

DEREK PRINCE
MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Sermon

The Roman Pilgrimage (Part 18)



Part 18/20
The Roman Pilgrimage
By Derek Prince

This is the second session in a series of four dealing with the last five chapters of Romans. We're going to start now at chapter 13. And the first part of this chapter deals with the issues of relating to secular governmental authority, which is extremely important and a very delicate subject to discuss and handle. There are probably somewhat divergent views among Christians on this point. I will do my best simply to bring out what the scripture says and leave it to the Holy Spirit to apply.

Before we read chapter 13, it would be good to take a parallel passage in 1 Peter 2, so I'm going to turn to 1 Peter 2 and read verses 13–17. It's a significant fact that both Paul and Peter, Paul wrote Romans, Peter wrote this epistle, both of them were executed under the Roman Empire. So, we need to bear in mind that whatever they said, they had to live it out. I need to bear in mind that whatever I say, I may have to live it out. So, this is a very sober subject. Anyhow, let me read what Peter says:

> "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. Honor all men; love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king."

Peter is saying very much the same as Paul says in this chapter that we're going to look at now.

And Paul says in verse 1:

> "Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God."

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Now that's a rather breathtaking statement when you reckon that it was made in the time of the Roman Empire which had crucified Jesus and later was to execute the author of this epistle. But Paul says very categorically there is no authority except from God. And those which exist, and that's in his time as much as today, are established by God.

We need to check on that statement and I want you to keep your finger in Romans 13 and turn to Matthew 28:18 for a moment. Matthew 28:18, this is after the resurrection of Jesus.

> "Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to me in heaven and in earth.'"

And in Colossians 2:10 it says:

> "He is the head over all authority and power."

So all authority in the universe has been delegated by God the Father to Jesus Christ the Son. And Paul wrote these words and Peter wrote what we read there in the light of understanding that all authority ultimately is in the hands of Jesus.

Then we go on in verse 2:

> "Therefore he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves."

Now, our first reaction is to say what Paul means is the one who resists righteous authority. But, it isn't what he says. He says the one who resists governmental authority resists the ordinance of God; and will receive condemnation. I see you're looking puzzled. I think very few Christians in America have really to face this issue. But, if you were to ask Terry Law here about Christians under Communism, I think he'd tell you that this is an issue they have to face. And who knows whether we may not have to face it quite soon. We have no guarantee.

Paul goes on:

> "For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same..."

As long as your conscience is clear and you do what is right, Paul says there is no reason to be afraid.

And then he goes on, and I like this translation because it uses the pronoun "it" in verse 4.

> "...for it [not he, not a person, but the authority] is a minister of God to you for good."

So we're not talking about the person that occupies the office, we're talking about the actual office itself. And Paul says it is a minister of God to you for good.

> "...but if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it [the office] does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God [or a servant of God] an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil. Wherefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for the sake of conscience."

So we are to be in subjection to the governing authorities not merely because we'll be dealt with severely if we are not in subjection, but for the sake of conscience. Because, as I see it, Paul and Peter both say the same thing, behind that office is God. And our relationship to the office ultimately depicts our relationship to God.

I realize there are questions arising in your mind and that's very legitimate. But I'm trying to present you as simply and as accurately as I can what the scripture actually says. The first lesson from this which I want to deal with now is that we need to pray for those in authority. I just immigrated to the United States in I963 when President Kennedy was assassinated. I was a stranger to this nation, a sort of visitor although I'd become an immigrant. God began to speak to me about teaching American Christians to pray for their government. I said, "Lord, I'm not the right person to do that. I don't really know anything about the institutions of this nation. Will they listen to a Britisher talking to them about praying for their government?" God was very insistent with me and I began to teach. I turned them to 1 Timothy 2, if you'll turn there. I got some astonishing responses from American Christians. One lady came up to me and said, "If you're asking us to pray for the government, that's like asking us to pray for our enemies." When I tried to suggest to her that government could be

changed by prayer, another lady said, "Well, doesn't the Bible teach that everything is going to get worse?" I said, "No, not as I understand it. I think the Bible teaches some things are going to get worse and some things are going to get better. And I'm one of the things that's going to get better!"

