying to one of the little girls she'd taken in, she said, "When I take a child, I'm committed. It's a lifetime commitment." When God takes a child, it's a lifetime commitment. Any of you that have ever adopted children, you know it's not a short commitment. Don't imagine if you do imagine that it will end when they get married. Believe me, it won't! God's made a lifetime commitment to every child of his. He said, "I will never leave you or forsake you. Do you want to know how much I value you? Look at the price I paid for you. The life blood of my own son."

Don't get involved in arguing with the devil about minor details. Focus on the cross and he cannot defeat you there. You're on undefeatable ground at the foot of the cross.

Then Paul goes on, verse 33:

> "Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies..."

If God has justified us, who can make us feel guilty?

And then he goes further still.

> "...who is the one who condemns?"

There will be people who will condemn us.

> "...who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is he who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us."

God has done everything conceivably possible to keep us from coming under condemnation. If people accuse us he says, "I've justified you." If people condemn us he says, "The price has already been paid by the death of my son." He paid the full penalty by his death and he rose from the dead that he might be our intercessor forever.

You know, I'm writing a book which I haven't made much progress with on the subject of curses. I've got involved in something I never anticipated which is how Christians actually wound one another by words spoken out of the Spirit and become each other's accusers. I didn't plan to put this in the book, it was something the Holy Spirit kind of forced me into and I haven't worked through it yet. But as I did that I thought to myself I wonder how many times I've prayed about people and accused them to God? And I thought to myself what insolence, what arrogance. I'm accusing to God somebody that God has undertaken to justify! I'm accusing somebody for whom Christ died.

I don't know whether you know the story of "Praying Hyde," but he was a Presbyterian missionary who was going out to India in the early years of this century and on the way out—the book doesn't tell you this—he was baptized in the Spirit. He came into a tremendous ministry of prayer. His prayers changed total situations and he spend most of his time in prayer. He did very little of the ordinary missionary work.

Early in his experience he was praying about an Indian evangelist who was very ineffective. He started to say to God, "God, you know how..." and he was going to say how cold that brother is. But the Holy Spirit wouldn't let him say the word cold. The Holy Spirit said to him, "What are you doing accusing that brother to the Lord?" He stopped and he began to give thanks to God for everything good he could think of in that brother. Within a few months that man was a flaming fire for Christ.

But to think of the impact of our prayers when they're negative. Suppose he had gone accusing that brother before the Lord, that man might never have become what God intended him to be. This, to me, places a tremendous responsibility upon us when we pray for our fellow Christians. I have made this little simple rule: If you can't thank God for a person, don't pray for them. You'll find almost every time Paul prayed for people he began by thanking God for them.

I just give that as a little illustration how dangerous and subtle the power of condemnation and guilt is. So many times it doesn't come from our enemies, it comes from our friends. As somebody said, with friends like that, why do we need enemies? I'm emphasizing this point: God will not tolerate condemnation of his chosen. He has pledged himself to maintain our cause. We have an expert advocate. In Hebrews 3:1 it says:

> "Jesus is the high priest of our confession..."

And in Hebrews 7:25, here's one of my favorite scriptures. I think I've got a lot of favorite scriptures! Speaking about this high priest:

> "Hence also he is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through him since he always lives to make intercession for them."

It's interesting to think of the life periods of Jesus' ministry. Thirty years of perfect family life earning his family living. Three and a half years of public ministry and nearly 2000 years of intercession. What does that tell us about our priorities? We have an intercessor. 1 John 2:1.

> "My little children, I'm writing these things to you that you may not sin..."

Thank God he didn't end there.

> "...and if anyone sins..."

How many of you would agree that sometimes we do sin? Anybody that never sins, just raise your hand and come forward and we'll pin a medal on you.

> "...and if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

We've got the most expert advocate in the universe pleading our case. There is no reason ever to be condemned, do you understand that? God is on our side, Jesus is at the right hand of God, he's our advocate, God is undertaken to justify us, he will not tolerate condemnation of us. I wonder if you can see how serious this matter of guilt and condemnation is?

