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MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Sermon



Death vs Life



Atonement
By Derek Prince

Our theme with which we're continuing is the divinely ordained exchange which took place when Jesus hung and died on the cross. So far we've looked at these aspects of the exchange, which I will recapitulate very briefly.

Jesus was punished that we might be forgiven.

Jesus was wounded that we might be healed.

And Jesus was made sin with our sinfulness that we might be made righteous with His righteousness.

And what do you say next? Thank you, that's right.

All right. Now we're going to go on to the next aspect of the exchange which is very simple. Jesus died our death that we might share His life. I think we'll say that together, you can handle that. "Jesus died our death that we might share His life." You remember He said in John 10:10:

> "The thief [that's the devil] only comes to steal, to kill and to destroy; but I have come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly."

But it cost Him His life to make life available to us. A familiar scripture in Romans 6:23 which all good soul winners always know, Romans 6:23:

> "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

You're aware, I'm sure, that there's a deliberate contrast there between two things, wages and free gift. Your wages are what you've earned for what you've done. They're justice. Anyone who withholds your wages is unjust. But the free gift is something that you cannot earn. Lots of people say, "All I want is justice." It's a very foolish thing to say. Because, if you want justice, God is absolutely just and you will get it. But justice demands that you receive your wages, and your wages are death. As a matter of fact, I think it was Loren Cunningham who related this little incident which illustrates this, about the lady who wanted to have her portrait photograph taken. She went to the studio and posed, the photograph was taken. She went back to look at the proofs and she didn't like what she saw. So she said to

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the photographer, "These don't do me justice." He looked at her and said, "Madam, you don't need justice, you need mercy!" And I've thought about that ever since. From time to time I say to myself I don't need justice, I need mercy.

So, the alternative to justice is mercy. If you decline your wages you qualify to receive the free, unearned gift which is eternal life. But that only comes because Jesus took our wages, He took the wages of sin which were due to us and He received them in our place.

Hebrews 2:9 states this very clearly. It's a reference to a prediction of Jesus being glorified and everything being put under His feet. But the writer says at the present time that prediction has not been completely fulfilled. He says:

> "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that he, by the grace of God might taste death for every one."

So Jesus tasted death on behalf of, or in the place of every descendant of Adam. He was the last Adam. You remember the two titles from 1 Corinthians 15? First of all, He was the last Adam, then He was the second man. As the last Adam he terminated the whole evil inheritance that was due to Adam and all his descendants, including you and me. And when He died He said it is finished, that's the end. When He was buried it was buried with Him. And then when He rose again on the third day He was the second man, the head of a new race.

We need to look back into the Old Covenant to the principles of divine justice to understand precisely the nature of this exchange. I pointed out to you that the Bible is the only book which as a source reveals the human problem, which is sin, and reveals the divine solution, which is the atonement. So, it is foolish to look outside of the Bible for some alternative solution. Let's turn, therefore, to the principles of justice which were laid down in the law of Moses. I want to turn to Exodus 21:23–25. Speaking about a situation in which one person has wrongfully injured another, this is the principle:

> "If any lasting harm follows, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe."

So the principle is there has to be something of equal value in place of that which was destroyed. The first sentence says you shall give life for life. We need to face the fact that translation sometimes obscures some of the meaning. This is very true with the word life both in the Old Testament and in the New. In the New Testament actually there are three completely different words, all of which are translated in English life. I don't want to get involved in this but one is psuche which is soul, one is zoe which is eternal life, and one is bios which is natural life. But they're all translated life in most versions. In the Hebrew there is a word, a very interesting word, which is the word for soul. When it says Adam became a living soul, this is the word. I won't write it up in Hebrew because that won't mean much to most of you. But that is the word, nefesh. Can you read that, my rather squiggly writing? Now, that means soul, soul or life. Or, person. There are various other meanings but those are the main translations. So, Adam became a living nefesh, a person. Out of the union of the Spirit of God and clay there emerged something totally new, a person, a new life, a new personality, a nefesh.

And so, when it says life for life, the Hebrew says nefesh for nefesh. Soul for soul. In other words, if one person has died, another soul has to pay the penalty. That's the principle. Just to look again in Deuteronomy 19:21, you find the same principle again, just to look at it there.

> "Your eye shall not pity, but life shall be for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot."

Where it says life shall be for life, the Hebrew is nefesh in place of nefesh, one soul in place of another soul.

This is, I would say, one of the great basic revelations of the Old Testament which has been obscured, I think, for a good many Christians who only read in translation. I think the same would probably apply to people who read in the Scandinavian languages or German or French, or various other languages. I'm not too sure of that, I don't make a positive statement about it.

Now, going to Leviticus 17:11, we have:

> "For the life of the flesh is in the blood..."

And it's God speaking, this is a marvelous prophetic scripture.

> "...and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the

> blood that makes atonement for the soul."

If you look to the beginning of the verse it says "the life of the flesh," the Hebrew says nefesh. The soul of the flesh is in the blood. See, man has spirit and soul and body. And when the spirit leaves he ceases breathing. When the soul leaves, his blood no longer flows, it no longer circulates. We mustn't get involved in that, we'll be dealing with that next month, but let's leave that out for the time being.