So, here's what I used to teach. I mean, I know Brother Jay Fesperman has heard me teach this many times. In fact, actually, out of this dealing of God with me there eventually emerged an institution called Intercessors For America, of which I was one of the founding whatever it was. Not founding fathers, but whatever you want to call it. I'm still an honorary member of the Board. I thank God for what came out of that.

But let's turn now to 1 Timothy 2. Bear in mind that 1 Timothy is written to instruct Timothy on how to conduct the affairs of a local church. The whole message of the epistle is that. And then he starts chapter 2, "First of all." In other words, what's the first thing to focus on in the local church. It's not preaching, it's prayer.

> "I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and giving of thanks be made on behalf of all men..."

Four different kinds of prayer are spoken there. Entreaties would be supplications, calling out for mercy. Prayers would be coming to God on behalf—petitions would be specific things that we ask for, thanksgiving explains itself.

"On behalf of all men." That broadens the vision of a lot of Christians immediately. Somebody said the average Christian's prayer life is "God bless me and my wife, my son John and his wife, us four, no more, amen." Well, Paul is talking about a lot more than that. God said that His house would be called a house of prayer for all people. That's the church. Now, who's the first group that we're to pray for? Is it evangelists or ministries or missionaries or the sick? No. Who is it? Kings and all in authority. That's a very significant principle.

> "...in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity."

Ask yourself this question: Does the government I live under affect the kind of life I live? Yes or no? Yes. Then it's self interest to pray for the government, isn't it? It's just enlightened self interest. And if we don't pray for the government, we deserve what we get.

In those days, and I think there's been a great change, but I would have to say in the l960s, American Christians were much more prone to criticize their government than to pray for it. Jesus has never told us to criticize the government. But the Bible does tell us to pray for it. And frankly, in many respects, the offices of government are doing their job more faithfully than the Christians who criticize. Because it's not our job to criticize, our job is to pray.

Then Paul gives the reason, the primary reason why we want good government. And it's not so we can double our income or start a new business. It's a spiritual reason.

> "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."

Why does God want good government? Because good government promotes or opens the way for the preaching of the truth of God. And that's what God wants. But He places a great responsibility upon His church to pray that the government will do that. And I venture to say if we don't pray, we have no right to expect that we'll have the kind of government that will facilitate the preaching of the gospel.

So there's our first responsibility as Christians in relationship to secular authority, it's to be regular and faithful in our prayers for the government. As I see it, this is a public prayer because in 1 Timothy, Paul is talking about the conduct of a local church.

Now we'll go back to Romans, but I wanted to say that as a positive before we discuss maybe some of the less clear or acceptable implications of this teaching. Going back to verse 4:

> "...for it [that the secular authority] is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil."

The word minister gives us a rather cloudy impression. We need to use the word servant, which is what a minister means.

Ruth and I made a trip to Pakistan a few years ago to preach the gospel. When we got to the immigration, they said, "What is your profession?" This is the point where you

have to be very cautious in a Muslim country. So I said, "I'm a minister." I didn't realize it, but he understood me to be a minister of the U.S. government. From that point onwards I got very preferential treatment. I wasn't deliberately deceptive, it's just his understanding. He didn't understand that a minister is a servant. What Paul is saying here is governmental offices and authorities are servants of God for the benefit of us. Can you say amen to that? It takes some adjusting for some Americans to say that.

See, this nation—and now I'm really getting myself into trouble—was born in revolution, in rebellion. You say he's British, that's why he says that. No, because if I'd have been English here in the days of George Washington, I would have lined up with George Washington. But, there is an element of rebellion in this nation which persists. There's no nation that I know that protests like Americans. Where the British let things happen and just hope it will work out all right, the Americans take the bull by the horns and stage a protest or have a march or do something.

Now, we're coming to verse 5 again.

> "Wherefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake."

And then Paul goes on to describe the things that government does for us.

> "For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing."

And so he says fulfill your duties as a citizen.

> "Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; [customs that you pay when you come into a country] fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor."

So there's a clear outline of our responsibilities.

Now, the question arises, What happens when an ungodly or a wicked man or a persecutor is occupying the position of authority? That's where the rubber meets the road. Well, let's take the example of Jesus. How about that? I think Jesus is a good pattern. Keep your finger there in Romans 13 and turn to the gospel of John, chapter 18 and verse 36.

John 18:36. Jesus is in front of Pilate and Pilate is questioning him about his claim to be a king. Jesus answered in verse 36:

> "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then my servants would be fighting that I might not be delivered up to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not of this realm."

