

Deliverance From The Flesh



Atonement
By Derek Prince

We are looking at five different deliverances listed in Galatians which God offers us through the work of the cross within us. We've looked at three and it would be good, I think, if we could recapitulate them, if possible, in the right order. Galatians 1:4 says:

> "God has delivered us from this present evil age."

Galatians 2:19 says:

> "God has delivered us from the Law."

And Galatians 2:20 says:

> "We can be delivered from self."

Wonderful! Now we're going on to the fourth deliverance listed in Galatians which is found in Galatians 5:24:

> "Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."

From what are we offered deliverance through that verse? From the flesh. Let's consider for a moment what the flesh means. It doesn't mean we're delivered out of our physical body, we remain in our physical body. We've already spoken about the old man, the rebellious nature which each one of us has inherited by descent from Adam. I would say the flesh could be interpreted as the way the old man expresses itself in us and through us. That's the flesh. So, the flesh, the old man, are very closely tied together.

Now this says those who are Christ's have crucified their flesh. That would mean those who belong to Christ. So that gives us a definition of those who belong to Christ. If you turn for a moment to 1 Corinthians 15:23, you find the same phrase used there. 1 Corinthians 15:23, speaking about the resurrection, Paul says:

> "Each one in his own order: Christ the first fruits [who has already been resurrected], afterwards those who are Christ's at His coming..."

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He uses exactly the same phrase in 1 Corinthians 15:23, Galatians 5:24, "those who are Christ's." Christ is coming back for those who are His. He's coming back as a thief but only in His coming. When He takes, He's only going to take what belongs to Him. See? He's not going to steal. He's coming like a thief.

So, here is the definition of those whom Jesus is going to take. It's those who belong to Him. And now you go back to Galatians 5:24 and you discover the kind of persons for whom Jesus is coming. It's those who have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. It's not a denominational matter. Jesus is not coming back for Protestants or Catholics or Baptists or Pentecostals. He's coming back for people who fulfill the certain condition, those who have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires.

Now, just a little higher up in Galatians, Paul gives us a list of the works of the flesh, the things that the fleshly nature produces in our lives. So, it's worthwhile looking at that for a moment. Galatians 5:19–21. There are slight differences in the translations based on different texts that are available. I'm speaking from the New King James but I'm going to follow a different text, don't let that confuse you, it's just designed to prevent you getting confused. All right. Are you with me?

> "The works of the flesh are evident..."

All too evident, I would say. Not always evident to the one who has them but evident to everybody else.

> "The works of the flesh are evident, which are: sexual immorality, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contention, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissension, heresies, envy, drunkenness, revelries and the like, of which I tell you beforehand just as I also told you in time past that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."

That's very clear. You can't live that way and inherit the kingdom of God, they're mutually exclusive.

It's interesting to note that there are four main categories of the works of the flesh. If you look with me for a moment, the first is sexual impurity: fornication or sexual immorality, uncleanness, and licentiousness. The word fornication or sexual immorality covers every kind of sexual immorality. It covers premarital sex if you want to give it that fancy name; it covers adultery, the breaking of a marriage covenant; it covers homosexuality and every other type of perversion. It says in one of the epistles that the men of Sodom and Gomorrah practiced this thing; that is, homosexuality. So let people say what they will and ordain whom they will, but the Bible says very clearly people that do that are outside the kingdom of God. That's the first category.

The second category I would call the occult. It's idolatry and sorcery. An alternative translation for sorcery is witchcraft. It's interesting that witchcraft though it's a very satanic thing, is initially a work of the flesh. Once the flesh comes into operation, the satanic moves in and takes over. What was the first desire of Adam and Eve that led them into trouble? It was to know. That's a desire of the flesh. And uncounted millions are captivated in the occult because they want to find out things that God has not permitted them to find out. Going to a fortune teller is motivated by that. That's just one of countless examples. They are works of the flesh.

The word that's translated sorcery is directly related to the Greek word for drugs. It's the same word from which we get pharmacy. And so, the whole drug cult is sorcery, it's the occult. And those who practice those things are outside the kingdom of God.

