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MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Sermon

Deliverance From This Present Age



Atonement
By Derek Prince

In our previous three days of teaching I've tried to cover in outline that which was accomplished for us by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. I think it would be good at this point if we were to try to recapitulate the various successive aspects of the exchange which took place. So, remember what you do with your left hand and your right hand. And you know what to say at the end, too. This is always a test for me, myself, but let's see if we can do it.

- 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.
- Jesus bore our shame that we might share His glory.
- Jesus endured our rejection that we might have His acceptance.

And our old man was crucified in Him that the new man might come to life in us. I don't think we've done that one so let's do it once more. Our old man was crucified in Him that the new man might come to life in us. That's right. I got one real good student here.

Oh, I left out poverty, thank you for reminding me. Let's not leave out poverty. Let's add it. Jesus endured our poverty that we might have His abundance. Amen. Thank you, Lord. Thank you, thank you.

Now today we're moving into a new area which is the area of what God intends the cross to do in us. This is completely distinct from what Jesus has done on the cross for us. I would have to say according to my observation, which is limited, there is relatively little emphasis in the contemporary church on this aspect. But if I understand it rightly, we will never have the real permanent benefits of what Jesus has done for us unless we permit the cross to do in us what God has ordained. I believe that nearly all the problems that beset the church collectively and individual ministers and Christians are due to the failure to let the cross do its work in us.

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I'd like to turn therefore now to Galatians 3. What really blesses me about Paul's epistles is they were never written as theological treatises, they were written in all sorts of places like jails and people's homes. They were written out of urgency and a sense of a need to deal with some situation. And yet, structurally they are the most perfect theology. If you look in Galatians 3:1 where we've already looked previously, we find the problem that Paul was dealing with in Galatia or in the Galatian churches. Again, I offer my personal opinion. I think this problem is extremely common in the contemporary church. In fact, I think it's probably the commonest single problem. It's a problem that's not easily recognized. If there's immorality or drunkenness or completely false teaching, people recognize it. But the problem here is carnality expressed in legalism and it sounds so good and so religious that we feel a little guilty if we don't go along with it. But actually, Paul was more upset about Galatian churches than he was about the church in Corinth where they just had plain old-fashioned sin—which is really much easier to deal with than this religious, spurious version of what Christianity is intended to be.

So, the problem in Galatia was the cross had been obscured by Satanic forces which Paul identifies as witchcraft. I pointed out earlier in this series Spirit quote, filled—and I wouldn't use the word myself because I think a lot of people who call themselves Spirit filled have had an experience of the Holy Spirit but they're far from full. Anyhow, let's use the phrase. Spirit filled Christians can be bewitched. Has that sunk into your realization?

The evidence of witchcraft at work was that they had lost the vision of Jesus Christ crucified. I suggest to you wherever this happens in a church that has the vision, the same cause is responsible. It's a Satanic infiltration. Let's read what Paul says now:

> "O foolish Galatians..."

How many of us want to be called foolish? I think a lot of us would rather be called immoral or wicked than be called foolish.

> "O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified?"

What had witchcraft done? Obscured the vision of Jesus Christ crucified. Because, the crucified Christ is the only basis of all God's provision for us. So if that is obscured, we no longer enjoy God's provision.

Secondly, the crucified Christ was the means of Satan's total defeat. On the cross Jesus administered to Satan and his kingdom a total, eternal, irreversible defeat. Satan can do nothing about that but he can blind the eyes of the church to that fact. And that he's very eager to do.

Now what blesses me in Galatians is that the letter not merely presents the problem but it presents the solution. That's what we're going to be talking about today, the solution to the problem of a church that has lost the vision of the cross, how to come back into what God has provided. And Galatians unfolds, as I understand it, five successive deliverances that take place when we allow the cross to do its work in us. Now we're not talking about what Jesus did for us on the cross. Thank God for that but don't stop there. There's a work to be done in every believer through the cross dealing with our root basic problems.

Now we'll turn first of all, to Galatians 1:4. This speaks about a deliverance which has been made available to us through the cross. Again, I'm just limited in my observation, but I do travel a lot and I come together with a whole lot of different Christians. I don't think that I can remember encountering a single group anywhere in the last 10 years that had a clear vision of this deliverance. It is something that has completely dropped out of the thinking and the consciousness of Christians. And it is radical. I'm grateful to the dear sister that gave me a black T-shirt with white writing on it that said, "Be a radical Christian." If this wasn't being videoed and going all around the world, I might have worn the T-shirt. But anyhow, we're talking about something that is radical. Let's read Galatians 1:3–4:

> "Grace to you and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins..."

