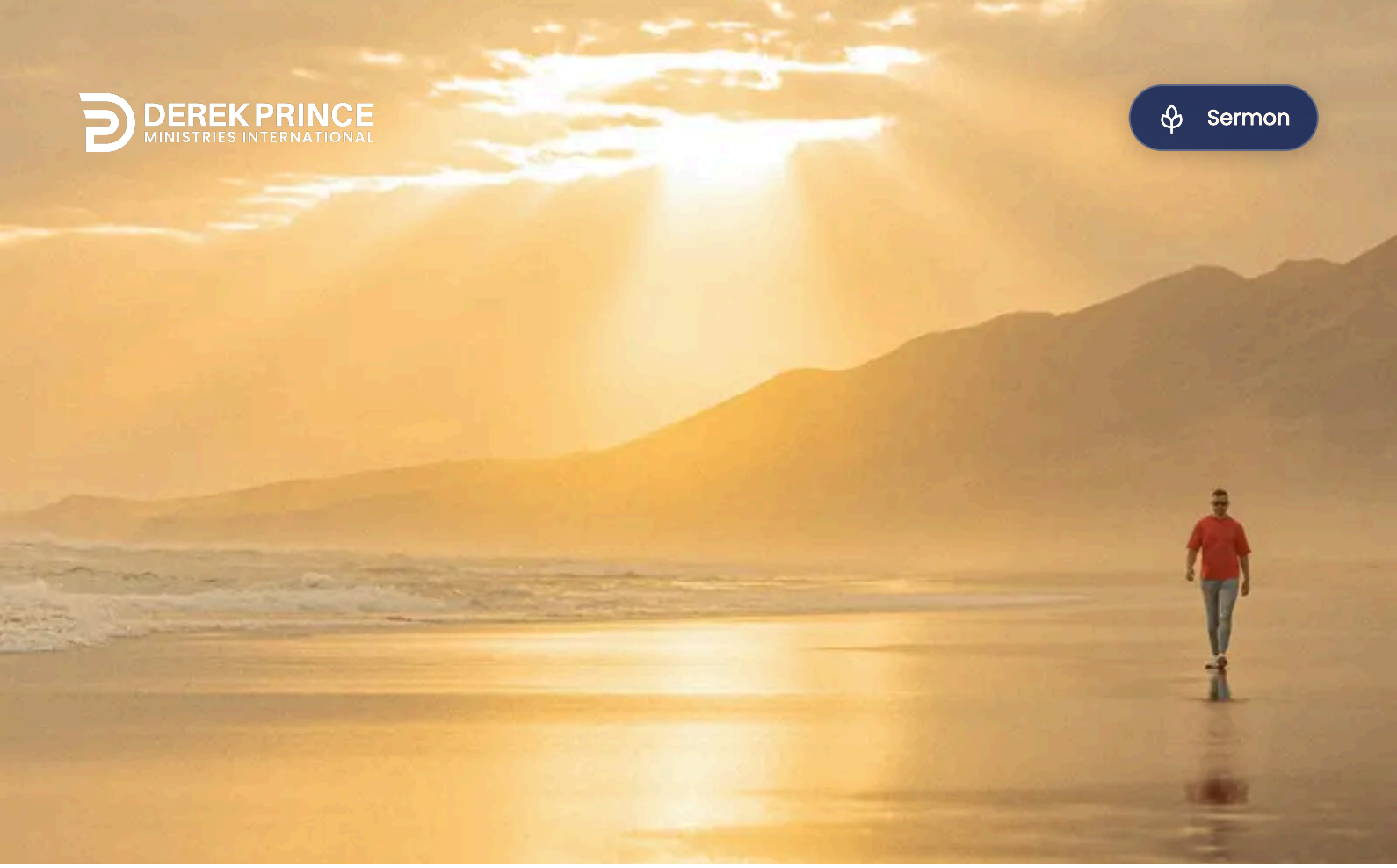

DEREK PRINCE
MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Sermon

From Legal To Experiential



Atonement
By Derek Prince

This is the final four sessions in this series of teaching on the atonement. Today I'm going to seek, with God's help, to try to give you some insight and instruction on how you can appropriate all that God has provided through the atonement. But I think it would be good first, and in line with the principles of teaching, to do a little brief recapitulation. Somebody who was in the teaching profession came out with this statement: "Remember, nothing has been taught until something has been learned." So it isn't a question of how much I've said, it's a question of how much you have learned.