I think that's a very important basic principle. The kingdom of God is never established by carnal weapons. I'm not saying we shouldn't use them but we don't bring in the kingdom of God with carnal weapons. It's not established by fighting.

We are citizens, if we're Christians, of two worlds. We're citizens of the kingdom of God, we're citizens of our county, the United States. As citizens of the United States it may be our responsibility to fight, but we're not establishing the kingdom of God by our fighting.

In the Old Testament in Zechariah 4:6, the Lord said to Zerubbabel:

> "Not by might, not by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts."

And the word which is translated might, ?heil?, is the modern Hebrew word that gives us the word for a soldier, ?hiyal?. So, it's not by military power, it's not by force of arms. There's only one power that can bring in the kingdom of God, which is the Spirit of God. We need to be very clear about that. I'm not saying Christians should not carry arms, that's a personal decision. What I'm saying is we will never establish the kingdom of God that way. It doesn't come that way.

Then we turn to John 19:11, and again Jesus is in front of Pilate. Pilate says to him in verse 10:

> "Do you not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you, and I have authority to crucify you?"

Notice the word authority. Was that true? Did Pilate have authority? He certainly did. He was making a true statement. Now listen to what Jesus said:

> "Jesus answered, 'You would have no authority over me unless it had been given you from above.'"

In other words, behind Pilate who was making an unjust decision concerning Jesus, Jesus said, "I see the authority of my Father."

And then He made another remarkable statement:

> "For this reason, he who delivered me up to you has the greater sin."

I presume that's the Jewish high priest. Because, he stepped out of the bounds of his authority. He was not operating within his authority. He did something he didn't have authority to do. So you see, Jesus had tremendous respect for secular authority even when it was being used unjustly against him. Is that true? I think it's indisputable.

So, we go back to Romans 13:5:

> "Wherefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of [God's] wrath [or the wrath of the ruler], but also for conscience' sake."

Now, you say what if the ruler demands that I do something that I cannot do with a clear conscience as a Christian? What do I do? The answer is you refuse to do it. But, you submit. You say, "I won't do that but you can do whatever you like with me." See, you don't give up your submission. There's a very clear example. Turn to Acts 5:29, where the apostles had been told that they must not preach anymore in the name of Jesus. Acts 5, we'll read from verse 27.

> "And when they had brought the apostles before them, they stood them before the council and the high priest questioned them, saying, 'We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name. [And notice they wouldn't say the name of Jesus, that's interesting. I mean, that prejudice goes back as far as that.] And behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.' But Peter and the apostles answered and said, 'We must obey God rather than man.'"

When there is a clear-cut issue, then we have to obey God and, if necessary, disobey human authority. But let's be very sure that it's really obeying God is what we're doing. You see, we need to turn to that. Mark 16:15, Jesus said to His disciples, to His apostles:

> "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation [or every creature]..."

So there was a specific command of Jesus which the apostles were obeying and which the high priest told them they were not to do. There was a clear-cut decision. It wasn't a foggy issue. It wasn't to gain something for themselves. They were determined to obey the law. The Lord said preach the gospel to every creature. So when they were told you mustn't preach, they said we can't stop. We won't obey you. You can do what you'd like with us but on this issue we have to obey God rather than man.

But they didn't stage a revolution. They simply submitted to unjust treatment and they were flogged. They did not rise up in revolution.

Let's just look at something that Paul said a little further on in Romans 16:20. We can just turn back to Romans. Romans 16:20, a remarkable statement. He said:

> "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet."

Now, there could be more than one way of interpreting that. But it's the God of peace who is going to crush Satan. How is that fulfilled? Well, one way it was fulfilled was in the subjection of the Roman Empire to Christianity. Christianity started as a little offbeat movement following a man who had been executed by the Roman government. A mere carpenter. It had no valid hopes of success. But within three centuries it had brought the Roman emperor to his knees. And God had crushed Satan under the feet of that church. And particularly, the church of Rome. But, they didn't stage marches, they didn't hold protests, they didn't have sit-ins, strikes. What did they do? They prayed, they testified, they preached. And, they submitted. And by their submission they opened the way for God to do for them what they could not do for themselves.

