

DEREK PRINCE
MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Sermon

Poverty vs Abundance



Atonement
By Derek Prince

We'll begin again this session by repeating or affirming out loud Hebrews 10:14:

> "For by one sacrifice He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified."

We're talking about the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross; one perfect, complete, all sufficient sacrifice that covered the needs of every human being for time and for eternity. I've been unfolding to you the truth, which I believe God made known to me many years ago and which has had a life changing effect in me, that the essence of the sacrifice was an exchange in which all the evil due to us came upon Jesus that all the good due to Jesus might be offered to us. This we cannot earn; it's by grace. And grace is received only one way, by what? Faith, that's right. When the scripture says "by grace you have been saved through faith," that covers everything that Jesus did for us on the cross. It is all salvation. It's all of grace and it's all by faith.

I've dealt with a number of aspects of the exchange. Let's see if we can recapitulate them here this morning using our appropriate hands. The left hand for the evil, the right hand for the good. The first one was:

Jesus was punished that we might be forgiven.

Jesus was wounded that we might be healed.

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

Jesus died our death that we might share His life.

Jesus was made a curse that we might receive the blessing.

Of whom? Abraham. How much did God bless Abraham? In all things, that's right.

Let me just mention, in case some of you haven't seen it, there is a little book of mine, two weeks of my radio teaching, called From Curse to Blessing. This deals with the theme that we just touched on in our last session much more fully, if you're interested. Interestingly enough, my radio program is heard on about sixty-some stations in America, apart from all the stations around the earth. And, the first time this was broadcast for two weeks, we offered to listeners who felt they needed it the transcript free. Six

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thousand people wrote in for the transcript. That gives you some idea of how this touches people where their need is.

Okay. We're going to go on with the exchange and now we're going to turn to 2 Corinthians 8:9. If there are some theologians here this morning, we're going to check out your theology. I'm going to read it and then I'm going to ask you to tell me the two aspects of the exchange. All right? 2 Corinthians 8:9:

> "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ..."

Notice it's grace. What's true about grace? It cannot be earned. It's receive by faith.

> "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might become rich."

What is the exchange, what is the bad thing? Poverty. How many of you agree that poverty is a bad thing? I say that because in certain sections of the church it's been taught that in order to be holy you need to be poor. And there's a certain element of truth in that but it's been carried to ridiculous extremes. As far as I'm concerned, and I've traveled much of the earth and seen poverty in many different nations, for me, poverty is a curse.

So what's the alternative to poverty? Riches. Now, for various reasons, partly because of various forms of teaching that have gone forth in the last two or three decades, I prefer to say abundance. I don't really believe that it's the mark of spirituality that every Christian should drive a Cadillac or Mercedes. Personally, that doesn't really impress me. Let me say that it so happens in Israel we do drive a Mercedes, so I'm not saying that through lack of anything but just because I don't believe it's an accurate standard of spirituality. But I do believe that God offers us abundance. And I would define abundance as having enough for your own needs and something over to give to others. I believe that is the level of God's provision.

Now, some of you are going to have to have a mental battle to receive this truth. If you're like me, and I wasn't very religious but I was compelled to attend church in Britain eight times a week for ten years while I was at school, I formed the impression that Christians had better expect to be poor and miserable. And many of you, especially if you're from Europe, have something of the same background. You're going to have to ask God to release your mind from a kind of captivity of traditional thinking.

So, Jesus on the cross took our poverty that we might have, let's say, God's abundance. That was the exchange. Now, if you turn to the great chapter on blessings and curses, which is Deuteronomy 28, and look in the list of curses in verses 47 and 48, you'll find these. It says in verse 45:

> "Moreover, all these curses shall come upon you..."

And then in verses 47 and 48 it says:

> "Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joy and gladness of heart for the abundance of all things..."

Now, that's God's will. That's what God wants. But when we fail to do it through unbelief and disobedience, then God says:

> "...therefore, you shall serve your enemies whom the Lord will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in need of all things."

Take those four things: hunger, thirst, nakedness and need of all things. Put them together and what do you have? Absolute poverty. You cannot have greater poverty than that.

Let me share with you a revelation that came to me many years ago when I was in New Zealand. My first wife and I had been invited there and they told us they would cover all our expenses. When we arrived they didn't have the money to pay our fares. So they said you've got to preach for an offering. I prepared my outline, it's not the first time I preached on that, and I began to give them the promises of blessing, et cetera. But as I was preaching and speaking about these verses, the curse and the blessing, the Holy Spirit was giving me a mental picture of Jesus on the cross. He showed me that this curse was totally fulfilled in Jesus. It was exhausted. He was hungry, He hadn't eaten for twenty-four hours. He was thirsty. One of the last things He said was, "I thirst." He was naked, they'd taken all His clothes from Him. And He was in need of everything. He had precisely nothing when He died. He was buried in a borrowed robe and in a borrowed tomb. And as I was

speaking that, the truth came to me that Jesus exhausted the poverty curse on the cross.