But this is much the longest part of the list and very little attended to. Every kind of division in the Body of Christ, every kind of broken personal relationship is in this list. Let me read them to you. "Hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, and envy." Everything that divides the Body of Christ is a product of the flesh. Everything that divides homes and families is a product of the flesh.

And then the final category is drunkenness, revelries and the like, which I call self indulgence. The self indulgent are not candidates for the kingdom of God. Overeating, overdrinking, overindulging your physical appetites excludes you from the kingdom of God. So that's the list. That's what the flesh produces. You can search in vain for anything good; nothing good ever comes out of the flesh. It is incapable of producing good.

What is the key word that I gave you for the old nature? Corrupt, that's right. Corrupt. And anything the flesh produces is corrupt. It cannot produce anything good.

To support what I said about the source of all divisions in the Body of Christ, let's turn for a moment to 1 Corinthians 3. Paul is writing to the Corinthian church and he's telling them they're carnal. You understand that the word carnal is

the same as fleshly. If you speak any of the Latin languages, you'll recognize the word. Carne in Italian is meat. French for flesh is ?Share? if I remember rightly. So, whatever those words are, it means fleshly. You're in the flesh. In other words, it's your fleshly nature that's controlling you.

Some theologians have said that Paul called the Corinthians Christians carnal because they spoke so much in tongues. Mostly those are the theologians that don't speak in tongues. However, it's not what Paul says. What's the mark of carnality? Here it is:

> "...for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife and division among you, are you not carnal, and behaving like mere men? For when one says, 'I am of Paul', and another, 'I am of Apollos,' are you not carnal?"

What is carnality? It's division, it's following fleshly leaders. So one says—Lord forgive me—"I follow Luther," another says, "I follow Calvin," another says, "I follow Wesley," that marks them out as carnal. Now you can receive the teaching of those men, and thank God for it. When you become a follower of men, it's carnality.

See, the problem was not speaking in tongues, the problem was these wrong attitudes and relationships. And wherever those are found there's carnality. It's the work of the flesh.

See, it isn't theology that divides the church, it's carnality. People can use theology in a very carnal way but it's the carnality, not the theology that's the root of the problem. And there's only one solution, tell me what it is. The cross, that's right. Where people are not willing to submit to the cross in their lives there will be division, strife and envy and jealousy and pride.

All right. Now let me point out something which I hope will help you because I have the impression as we go through this very condensed outline you get the impression, "I'm not up to standard. A lot of the things he's saying, I haven't arrived there." Relax. God doesn't expect you to have arrived. But he trusts that you're on the way, you understand? As we go through this, I want to point out this very important fact: every one of us, the preacher included, has an enemy of God within us. Most of our struggles and problems and difficulties as Christians are due to this enemy within.

I don't know whether you've ever heard the phrase "the fifth column." Have you heard that? If you lived through World War II, you did. Well, I don't know whether you know the origin of the word "fifth column," but it came from the Spanish Civil War in the I930s, I936, when Spaniards were fighting Spaniards inside Spain. A certain Spanish general was besieging a Spanish city and another general came to him and said, "What is your plan to capture this city?" And he said, "I have four columns advancing against the city: one from the north, one from the east, one from the south, and one from the west." Then he paused and said, "But it's my fifth column I'm expecting to take the city for me." The second general said, "Where is your fifth column?" The first general said, "Inside the city." Well, that's our problem. We are never defeated from without. The church is never defeated from without. The church is undefeatable except by the fifth column, the enemy inside. Every one of us has an enemy inside. It's the flesh.

Let's look at what Paul says in Romans 7. Why I'm saying this is I don't want you to feel guilty if you discover you have a struggle. The fact that you have a struggle may mean that you're much more alive than Christians who don't have any struggles, because as far as they're concerned, the enemy is not meeting with any opposition. Romans 7:18:

> "For I know that in me; that is, in my flesh, nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find."