So, the soul of the flesh is in the blood. And then God says, "I have given it [the soul or the life] on the altar to make atonement for your soul." One soul has to make atonement for another soul. Do you understand that? But the making of the atonement, the giving of the soul life is in the blood, it's in the blood that the soul resides. There are a lot of implications to that. For instance, I have to be careful of what I say because who knows where this will end. But my wife Ruth at present is on medication that thins her blood, which a lot of other people are on too, incidentally, we've discovered. And it has a certain effect on your personality. It's not just physical, it goes further than that because soul is in the blood. Do you understand? There's just a practical indication of how real this is.

Now, we come to the great atonement chapter and here is one of the wonderful revelations of scripture, going back to Isaiah 53, the closing verse, this is speaking about the servant of the Lord and what he has done in his sufferings. And then his resurrection, you remember, because in verse 10 it said "he shall prolong his days, the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper his hand." It says therefore, because of all that he's done:

> "I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul unto death, and he was numbered with the transgressors, he bore the sin of many, made intercession for the transgressors."

Notice that statement "he poured out his soul unto death." I'm inclined to think that some of the other modern translations probably use the word life, is that right, in place of soul? You understand, you always got those options in translation.

Now, here is the essence of the whole revelation, how did Jesus pour out His soul to death? In what? I want to hear you say that. In His blood, that's right. So that when Jesus' body was emptied of His blood on the cross, His soul was given on behalf of all humanity. Personally, as I read the account of the crucifixion I form the impression that basically His body was emptied of blood. First of all, they pierced His hands and His feet. They lacerated His back. He was bleeding profusely and after He had actually expired, you remember, a soldier thrust a spear into His heart and there came out water and blood. It was like the whole blood contents of His body was poured out on the cross. This was His offering of His soul on behalf of all the Adamic race. He was the last Adam.

How shall I try to express this? For years I believed in the atonement, I believed that Jesus was the sin offering. I believed that somehow it made provision for forgiveness for all humanity. But it was really only when I began to meditate on this truth about the soul in the blood that it became really vivid and logical to me. See, I'm a logician by background. And I can accept things by faith and believe them but sooner or later I want them to click logically. And I thought to myself the soul of the Son of God was given on behalf of humanity.

And then I thought about value and I thought about the life of God, the Creator, is infinitely more valuable than the life of all the creatures He's ever created. And so, the soul of the Son of God was more than a sufficient atonement for all the souls of the whole human race. Do you understand what I'm saying? And it says in the book of Psalms, "God has provided redemption in abundance." In other words, He not merely paid but He overpaid. And if you can grasp this it will somehow make Jesus infinitely more precious, I believe. His one soul which He gave on the cross through His blood was the offering for the redemption of the whole human race on the principle of a soul for a soul.

So, I want to emphasize that we need to be very, very careful about how we speak about the blood of Jesus. I've heard even Evangelical and Charismatic ministers in some way speak about the blood and say, "Well, the blood was merely negative, it's merely paid the price of sin." I don't believe that. I advise you to be very careful never to entertain any negative thinking about the blood of Jesus. Of course, the church is absolutely permeated with all sorts of teachings. And some of the denominations today have removed from their hymn books every reference to the blood of Jesus. Who's behind that? That's right, you said it, not me.

You see, the life is in the blood. Life is not negative, is it? Life is the most positive thing that you can ever encounter. The life of God is in the blood of Jesus.

Now, if you can receive this, let's turn on to John 6. Furthermore, I believe that when we express our appreciation of the blood of Jesus we attract the Holy Spirit. There's that beautiful hymn of Charles Wesley, "The Spirit Answers to the Blood." And when we really proclaim the truth about the blood of Jesus the Holy Spirit says, "That's a meeting I like to be in. I'd like to be there. Those people are saying things I like to hear." Because, believe me, the whole of heaven views with abhorrence anything that downgrades the blood of Jesus, as all heaven was a witness to the sacrifice in which He poured out every drop of His life blood.

So here are the words of Jesus in John 6. I want to warn you in advance that these words offended some of His disciples, they didn't follow Him any longer. And these words still offend people today. After all, there is something, in a way, offensive about blood. Whenever I think of blood, something inside me just begins to turn over. When I was a small boy I couldn't look at blood without vomiting. It took me years to get over this revulsion. And there's something in every one of us that just doesn't like the thought and the spectacle of blood. Is that right? Well, some things that are offensive are necessary. The cross is an offense. But without the cross there's no redemption. The blood is offensive to some people but without the blood we have no hope. Our hopes are entirely dependent upon the merits of the blood of Jesus. So here we are, John 6:53 and following:

> "Then Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly I say to you, unless the eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.'"

Why? Because the life is where? In the blood, that's right.

> "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is food indeed [or my flesh is true food], and my blood is true drink. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live by the Father, so he who feeds on me will live by me."