I think it's very timely that I'm teaching this right now because I venture to suggest, and I appreciate having Terry here, that the Christians in the Soviet Union followed in the

steps of the early church. I don't read that they staged a revolution or a rebellion, I don't read that they held protest marches. They went the way of the early church and God had vindicated them. If we submit, we open the way for God to do what only He can do. That's my understanding of it.

I have such a solemn sense that this is not an abstract issue for American Christians. I have such a sense that God has prompted me to bring this before you because some of you may have to decide in due course. I'm not making a prediction, I just have an uncanny sense that things are not going to continue forever the way they are. Don't assume it. It's better to be prepared beforehand. Talking about suffering in 1 Peter, Peter said, "Arm yourselves with this mind, for Christ also suffered once for sin." In other words, arm yourself with the attitude, "I may be called upon to suffer." Don't go into that situation unarmed. Don't go into the situation assuming nobody will ever ask me to make that sacrifice. I'll never be faced with this difficult choice between obedience to God and obedience to secular authority. If you get into that situation without facing these issues beforehand, you're unarmed. Peter said arm yourself with this mind. Make a decision now, settle it in your minds how you're going to act.

It says about those that brought down Satan's kingdom from the heavenlies in Revelation 12:11, one of my favorite scriptures:

> "They overcame him [how, do you know that?] by the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, [does the verse end there? What else does it say?] and they loved not their lives unto the death."

What does that mean? My interpretation. It means that for them it was more important to do the will of God than to stay alive. And I don't believe they would have been able to use those spiritual weapons if they hadn't that degree of commitment. I don't think that Satan is the least bit scared of uncommitted Christians. You can use all the language, pray all the prayers and he'll laugh in your face. But when you've laid your life on the line, then he treats your prayers with real respect.

I was called up into the British army in l940 and served five and a half years, reluctantly let me say, it was not my choice. But when I joined the British army on the 12th of December, l940, they did not give me a little certificate saying "We guarantee you will not get killed." No army has ever made that commitment. And I hear Christians talk about being soldiers in the Lord's army, I don't think they've ever stopped to consider what they're saying.

This is a serious business. I think you've probably heard what Brother Andrew said about the commission: Go into all the world, preach the gospel to every nation. His comment was Jesus didn't say anything about coming back. People say, "We can't go because we won't come back." Jesus didn't say come back. He said go. Now, you have to hear from the Lord, I'm not saying leave this place immediately and go to Albania. But may God go with you if you do! What I'm saying is what Paul said, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied." If all the gospel does for us is in this life, we might as well give up now.

I think we have to move on. We've got the rest of the chapter to deal with. Now, it's so refreshing and beautiful to come back to the theme of love. And that's what the main teaching of this section is. I pointed out in regard to chapter 12 that it's not a set of religious rules, it's directions for releasing the love of God that He's placed in your heart. If you don't have the love of God in your heart, you won't be able to do it anyhow. It all starts with love.

So let's read what Paul says here in chapter 13, beginning at verse 8:

> "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law."

So Paul says, "I don't want you to be in debt." Incidentally, I could preach a whole sermon on this, "owe no one anything." How many of you don't owe anyone anything? You don't owe on your car, you don't owe on—never mind, let's not go into it. Do you know what the Bible says, "The borrower is servant to the lender." When we get into debt, we make ourselves servants of the person that we are borrowing from. And the United States is the great servant nation of the world today. Debtor nation number one. In slavery to the Japanese and other nations. Britain and America won the war but they've not won the peace. That's by the way. Don't let me get into that.

So, let's talk a little bit about love. I want you to keep your finger in Romans 13 and turn to Romans 8:4 where it speaks about the purpose of Christ's death. It says—well, we better read verse 3.

> "For what the law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin."

He condemned sin in the flesh. That happened when Jesus died on the cross.

> "In order that the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."

So we are set free from the law of Moses and all its ordinances, statutes and regulations and ceremonies. But in order that the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us.

Now, another translation says "the righteous requirement of the law." Which is a better translation because the word is directly derived from the word for righteous. The same word is used in Revelation 19:8 where it says "the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints." It's precisely the same word. So we are set free from the requirements of the law of Moses, but in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be worked out in us.

What is the righteous requirement of the law? This is the thousand dollar question. Because, we have to know. In one word. Love, that's right. Let's look at what the scripture says. First of all, we'll go back to Romans 13 but we'll look in Galatians 5:14 for a moment.