I have said sometimes the difference between the apostle Paul and most of us was he knew, we don't. He said, "I know that there's nothing good in my fleshly nature. I cannot expect any good to come out of it. No matter how hard I want to do what is good, I'm faced with this continual struggle of something inside me that doesn't want to do what is good." None of you have ever had that problem, have you?

Let's go on, Romans 8:6–8. What I want you to see is the problem is, in a sense, is a good sign. Let me tell you, Paul was not an immature Christian when he got to Romans 7. He was on the threshold of Romans 8. You'll never really get into Romans 8 till you've learned to deal with your flesh.

Romans 8:6–8:

> "For to be carnally minded [to think the way the flesh thinks, to let your fleshly nature control your thinking] is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace..."

To let the Holy Spirit control the way you think, that's life and peace.

> "...because the carnal mind is enmity against God..."

What against God? Enmity.

> "...for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be."

There is no way to bring your fleshly nature into obedience to God. It will never obey God. Accept that fact. Don't try to make it obey God, don't make it religious, don't try to take it to church and sit on hours in meetings and go through a lot of religious exercises trying to make your carnal nature obey God because it won't do it. It can't do it. It is incurably corrupt and it is a rebel to the roots. So what is the remedy? We've all looked at that, it is what in one word? Execution, that's right. God's solution is execution. Shall we say that? "God's solution is execution."

But let me say again the mercy of God is this: the good news, the execution took place more than 19 centuries ago. When Jesus died on the cross, our old man, that carnal nature, was put to death in Him. What we have to do now is apply what Jesus accomplished for us on the cross. Do you understand? We don't have to do it, we have to apply what Jesus has done.

Romans 6:6:

> "Knowing this..."

And again I have to say, the problem with the contemporary church is most Christians don't know it.

> "Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him..."

That's a historical fact. It's true whether we know it or not, whether we believe it or not. But when we know it and believe it, it works in us. Do you understand? I hope you do.

> "Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him [Jesus], that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin."

The translation "done away with" I think is a little misleading. I don't believe as long as we are in this life we're ever going to come to a total end of our carnal nature. It can be put out of action, it can be rendered ineffective. I have met people who believe they were totally delivered from the flesh, but I wasn't convinced. After that they didn't get angry, they just had righteous indignation! But I think that's hypocrisy myself. As I understand it, the flesh can be rendered ineffective, it can be made incapable of doing what it would like to do but it cannot be eliminated in this age. That's another reason for looking for another age. See?

All right. Then Paul says in Romans 6:11:

> "Likewise, you also reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin..."

Notice the order. Verse 6, you know it, you know it from scripture. But verse 11, you reckon it, you apply it to yourself. You say, "My carnal nature has been crucified."

Let me give you these three simple words which may help some of you. I'm sure some of you have heard this before. Three "F's." Fact, faith and feeling. Now, you've got to go from left to right. If you go from right to left, you are in trouble. You do not begin with your feelings. You begin with the facts. Where are the facts found? In the Bible, that's right. The Bible contains facts.

All right. Your faith is built on the facts, and your feeling comes into line with your faith. So what I'm giving you and what I've been giving you consistently throughout this series is facts. I think some of you kind of felt it's a little too objective, too remote. But the truth is you've got to begin with the objective. If you begin with your feelings, you're awash. I mean, you have no anchor, you can go anywhere, you can believe anything, you'll get carried here and there. You have to begin with the scriptural facts. Base your faith on them and let your feelings take care of themselves. Don't let your feelings dictate to you.

I'll tell you this from experience. Sometimes when you feel that you're the most miserable failure, you're more pleasing to God than when you really think I'm doing tremendously well. God is near those who are of a broken heart. In fact, the sacrifices of God are a broken heart. One thing that keeps God at a distance is self confidence. I don't suppose any of you have ever had this problem, but I've met problems that I thought I can handle this one. Sometime later I wished I'd never said that.