So, our having life depends on our living by Jesus, on our appropriating what is in His blood. See, as I understand it, the only person in the universe that has life in Himself is God. And God granted to Jesus to have life in Himself, He tells us that. None of us have life in ourself, none of us are the origin of life. Every one of us is dependent for life on some other source. Actually, that's the very essence of the word nefesh. I can't go into it but it describes life that is dependent, it does not initiate but is dependent.

It says in 1 Corinthians 15 "the second man was made a life giving spirit." He's the only one who gives life. Adam was made a living soul, he had a life that was dependent on the inbreathed breath of God that came into him. So we are dependent upon God for life. And the only channel of eternal life that God has given us is the blood of Jesus. If we want life, it comes to us through the blood of Jesus. And I would suggest to you the more you learn to meditate on and honor and appropriate the blood of Jesus in your life, the fuller and more abundant your life will be in God. Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." I believe the only channel of that life is the blood of Jesus.

Now, how do we feed on the blood of Jesus? I by no means am suggesting that I have all the answers. But it so happens that I began my ministry in l946 in an Arab town in the land of Israel which is called Ramallah, which is a lot in the news these days. In those days it was a small Arab village. And although I was never fluent in Arabic, the language that we used in our home at that time was Arabic. When the Arabs want to take the Lord's supper, do you know what they say? How would you know! "Let us drink the blood of Jesus." So I grew up, in a certain sense, with that concept that taking the Lord's supper is drinking the blood of Jesus. Of course, you understand, it's not literal. I'm sure you understand that. But as I understand it, that is the way or a way in which we appropriate the life, the soul life, of the Lord Jesus that He's made available to us.

You see, when Jesus died on the cross and poured out His blood, the life of God was released into the universe. And it's available to anybody who will receive it through faith in Jesus. Up to that time the life of God had been confined within God. The thought of what took place when Jesus died on the cross staggers the human mind. But in the blood of Jesus poured out freely was released the total life of God. And it's available to us only through His blood. There is no other channel of life but the blood.

I'm going to tell you something personal. When I tell this I always want to be careful that I don't give the impression everybody ought to do what I do. But Ruth and I lead a very nomadic life, we're always on the move. And one of the things we've learned is we have to have certain things that give us stability. And one thing that we do is every morning

I, as the priest of the house, give communion to Ruth and myself. Come and stand up here now. And as we take communion we have learned to say—I didn't give her any rehearsal of this and I hope it's right:

> "We thank you that in the blood of Jesus we receive the life of God—divine, eternal, endless life."

That's what I believe.

Sermon
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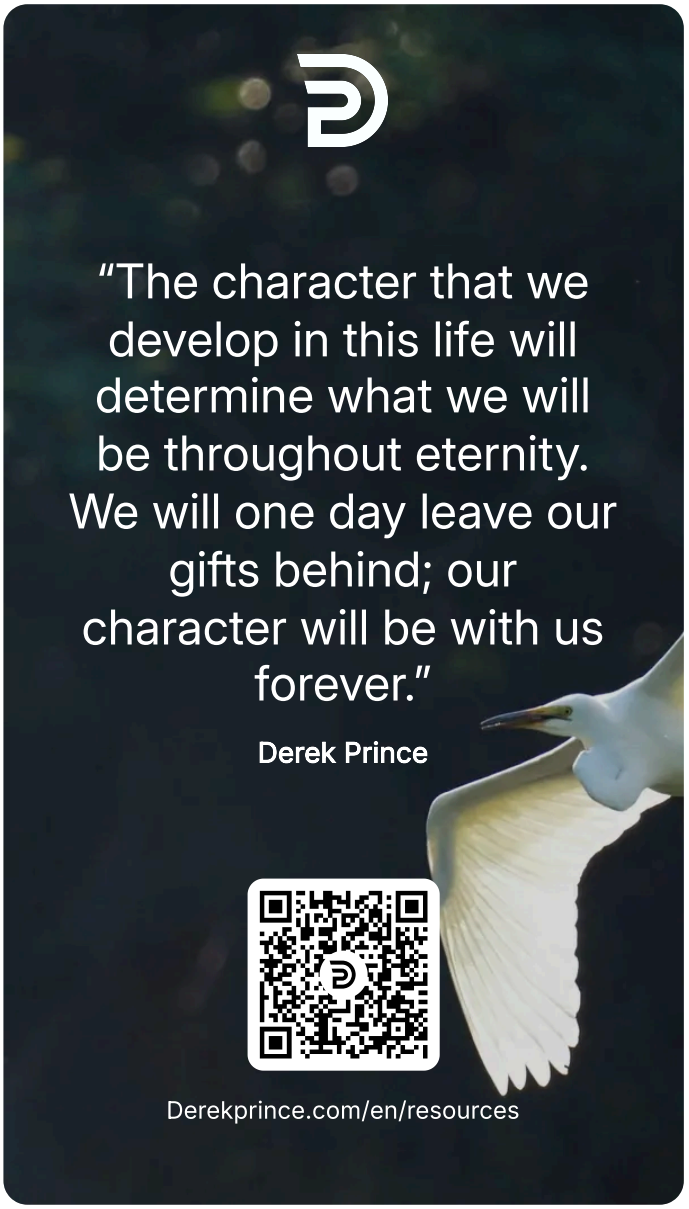

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