Let me give you a beautiful scripture from Isaiah 54, the last verse. How many of you know what that is? I'm sure some of you do. Isaiah 54:17. This is spoken to God's people.

> "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper."

Now there'll be lots of weapons formed against us but they'll never succeed.

> "And every tongue that accuses you in judgment, you will condemn."

Notice that. God doesn't say, "I'll do it." He says, "I've given you the basis for you to do it." Did you realize that? Every tongue that will rise against you in judgment, you will condemn.

> "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord and their vindication is from me, declares the Lord."

Amen.

Now, having once again dealt with this matter of condemnation and guilt, we come now to the beautiful glorious climax. But notice you can't get there under condemnation. So we read not these closing verses. The climax, I would say, in a simple phrase is inseparable and eternal unity in Spirit with Messiah. That's where we're headed. Jesus is the goal. He's the beginning, he's the ending. He's the first, he's the last. He's the alpha, he's the omega. And you haven't arrived until you have this union with Jesus in the Spirit. Let's read it now.

> "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?"

Do you think Paul would have listed those things if they could never happen to us? It would have been a waste of words, wouldn't it? Paul says we may encounter any or all of those things but one thing they can never do is separate us from the love of God. And then he quotes from Psalm 44, a very somber psalm.

> "Just as it is written, For thy sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

That was God's people under the Old Covenant.

I want to tell you, brothers and sisters, I have a deep inner conviction that those words are going to be true of the church before this millennium ends. God has not promised to keep us from persecution. In fact, he's warned us to anticipate it. But he said persecution can never separate you from the love of God.

I have an acquaintance who's an expert in statistics in the Christian world. David Barrett is his name, some of you may know, he's the author of the Christian Encyclopedia. He estimates that every day in this century 1000 believers are laying down their lives for Jesus. That's 365,000 believers every year. I think that's an underestimate. We live at the present time in the United States in a somewhat sheltered environment. It's not going to be that way much longer. All

around this earth our brothers and sisters are laying down their lives, they're being imprisoned, they're being beaten, they're being persecuted; but thank God they're not being separated from the love of God.

Now we go on in these glorious words, verse 37:

> "But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through him who loved us..."

In all what things? Let's look at the list. Tribulations, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword. In all these things we overwhelmingly conquer. The old version used to say "we are more than conquerors." What does that mean? I understand it means you go into the test, you go into the battle and you come through with more than you had when you went into it. You've not merely won but you've gained spoil. That's to be more than a conqueror. And that's what Paul promises us. In all these things we overwhelmingly conquer.

Then he comes to this glorious conclusion.

> "For I am convinced..."

It's something when a person can say "I'm convinced." It carried conviction. I'm able to say I'm convinced about some things and I notice when I use that phrase it makes an impact on people. Paul says:

> "I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

What is Paul talking about? An eternal and inseparable union with Jesus our savior, messiah, through the Spirit which nothing can ever break or terminate. This is the goal of the Christian life. Christ is the goal. He's the beginning, he's the ending.

I'd like to close by some words from Colossians 3 which have been really impressed upon me recently. Colossians 3, and these will be the closing scriptures for this session. Colossians 3:3–4:

> "For you have died..."

I prefer to say "you died." When did we die? When Jesus died on the cross.

> "For you died, and your life is hidden in Christ..."

We have a hidden life which the world cannot see. And then it continues:

> "When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory."

Take out four words, "Christ is our life." That's all you need. It's a hidden life, a life beyond the veil but he is our life.

And then one further scripture from that chapter, verses 10–11:

> "You have put on the new man who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the one who created him—a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all."

That's it. Christ is all. When we have him, we have everything. He's all we need, he's the beginning, the ending, the author and the finisher.

Now I want to ask you to respond to these glorious truths with what I believe is the only appropriate way which is just to take time now to pour out your heart in praise, thanksgiving to God.

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Sermon

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