Now, Jesus was not poor. Before He went to the cross He just didn't carry a lot of cash. But He always had what He needed. And any man who can feed 5,000 men plus women and children on the spot is not poor. My little comment on that in the light of contemporary culture is He just carried His Father's credit card and it was honored everywhere.

So, to suggest that Jesus was poor before He went to the cross is misleading. But on the cross because He took our curse, which we saw yesterday, He also endured the poverty curse. He exhausted it. There's nothing left of the poverty curse. After you've been hungry, thirsty, naked and in need of all things, you can't be more poor than that.

I relate the consequence. This revelation somehow broke through. There was a comparatively small number of people, maybe three or four hundred. They took up such an offering, it covered every need and every expense for the rest of our time and our journey to and fro. And they weren't particularly wealthy people. But it was just a spirit of revelation came.

And that's what I'm trying to share with you in this session, this revelation that on the cross Jesus exhausted the poverty curse that we might have abundance.

Now, turn back to the New Testament to 2 Corinthians 9:8. You've been in 2 Corinthians 8:9, now go to 2 Corinthians 9:8 which is the opposite side of it.

> "And God is able..."

How many of you believe God is able? I'm sure we all believe that.

> "God is able to make all grace abound towards you that you always, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work."

What is that? It's grace, isn't it? We don't earn it, we receive it by faith on the basis of what Jesus did on the cross. That is an astonishing verse. It doesn't fully come out in the English translation but in the Greek the word "all" is used five times and the word "abound" twice in one short verse. I'm going to ask my wife to come forward for a moment, I think she was expecting that though I didn't warn her. This is our personal basis for the financial needs of our ministry, which are vast. This is what we stand on. This is what we affirm. I want to impress upon you the importance of affirmation, proclamation, confession. Say it and keep on saying it. So, here we are, this is the way we say it. You see, we take it and make it personal. Paul says you, we say we.

> "God is able to make all grace abound toward us, that we always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work."

Would you like to say that? If you can believe it and say it, it will start something in your life. You just don't say it once, you have to maintain a good confession. Don't forget it when you move out of here. We'll say it phrase by phrase, you say it after us. Okay? Not with us but after us. And if you believe the Bible, you believe this. Don't analyze this and that, just say I believe the Bible, this is in the Bible, I believe it. All right. After us, not with us.

> "God is able to make all grace abound toward us, that we always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work."

Now, if you really believe that, what do you do next? "Thank you, Lord." See, if you don't say thank you, you're either a very ungrateful person or you don't believe it, there's no other alternative. Cultivate the habit of saying thank you. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says:

> "In everything give thanks..."

Now, let me point out to you I fear that some of this truth has been abused in some quarters for the carnal gratification and self-indulgence of people who ought to know better. Nevertheless, it's still true.

Let me offer you a thought about abundance. There's three levels. Insufficiency, sufficiency and abundance. Insufficiency means you don't have enough for what you need. Let's say you're a housewife and you need $80 worth of groceries. I'm not sure whether $80 buys anything today but anyhow. And you've got $75, you are shopping out of what? Insufficiency. Suppose you have $80, you are shopping out of sufficiency. But suppose you have $100, you are shopping out of abundance. Abundance comes from a Latin word, it means "a wave that flows over." So, you should be a person who has a wave in your from God that flows over.

Now why does God want all His children to have abundance? Turn to Acts 20:35. You see, I think of those who may be called to the ministry. I was a pastor in my

native land of Britain for eight years. This was a long while ago and Britain is beginning to change in a wonderful way. But the motto of the church in those days about ministers was, "Lord, you keep him humble and we'll keep him poor." And they certainly kept their part of the bargain! I sometimes meet ministers who've received the left foot of fellowship out of their particular denomination. If it's for the sake of the Lord I say, "Please don't worry. God is much more generous than most church boards."

So, here's Acts 20:35, Paul says:

> "I've shown you in every way [speaking to the elders of the church at Ephesus] by laboring like this that you must support the weak, and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Which is more blessed? Listen, I'm telling you, we're not taking up an offering in the next ten minutes, you can say it, it will not be used in evidence against you. All right.

Now, does God want some of His children to be without the greater blessing? I don't believe that. He has no favorites. So why has God provided abundance? That we may not merely receive but also give and thus receive the greater blessing. It doesn't follow we all give a lot but giving something is a very important part of the Christian life. In fact, God said of His people Israel in the Old Testament in the book of Exodus, "No one shall appear before me empty-handed." The book of Psalms says "bring an offering and come into His courts." Don't go without something.