So, we're going to recapitulate two things. First of all, the aspects of the exchange that took place when Jesus died on the cross. I'll tell you the second one next. But let's see if we can do this. This is always a test of my own memory. Let's be simple and childlike, using our left hand for the bad things, our right hand for the good things. Okay. Are you ready? 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 endured our poverty that we might share His abundance. Jesus bore our shame that we might share His glory. Jesus endured our rejection that we might have His acceptance. Our old man died in Jesus that the new man might live in us.

I saw some of you really saying it without looking at your note outline, so congratulations! I'm impressed.

Then yesterday in our sessions we looked at five different aspects of deliverance through the application of the cross in our lives. They're all contained in Galatians. So, let's see if we can do that. Through the cross we receive deliverance from this present evil age, from the law, from self, from the flesh and from the world. Again, I'm impressed. A lot of you have mastered it.

Now all that is what God has done. But it doesn't avail us unless we know how to appropriate it. So that's going to be my theme throughout the sessions today. Let me say by way of help that if anybody misses what God's provided, it will not be because it's too difficult, it will be because it's too simple. There's nothing complicated in God's plan for appropriating His salvation.

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I want to start with a little example from the Old Testament from the book of Joshua. Because, I believe this is a wonderful pattern for us. I'm just going to read Joshua 1:2–3, which were the words that the Lord spoke to Joshua when he was given the responsibility of bringing the Israelites into the land of Canaan after the death of Moses. I think you'll agree that Moses was a hard person to fill the shoes of. So it was a tremendous responsibility that had come on Joshua. This is what the Lord said:

> "Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore, arise and go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them [the children of Israel]. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon, I have given you as I said to Moses."

I want to point out two different tenses. In verse 2 the Lord says, "I am giving." But in verse 3 He says, "I have given." Now, the Lord is the disposer of everything in heaven and earth. The earth is the Lord's, the fullness thereof. So when the Lord gives something, that settles it, there's no arguing about it. The Lord said, "I am giving this territory that you see in front of you to you." And then He said, "I have given it to you." And as far as I understand, from that moment onwards, legally the entire land of Canaan belonged to the sons of Israel.

But they didn't actually occupy anything more than they had before the Lord spoke. They could have had two wrong reactions. The first would have been discouragement. "Well, the Lord said He'd given it all to us and we don't have anything more than we had before. We're still in the same place!"

The other would be presumption which is the opposite of discouragement. And here we take a little picture of God's people and we could apply it to the church. I don't want to use any names but suppose you view the crossing of the Jordan that was to follow as receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit. So, there's two different ways the Israelites could have acted presumptuously. They could have lined up on the east bank of the Jordan, folded their arms, looked westward and said, "It's all ours." But they wouldn't have any more than they had before they started. Or, they could have been a little more adventurous, crossed the Jordan, lined up on the west bank, look westward, folded their arms and said, "It's all ours." Legally they would have been right. Experientially they would have been wrong. The Canaanites still knew who possessed the land.

So I think sometimes the church can be like that. Whichever side of the Jordan you might happen to be on, you look across at the Promised Land and you say, "It's all ours." Legally you're right, experientially you're wrong. I've heard people say—you may have heard it—"I got it all when I was saved." My answer to that is, "If you got it all, where is it all? Let's see it." But it's perfectly true. Legally once you are saved and born again, you are an heir of God and a joint heir with Jesus Christ. Everything that belongs to Jesus belongs to you. But, you don't possess it. So you have to distinguish between the legal and the experiential.

This is true in what we're talking about. Legally, everything that Jesus did on the cross is for us, it's already ours. It's already provided. But experientially, most of us haven't entered into everything what He's provided. In fact, I doubt whether there's anybody who has actually appropriated in experience all that Jesus provided through His death on the cross.