Where did He give Himself for our sins? On the cross. All right. We're talking about what He did on the cross.

> "...that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father."

Did you realize that it's God's purpose that through the cross we should be delivered from this present evil age?

You'll find some translations mix up the words "age" and "world." I just want to say a word about these two concepts. The Greek word for "age" basically is that. I mean, that's not exactly. Eon. It's a period of time, a very long period of time.

Basically, according to the Bible, time is measured in ages and generations. In every age there are X number of generations. And one of the beautiful phrases in the Bible which never comes out in translation is usually translated "forever and ever," but what it actually says is "for the ages of the ages." So not merely do we have ages but we have ages that are made up of ages—if you can remember that. And not merely do you have one of them, you have X number of them. So, when you think about eternity, think about ages made up of ages.

The other word is cosmos from which we get such words as cosmonaut and cosmological and all sorts. Cosmos is a sociological term in the New Testament. It has other uses but in the doctrine of the New Testament, cosmos describes people of a certain category. We'll come to it a little later in this study. But just bear in mind that when we're talking about the age, we're talking about an eon—however long that may be.

I want to point out to you certain facts about this present age which I think will enable you to understand why we need to be delivered from it. In other words, we should not belong to this age. We're people from another age. There's a lot of talk today about the new age movement—which I don't believe in, let me say that. But we really are the people of a new age. We're living in this age but we belong to a future age. I'll show you that in a moment. If you or I are living as though we're forever in this age, we've missed the whole purpose of God.

The first thing I want to say is the present age is coming to a close. Let's look at Matthew 13, just a few quick scriptures. This is the chapter of parables and Jesus is interpreting parables. I won't go into that in detail, but in verse 39, speaking about the parable of the wheat and the tares, He says:

> "The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age."

So, this age is coming to an end. If you feel like I do about this age, you'll say, "Thank God." I can't think of any worse prospect than the present age continuing forever. With all its misery, its sickness, its darkness, its ignorance, its cruelty, its war—thank God is it not going on forever.

And then in verse 40 Jesus says:

> "So it will be at the end of the age..."

And in verse 49 of the same chapter:

> "So it will be at the end of the age..."

And you can find many other passages. I just want to point out to you this age is impermanent.

Why is it an evil age? The reason is because it has an evil god. 2 Corinthians 4:4, a very important scripture. Paul is talking about people who can't see the gospel because their minds have been blinded. And he says:

> "Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded."

Who is the god of this age? Satan. Why is it an evil age? Because it has an evil god.

Now you could say God could depose Satan, but that's not His program. Satan will remain the god of this age as long as this age continues. God's program is to terminate the age. And when the age terminates, Satan will no longer be a god. He knows that well. That's why he does everything in his power to prevent this present age from coming to an end. That's one of the reasons he resents the church, because the church is God's instrument to bring this age to an end. Did you realize that? One of our main responsibilities in the world is to bring the age to an end, because it cannot end until we've done what we have to do. What's that? Various things but mainly Matthew 24:14:

> "This gospel of the kingdom shall be proclaimed in all the world as a witness to all nations, and then the end shall come."

The end of what? The end of the age, that's right. So, why does Satan oppose the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom? Because when that's been done, the age is *g*oing to end and he will no longer be a god. We are the people who threaten him. He's not threatened by politicians, military commanders, academicians; he's threatened by the people who have a purpose to preach the gospel of the kingdom. And I want to say I'm one of them. I am as far as I know totally committed to that task.

Let's notice Hebrews 6:4–6. The writer is here talking about people who've had a number of experiences and then deliberately go back, deny them and deny Jesus Christ. He says you can do nothing more for them, they're cut off. My aim is not to present that fact but just to list the experiences that these people have had. Hebrews 6:4:

> "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened [experience number one] and have tasted the heavenly gift [number two] and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit [number three], and have tasted the good word of God [number four] and the powers of the age to come [number five]..."

So there are people today—and I believe I'm one of them, I believe you are among them—who have experienced those things. And having tasted the good word of God, and having become partakers of the Holy Spirit, we have tasted the powers of the next age. One reason, I believe, is that God wants to spoil our taste for the powers of this age. God wants us to have tasted something so totally different and so utterly superior that we'll never again be enamored of the powers of this age. But I don't see that happening with many Christians up to this time.

And then Matthew 13, going back to the parables. The well known parable of the sower and the seed. Jesus interprets the different types of soil and the results that were produced from the seed. He speaks about the one who received the seed among thorns in Matthew 13:22:

> "Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word..."