This probably may end up in Britain one day so I have to be careful what I say. I was in Britain a little while back and I said, "Please, don't tip God." All right. God doesn't need your tips. When the offering comes around you don't just reach into your pocket, find the smallest thing you can and put it in. That is not honoring God. You don't have to give. But if you give, give in a way that honors God. Give God a little bit more than you'd give to the boy that parks your car in the parking lot. All right? You look a little somber. To me it is grievous to see people tipping God.

Remember, giving is part of worship. If we can't give with worship we ought not to give at all. I really don't like the idea of passing the whatever it is, the basket or the bucket. I prefer to see God's people come forward, marching up to the front and bringing their offering. I spent five years in east Africa and I'll tell you, when God touches the African heart they love to give. Scripture says God loves a hilarious giver. I've seen some hilarious givers. Most of them didn't have money so they'd come up with some coffee beans on their head, as every woman carries things. They'd go back again, God would touch them again, they'd come up with some corn cobs. Go back again and God would really touch them and they would come up with a live chicken and bring that. See? But they were hilarious. Some of you have maybe never tasted the hilariousness of giving.

But now, before we close this session, I want to add a P.S., a word of caution. I've got it written here, there is a higher order of riches. If all your wealth consists in your house, your swimming pool, your Cadillac, your cottage by the lake, and all the rest, remember one thing. When you die you won't take anything with you. You'll step out into eternity a naked soul. So there is a higher order of riches and it's called enduring riches.

Turn to Proverbs 8:18 for a moment. This is wisdom speaking. It's such a beautiful passage I'd love to read it all but I'll just read a little from verse 17 of Proverbs 8.

> "I love those who love me..."

Actually, this is the Lord Jesus speaking because He's the wisdom of God. You understand? It's wisdom personified in Jesus.

> "I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently will find me. Riches and honor are with me, enduring riches and righteousness."

Note that word "enduring." You see, everything that you have in this world is not enduring. You cannot take it with you. So what is enduring riches? Well, there are many answers. First of all, whatever you give to the kingdom of God, Jesus said in the next world you'll receive a hundredfold, which is ten thousand percent. That's a good rate of interest. So what we give out of our substance to the Lord becomes in the next world enduring riches.

And then Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3 there are two ways we can serve God on this earth. 1 Corinthians 3:11. He says:

> "No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw;

> each one's work will become manifest: for the day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned; he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved; yet so is through fire."

I think the New International Version says "as one escaping through the flame." So there's two kinds of service we can offer the Lord. One is large in quantity but low in value: wood, hay, straw. The other is gold, silver and precious stones. Which abides? Which stands the fire? The gold, silver and precious stones. If you're called to the ministry, let me suggest to you that you take care that what you are laying up is not vast quantities of wood, hay and straw, because there's going to come a fire that will consume it in an instant. But enduring riches is the lives that we bless with the truth of God's word with the power of the Holy Spirit that produces Christian character. We build men and women of God. And they're not really usually in such large quantities. There's a terrible tendency, I think especially in the United States, to focus on numbers. How many members do we have? A better question to ask is how many disciples do we have? Jesus never told us to get church members. He said make disciples.

What I've observed in the course of a fairly long life in the Lord's service is if you make disciples, you won't start with a large number but they'll be self reproducing. In the long run you'll end up with a lot and it will be quality, not quantity.

So, let me say that when we talk about abundance it's not always material abundance that God blesses us with. I'll give you two scriptures just to close with. Proverbs 13:7:

> "There is one who makes himself rich, yet has nothing. And one who makes himself poor, yet has great riches."

So there are those who deliberately turn away from the material wealth of this world, make themselves poor, but in the spiritual realm they have great riches. And I think Paul was one of those. Let's just read his testimony for a moment, as we close, in 2 Corinthians 6. It's a tremendous sentence. In verse 4 he says:

> "In all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God..."

And he gives a long list, most of which don't appear in Bible college curriculums. Like patience, tribulations, needs, distresses, strifes, imprisonments, tumult, labors, sleeplessness, fasting. You don't find that most Bible colleges train people in those areas.

And then he goes on in all the other ways in which they have approved themselves as ministers of God, and he comes to verse 9:

> "As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as chastened, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

So, poverty is a curse. God's provision is abundance. But don't focus merely on the material because when you die, that will be the end of that. There is a greater riches which comes to those whose priorities are right.

Sermon

Transcript: MV-4278-101-ENG
Last Updated: 16 Sept 2026
Website: Derekprince.com/en/resources



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