Do you remember the scripture that we were saying at the beginning—which we could well say again, Hebrews 10:14:

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

So that's the one sacrifice. It's like God saying, "I have given it." But the being sanctified in like crossing the river and going into the land and taking possession of it. And it's an interesting fact if you study the history of Joshua, God did two tremendous miracles to bring the Israelites into the land. The crossing of the Jordan and the destruction of Jericho. But from that time onward they had to fight for everything they got. I personally believe this is true in the Christian life. God will do certain miracles to bring you in. After that you only get what you fight for. And if you don't fight for it, you don't get it.

Historically, the Israelites at that time never really took over the whole land. They coexisted with the alien forces, which was a disaster for them. I think that perhaps is a picture of the church, trying to move in and coexisting with a lot of enemy forces which shouldn't be there.

Anyhow, I just want to encourage you that Joshua and the Israelites entering into the inheritance is, in a certain sense, a pattern for us. So, don't be discouraged if you find yourself involved in tremendous battles. It's part of the whole process. Don't just fold your arms and say, "It's all ours," because you'll be disappointed.

There's a scripture, too, in the prophet Obadiah. Some of you don't really know much about Obadiah. He's the

shortest of all the prophets but he's got a message. If you want to know where to look for him, he's between Amos and Jonah. If you don't know where to find Amos, well then you have a problem. I just want to read one verse from Obadiah, verse 17. This is a picture of the restoration of Israel to their inheritance at the close of this age, which is at present as I believe, under way—although it's got a lot further to go.

> "But on Mount Zion there shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions."

Now there are various different translations, I've looked at two or three. But the essence is there. Three things: deliverance, holiness, and God's people possessing their possessions. You see, we can have possessions that we never possess. And I personally believe that these are the steps in very simple outline by which God's people will get back into their inheritance.

I am intimately involved in Israel and in the Middle East. I'm not Jewish but my view of history is that the Jews, because of disobedience, were exiled from their God-given inheritance for something like 19 centuries. At the present moment they're on their way back. This you may not agree with but as one of my friends says, "How can I help it if I'm right!" What I want to suggest to you is this is not only true of Israel, it's equally true of God's covenant people, the church. For almost the same period of time, I believe the church has been in exile from it's God-given inheritance in Christ. If you look at the church portrayed in the New Testament and in the book of Acts, and look at the church as it has been through the centuries, you'd have to say there's very little correspondence between them. So in a sense, Israel returning into their geographical inheritance is a pattern and a challenge for the church returning into its spiritual inheritance in Christ. I believe the steps are the same. Deliverance, holiness and then possessing our possessions.

We spoke yesterday about five forms of deliverance in the book of Galatians. Deliverance from this present evil age, from the law, from self, from the flesh, from the world. I believe those deliverances are essential if God's people are to get back into their inheritance. But I also believe that we will not really enter into our inheritance without holiness. You remember Hebrews 10:14, how can you ever forget it from now on?

> "By one sacrifice He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified [or made holy]."

In other words, as we progress in holiness we qualify to get back into our inheritance. So there's just a little picture from Obadiah.

Now, I want to come to what you call the practical aspect. How can we appropriate the provision that's made for us by the cross? The first thing which has to be established, it's not new but it's true—and incidentally, I'm not interested in people preaching something new. I'm interested in people preaching what is true. Some Christians always want to hear something new. Very often, what is new is not true. So, let's come back to the old truism, faith is essential. Hebrews 11:6:

> "But without faith it is impossible to please Him [God]..."

So it's no use trying to please God without faith because it's impossible.

> "...for the one who comes to God must believe..."

Must do what? Believe, that's right. And must believe two things:

> "...that God is [that He exists] and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."

Now most people believe that God exists. But it's not enough, you've got to believe that if you diligently seek God, He will reward you. And so, faith is essential but something else is essential, too. What's that? Diligence. You look carefully through the Bible and find if you can ever see anything in it that speaks well of laziness. If you do, well, I could give you a big reward but I'm not going to offer it. I don't believe there's one good word for laziness anywhere in the Bible. The Bible condemns drunkenness but it condemns laziness far more severely than drunkenness. And you see, some of our values in the church are distorted because we're down on the people who are drunk and we tolerate lots of people who are lazy. Is that right? Are there any lazy people in our churches? The question is, are there any people who are not lazy?