> "For the whole law is fulfilled in one word in the statement, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"

What is the one word? Love, that's right. So what is the righteous requirement of the law? Love. That's important to be clear about that. We're not required to follow all the details of the law of Moses but we are under obligation to love.

Now, going back to our outline. In Romans 13:8–10:

> "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law."

See, that is the fulfillment of the law.

> "For this [and he mentions the commandments] 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET,' and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOURSELF AS YOURSELF.'"

All the commandments are summed up in that one commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

So, we don't need to be foggy or unclear about how we are to relate to the law of Moses. We've been set free from all its enactments and requirement but we are required to walk out its righteous requirement which is love, that's right.

Let's look at what Jesus said. Keeping your finger in Romans 13, turn to John 13 for a moment. John 13:34:

> "A new commandment I give to you, [He's deliberately, as it were, adding His P.S. to the law and to the Ten Commandments] that you love one another even as I have loved you, that you also love one another."

So Moses gave them ten commandments, Judaism has 613 commandments, Jesus said, "I'll just give you one commandment." Because, in that one commandment everything is included. What's the one commandment? Love one another. It's so simple.

I'd like to go back for a moment to a verse we looked at in the last session, because I am so fond of this verse. 1 Timothy 1:5, and especially in the New American Standard translation. I don't like everything in this translation but this is good. 1 Timothy 1:5:

> "But the goal of our instruction is love..."

The goal is love. And then he gives three conditions for maintaining love.

> "...from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith. For some men straying from these things have turned aside to fruitless discussions, wanting to be teachers of the law..."

So any kind of teaching or preaching in church that does not produce love is fruitless discussion. It's wasted, empty words. The only final goal of all teaching is love. The goal of our instruction is love.

And believe me, brothers and sisters, I check on myself from time to time. I say am I really aiming at the goal? Or have I got diverted to secondary issues? I don't want to be negative about the church, but I would say that there are relatively few congregations that really specifically make love their primary aim. We've somehow got diverted into lots of things that are important but they're secondary. And they don't work without love. Love is the motivating power that makes all the rest work. It's the force that releases the water through the hose. Without that, you've got a hose, you've got a garden but you've got no water. You can wander around with the hose in your hand and look active but you're not making anything grow.

Keep your finger in Romans 13, let's turn to James 1:25. Some people claim that I require them to have too many fingers, but I don't think that's true. James 1. Now, James, if ever anybody was, as it were, dedicated to the Lord, it's James. James says in chapter 1, verse 25:

> "He who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does."

Now, he doesn't specifically state what is the perfect law of the law of liberty, but you go on to James 2:8 and he says:

> "If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the scripture, you shall love your neighbor as yourself, you are doing well."

So this is the royal law, the perfect law, the law of liberty. What is it? Love your neighbor as yourself. That's something to think about. When you are motivated by that, you live like a king. Nobody orders you about, nobody can force you to do anything because you always want to do the right thing. You're never made to do anything against your will. It's the law of perfection, it's the law of liberty, it's the law that's kingly.

Why should we waste our time on a lot of things? I tell you who diverts us, the enemy of our souls. He's afraid of Christians who really love one another. Because, they have power, they have authority. And furthermore, they challenge the world.

Do you remember what Jesus said in regard to that commandment we read, "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another." I think it was Francis Schaeffer who said, "The Lord gave the world the right to judge the church." Because if the world sees us not loving one another, the world has got the right, on the basis of Jesus' own words, to say they are not His disciples. Amen.

Let's go back to Romans 13. You'll get to know your way to Romans 13 after awhile. Now we're going on to what I've headed "Live in anticipation of Christ's return." Are you living in anticipation of Christ's return? Are you excited about the fact that Jesus is coming back? And furthermore, you don't know when? Just to avoid a few possible pitfalls.

Verse 11:

> "This do..."

Do all that Paul has been talking about; that is, subjection to authority and love for one another.

> "And this do, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed."

That's a sort of puzzling statement in a way, isn't it? The time factor in this age is difficult to comprehend because Paul wrote as if the coming of the Lord was very close. I'll give you my personal understanding. This is not doctrine, this is just Brother Prince. And if it helps you, praise God. If it doesn't, don't get angry with me. But you see, there are some benefits of having been a philosopher. One of the things that philosophers always ponder about is time. And time remains a mystery, even in spite of Einstein. Nobody has really plumbed the depths of what time is.