I remember years ago with my first wife—I can't go into this in detail—taking a journey. The first time I ever came to this

dangerous United States from Canada, I was terrified of this country. I mean, I heard there were freeways that you couldn't drive less than 40 miles an hour. That frightened me. So we planned our route from where we were in Ottawa to Lima, New York, to avoid all freeways. Succeeded and arrived safely. So when we were starting off back to Canada, Lydia said to me, "I think we better pray." I said, "There's no need to pray." Oh, God, I've never said that again, never! We got on the freeway, we thought we could handle it. Well, the exit signs on freeways in the United States are different from those in Canada. So we passed the right exit and the next exit was 57 miles further on. So we had to drive 114 miles, got off at the right exit and then the car broke down. I won't tell you the rest of it, I have never again said there's no need to pray—never! I learned that lesson.

Now, let's look at how we apply the provision. 1 Peter 4:1– 2. There are verses I've pondered over for years. Then I think the Lord showed me the answer which I'm going to share with you. 1 Peter 4:1–2:

> "Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind..."

That's important. Be armed. Don't be unarmed. Go into life armed with the expectation you are going to have to suffer. All right? I didn't hear anybody say "Praise the Lord."

> "...arm yourselves also with the same mind, [that you are going to have to suffer in the flesh] for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God."

The passage that I couldn't interpret was "he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin." Because I said to myself, "I thought all the suffering took place when Jesus died on the cross and I can't add anything to what He did. I can't suffer extra, He's already suffered." But I came to see that the suffering is in crucifying your flesh. You remember what it said at the beginning? "Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."

Now, crucifixion is not painless. I don't believe it's painless for any one of us to crucify our flesh. It means, in a certain sense, you've got to drive the nails in and put yourself on the cross.

I use a sort of familiar simple example that's not from real life but could be. We take a Christian young lady in her early 20's who is a committed Christian, wants to serve the Lord. But a man comes into her life who claims to be a Christian and goes to church but really only goes to church in order to be with this young woman. And he says he wants to marry her. She has become emotionally involved with him and she doesn't know what to do. She has a godly pastor who cares for her soul and this pastor tells her, "He's not a real Christian, he's just putting it on because he wants you. Don't marry him."

Now she's got two options. She can crucify her flesh or not crucify her flesh. If she crucifies her flesh, her flesh says, "But I love him." She says, "Nail in."

"But I want a home and children."

"Nail in."

"But I'm afraid of being lonely and having to live by myself."

"Nail in."

You understand? Both hands and the feet are nailed. That's painful. But it doesn't last long. After a little while she's free, she's happy and in due course the right man comes along. But suppose she refused to crucify her flesh? What happens? Well, it's an all too familiar story. She married him and it soon appears that he wasn't really committed and doesn't really love the Lord, and is not going to be any kind of spiritual head or help to her. After 15 years of strife he deserts her, leaving her with three children.

Has that ever happened anywhere? It happens every day, doesn't it? So, which is more painful? Dealing with your flesh or spending 15 years married to a man and being left with the children? See what I'm saying? It's going to be painful one way or the other, there are things in life which are painful because of our fleshly nature. The question is are you going to take God's solution or are you going to go the other way? God's solution is painful but only temporarily. It doesn't last too long. Most broken hearts mend after a year or two. And you're free to live the rest of your life for God.

That's what Peter says. See, I couldn't understand that. Let's go back to that passage.

> "Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin..."

That's tremendous. You can come to the place where sin no longer dominates you.

> "...that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God."

I do believe that there comes a crisis in the life of most Christians, especially those who are what you might call "called" to some specific type of ministry. A crisis where they're either going to do what the flesh wants and miss God, or they're going to crucify the flesh and suffer. But out of the suffering comes a developed character and a committed life that is no longer a slave to sin. I would think that very few people come into what you might call, quote, full time ministry in the will of God, who haven't gone through that.

Looking back on my own experience, without going into any details, I can see that there came a point where I could either make the right decision or the wrong decision. I could have gone the way of my flesh, pleased myself, taken the easy course. Or, I could apply the cross. And I'm glad—I didn't do it knowingly, I didn't have all this doctrine, but I did it. I think I was pretty clumsy, I didn't get the nails in right the first time, but I did it. And I have to say many years later, more than 40 years later, I'm glad I did.

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Sermon

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