So, we have to have faith. Praise God, if you remember, I told you how you can get faith. I think it was the second

session, I gave my personal testimony of how I'd been sick for a year on end in hospital, desperately seeking faith. And God gave me this wonderful scripture in Romans 10:17. Oh, how I thank God for Romans 10:17! It was a ray of light in my darkness.

> "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

This scripture is very real to me. I mean, it was my lifeline out of hospital. So I want to say to you don't over-simplify it. Some people say faith comes by hearing the Word of God. That isn't exactly what Paul says. He says what comes from the Word of God is hearing, and what comes from hearing is faith. In other words, they're two stages. When you expose yourself to the Word of God with an open heart and mind, what first comes is hearing, the ability to hear what God is saying. It becomes real to you. And out of hearing there develops faith. The problem is that a lot of people don't allow the time that's needed for hearing to produce faith. You have to expose yourself to the Word of God without setting time limits. Ruth and I have discovered one thing in our walk with the Lord, that we shouldn't set time limits to God. If we begin to pray with the attitude we've got half an hour, well, we get what we can get in half an hour. But if we have the attitude we're here to hear from God, no time limits; it's totally different. And almost invariably, sooner or later we hear from God. What I'm suggesting is that you've got to be prepared to give more time than most Christians presently give to hearing what God is saying to you through His Word. Hearing comes first, then faith. If you don't take time for hearing, all you'll do is read the Bible. But it doesn't say faith comes by reading the Bible, does it? A lot of people interpret it that way. It says faith comes by hearing, hearing by the Word of God.

And the Word there is that famous word which has gone around the world now, rhema. It's not the established Word of God in heaven, it's the word that God is speaking to you at that moment. Jesus said in Matthew 4:4:

> "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word [rhema] that proceeds out of the mouth of God."

We don't live by the Bible, if I can put it that way. We live by the Word made real to us personally by the Holy Spirit. See, what is the Bible? It's white sheets of paper with black marks on them. That's not going to do you any good. What transforms those black marks into something that produces faith? My answer is the Holy Spirit. It's the Holy Spirit that makes the Word of God live, makes it a living word. For about nine months when I first went in the British Army, I studied the Bible as a philosopher. Because, I felt it was my philosophic duty to know what the Bible had to say. I didn't want to know, I just felt that I really couldn't speak with authority about the Bible if I didn't know what it said. And, it was wearisome. I mean, only determination kept me going. I said, "No book is going to beat me, I started at the beginning and I'm going to read it through to the end." After nine months I had a supernatural encounter with Jesus in the middle of the night. No intellectual decision, but an experience. The next day when I picked up the Bible to read it, it was totally different. It was the voice of God speaking to me personally. It was just as if there were only two persons in the universe: God and me. And the Bible was God speaking to me. That's it, you see. That's where we have to come. Whatever it takes, don't stop short of a relationship with God where His Word speaks personally to you. I believe that's what faith comes from. First we have to have hearing, and then out of hearing there develops faith.

God does not offer instant faith. We're so used to instant everything now that we think God deals that way. As a matter of fact, frankly there are a lot of people in the church that think that God is a kind of heavenly automatic vending machine. So, if you find the right coin and put it in the right slot, you'll get the right kind of soft drink. God is not like that. He's not a machine, He's a person. You have to relate to Him in a very personal way to get the results.

Anyhow, I just want to offer some suggestions in closing this session on how to receive the scriptures. First of all, in 1 Thessalonians 2. Paul was really proud of the Thessalonian Christians. He said, "You've been an example to all the other Christians around." One reason for their success is stated in 1 Thessalonians 2:13:

> "For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the Word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe."

So if you will receive this not as a word of men, not on the same level with human writings and human wisdom, but as God Himself speaking to you, then it will do its work in you. It works effectively in those who believe. When you open your heart by faith to God's Word, it will do in you what God has said it will do. I'd like to emphasize that but I must move on.

Now there's another requirement in the epistle of James, chapter 1 and verse 21:

> "Therefore, lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted Word, which is able to save your souls."