But I want to suggest to you that when a true believer dies and passes out of this life, he passes into a timeless existence. Eternity is not subject to the laws of time. We're no longer having elapsed time. There are no clocks in that world that we go to. And his body is laid in the tomb and decomposes. So he closes his eyes in death, moves out into a timeless existence and his eyes are not going to open until when? The resurrection. This blesses me so much, I hope it will bless you. And when he opens his eyes in his

resurrected body, what's the first thing he'll see? The Lord coming in power.

So, you are never further from the Lord's coming in time than you are from your point of death. See what I'm saying? Because after that there's not time. This excites me. I don't know whether it excites you. I've pondered on it a lot.

It also excites me that when I open these eyes with a resurrected, glorified body, the first thing my eyes are going to look at is Jesus in His glory, in His power. If you're not excited about that, you should be a Britisher! You know how excitable we are! I was, after all, brought up an Anglican, let me tell you that, too, an Episcopalian. But I get excited when I think about the Lord's return. And that really is the thing that motivates me to live the Christian life. I'm going to see Jesus in His glory, I'm going to see His kingdom established on earth. That's the only solution to the innumerable problems of humanity. We can do a little bit of good, we can open hospitals, we can start schools. But evil actually seems to outrun good in this present age. I'm not sure whether humanity is better off in the 20th century than it was in the 1st. If you measure all the different problems that confront us today.

I am naive enough to believe that the only solution to humanity's problems is the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. And that was the thing that Jesus taught to us pray for every time we pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done." Where? "On earth." A lot of Christians have got the attitude that our aim is to get to heaven. Well, I have to say it's a tremendous privilege to believe that you're going to go to heaven when you die. That isn't my aim. And it wasn't Paul's aim. Look for a moment in Philippians 3, beginning at verse 8:

> "More than that, I count all things to be lost in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ; and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection..."

We all say amen to that, don't we? What about the next words?

> "...and the fellowship of His suffering, being conformed to His death, in order that [I may get to heaven, is that what he says?] I may attain to the resurrection of the dead."

The resurrection is our goal, not heaven. When we are in heaven, our spirits will be there but our bodies will be decomposed. That's not the end of salvation. Jesus has purchased spirit, soul and body. And Paul says, "I pray that your whole spirit, soul and body may be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

So, you could say Paul was naive or Peter was naive. I say no. They were inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit showed them that they'd have that much time and then they'd see the Lord. And while we spend centuries here on earth, they're in a timeless existence. It's hard for the human mind to conceive that but I believe it's established fact.

So now, in the light of that, let's go back to Romans 13:11 and following.

> "And this do [keep all these instructions], knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep, for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave properly as in the day, and not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, and not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts."

That's a picture of people who are living in excited anticipation of the Lord's return. The motivation for holy living is not a set of rules, it's the fact we're going to meet Jesus—and we need to be ready. We're going to stand before His judgment seat and He's going to weigh every word we've spoken, every thought that's passed through our minds, every act, with those eyes that penetrate to the very core of our being.

I was reading—in fact, it's a little later on in Romans —that every tongue shall confess to God. I got interested in the

Greek word because it's translated in various ways. I came to the conclusion it means confess to the uttermost, confess everything, keep nothing back. You'll be able to hide nothing in that day. Everything will be transparent in the eyes of the Lord Jesus. That's the main motivation for holiness in the New Testament church.

Turn for a moment to—you're getting good at turning, aren't you? Turn for a moment to Titus 2:11, starting there.

> "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men..."

Now, many people think about grace as something that lets you do anything and get away with it. But that's not the New Testament picture, because the next thing it says about grace is it instructs us. Are you aware that grace instructs us?

> "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires, and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age; looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Christ Jesus, who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for himself a people for his own possession, zealous for good works."

So what is the real motivation for holy living? It's anticipating the Lord's return. And my personal conviction, and I think I have seen it in observation, is that the standard of New Testament holiness will never be found in a church that isn't anticipating the Lord's return. It does something for people. It motivates them, it makes them excited.

Ruth and I travel around a lot and we meet Christians, wonderful Christians from many different backgrounds, different denominations, different movements. God has got wonderful people all over the place. Some are tucked away in little corners you wouldn't ever think to find them. But two things motivate Ruth and me, I think I could say. One is Matthew 24:14. Do you know what that says?