This version that I'm reading, the New King James, says "the cares of this world." But that's inaccurate. The word is not cosmos, it's eon. It's the cares of this age. I think you'll find all the new translations use the word age. Isn't that right? NIV, NASB and so on. And most of them use the word "worries." So:

> "...the worries of this age and the deceitfulness of riches..."

What's the deceitfulness of riches? Well, first of all, people think that riches will make them happy. They never do. Some of the unhappiest people in the world are some of the richest. Another deceit of riches is it's going to last forever. It isn't. When you leave this life, you leave it all behind you. But:

> "...the worries of this age and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and those people become unfruitful."

See that? If we are preoccupied with the issues of this age and all our focus is on what's going on in this age, the result will be that we'll be unfruitful Christians. The Word of God will not do its work in us. Could that have happened to any of us? Is there a possibility that we or some of us could have become totally preoccupied with issues of this age? Political issues, social issues, theological issues? And we're living as though this age was going to go on forever? It isn't. If you could see your own faces! I'm telling you good news!

It's coming to an end, thank God. There will be an end of misery, shame and crime and hunger. There's only one thing that will bring it to an end, that's the coming of the Lord. Nothing else will do it. The church has had 2,000 years to do it and they haven't made much progress. There's more misery, more war, more sickness, more poverty and more ignorance in the world today than there ever was. Thank God the Lord is coming back! He can handle situations.

I tell people sometimes if you want to stand up to the antichrist, that's fine. But I'm not going to be a hero. I'm going to let Christ deal with the antichrist. Let's not get involved in all that.

Do you understand then that the worries of this age will make us unfruitful? Maybe you've had a problem in your life, "Why don't I see more results? Why don't I get more answers to prayer? Why are I not successful in leading people to the Lord?" Could it be that you're too much preoccupied with the issues of this age? Because, they'll make you unfruitful.

Then we look in Romans 12:1–2. Paul comes to the point where he is applying the theology of Romans 1–11. Most commentators would agree Romans 1–11 is the theological, the doctrinal basis of the gospel. I was a professional logician, philosopher, and I want to give you my personal opinion. The epistle to the Romans is the most wonderful piece of logic that has ever been penned by a human being. You never need to feel intellectually inferior for believing your Bible. There is not another work on earth that can rival this for intellectual accuracy and clarity. But having gone through all the theology, Paul does end. He never does. He says this is how it works out in your life. You will not find theology divorced from living anywhere in the New Testament. Always theology is related "and this is what it means for you and me in our lives." Now he comes to the therefore at the end of 11 chapters.

> "I beseech you therefore, brethren..."

Some of you have heard me say when you find a "therefore" in the Bible, you need to find out what it's there for. This therefore is there because of the previous 11 chapters of Romans.

> "I beseech you therefore, brethren..."

What? What does he want you to do? Be very spiritual? Study a lot more? Go to seminary? Well, he doesn't say that. He says

> "...present your body a living sacrifice..."

How down to earth the Bible is, isn't it? Just when we're getting super-spiritual, God says, "I want your body on the altar without reservation. And when I have that, I'll do something in your mind. Then I'll renew your mind." If you want a renewed mind you have to present your body. God doesn't renew your mind on any other basis. Paul goes on to say in the next verse:

> "Do not be conformed to this world..."

That's my translation but it's "age." Do not be like the people of this age. Don't think the way they think, don't act the way they act. Have a different set of priorities, focus on different issues. Don't focus on the temporal, focus on the eternal. That doesn't mean you're unpractical. The people who really focus on the eternal in the light of God's Word are the most practical people on earth today. They're the ones who are getting results.

Let's look at what he says:

> "Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind..."

God doesn't change us from outside in, He changes us from inside out. Religion cleans you up on the outside, dresses you in new clothes and tells you not to eat this and not to drink that. God changes us from the inside. When you think differently, you'll live differently. God is not interested in external change that doesn't touch the inner nature.

Well, I'm coming back to this later so I'll move on. Let's look at one last tragic scripture. 2 Timothy 4:10. Here's Paul near the end of his ministry, a tremendous success, isn't he? Or is he? By whose standards? Forsaken by most of his friends, an elderly man, rather cold in winter, sitting in a jail awaiting an unjust trial and execution. Is that success by this world's standards? Not even by the church's standards today. What does he say? I'm sure he must have shed tears as he wrote these words:

> "For Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present age."

There's a man who had been with Paul years. He was a trusted coworker. Paul was relying on him—and he quit, he walked out. Why? What was the cause? Tell me. He loved this present age. Understand, that in the long run you cannot love this present age and be faithful to Jesus Christ. Thank God that He has provided a way of deliverance through the cross.

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Sermon

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