How are we to receive it? With meekness. What does that mean? Humility. God is the teacher, we are the pupils. God is teaching us. We don't tell God how He should run the universe, how He should have managed our lives. We let Him teach us. That's meekness.

I came up with a new definition of faith just recently. There's no limit to the definitions of faith and I understand that. This is a very simple one: Faith is taking God seriously. Reading the Bible with faith is taking seriously everything that God says. So when God says "do something," you do it. Let me give you an example. If you will catch on to this, it will change your life—most of you. Some of you may have been changed already. 1 Thessalonians 5:18:

> "In everything give thanks..."

In how many things? In everything. Do you believe that? Do you take it seriously? Do you do it? Praise God. All right. So when you get into the car, you thank God for your car. When you drive along the highway, you thank God for the highway. We don't take the highway for granted. It took a lot of money and labor to build those highways. When you put on your clothes, you thank God for your clothes. And bear in mind there are a lot of people that don't have enough to wear. I think most of the world doesn't have shoes. What do you do when you put your shoes on? In other words, don't just sporadically thank God when it comes to your mind, make it a habit to thank God in everything. It will change you. But that's an example of what I mean. You receive with meekness the Word of God. You don't say, "God, that doesn't sound reasonable to me. After all, I paid for these shoes." You say, "That's right, Lord. I'll thank you for them."

Now we come to Matthew 6:33, which is just what I want to close with:

> "Seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness..."

So, you have to give God and His Word priority in your life over everything else.

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Sermon

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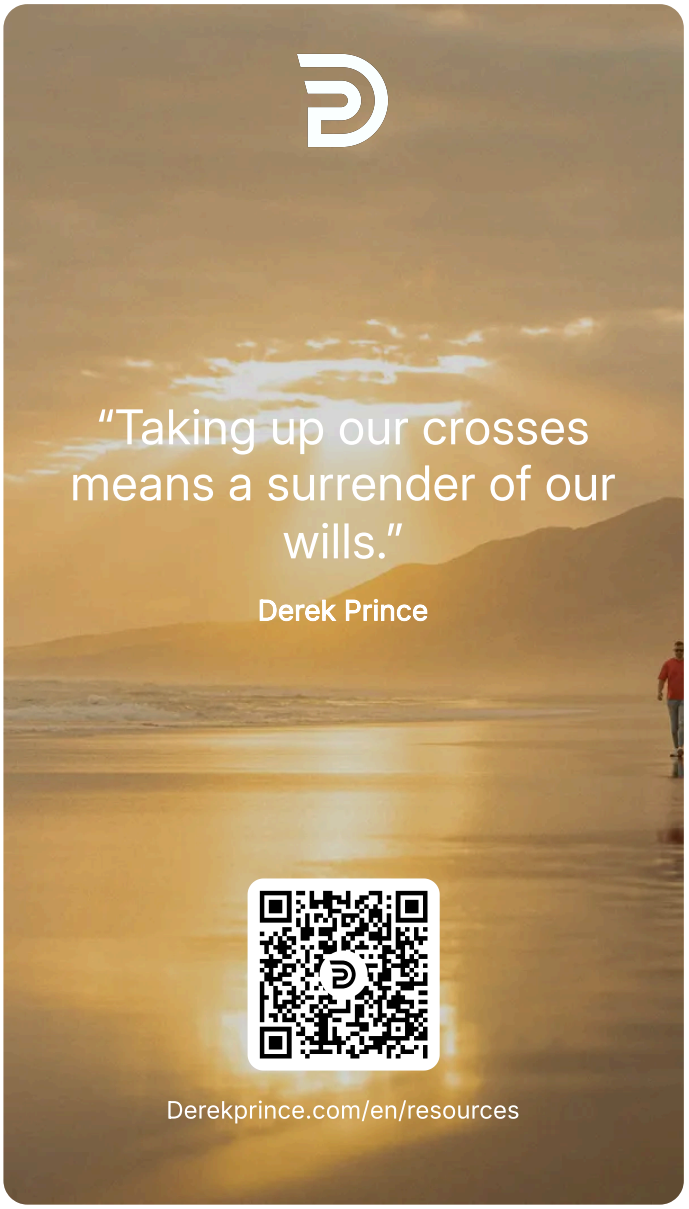

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