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

The other motivation, the other excitement in our life is we are looking for the Lord's return. We're excited He's coming back. I have a brother in the Lord who is a minister who has been very close to me for years. He was commenting on the lack of excitement in the church about the Lord's return. And he said, "I suppose when the bridegroom comes back, the bride is expected to say something more than `Nice to have you back.'" If I'd been away for a week and I found Ruth waiting for me at the door, which I would find, when I came back, and she just said, "Nice to have you back", I would be a little disappointed.

Jesus, I'll say it again, He loves us passionately, He wants to be loved passionately.

But what I was saying is where we meet people who have these two motivations, first of all, we've got to get the gospel to every nation, and second, the Lord is coming soon. We find that it's like we've known them all our lives after ten minutes. We're just on the same wavelength.

I believe that's how we should be living. If the Christian life is getting boring for you, well, try going to Albania! Do something. I mean, just step out. You may sink but the Lord will pick you up. But the Christian life is not down. I often say to Ruth, "At least one thing you can't complain, I haven't led you into a dull life." And thank God, I don't want a dull life. It's not an easy life. There are times the pressures become so intense I think can we hold out? This is just one of those times. In fact, it's been going on for a long while now.

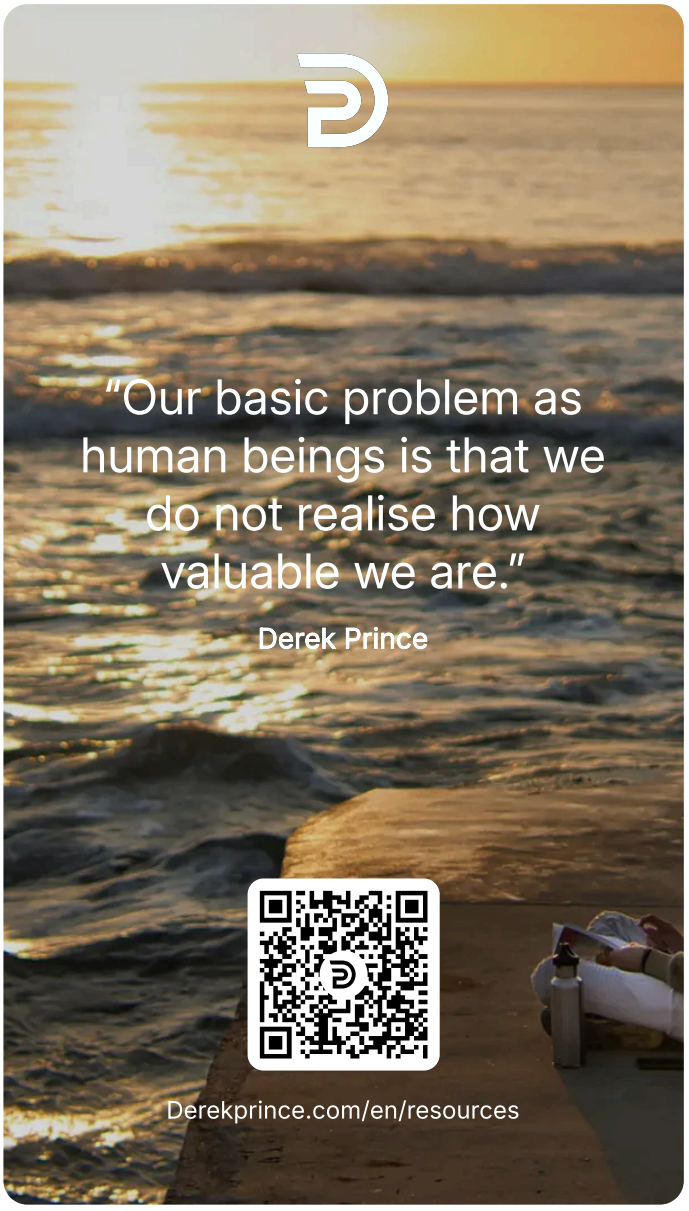
But, thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Why don't we all say that and close this rather unorthodox teaching session. "Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Now, you look so wonderful saying that, turn to a neighbor and say it to your neighbor. "Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Amen and amen. Bless you.

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Sermon

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