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MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Sermon

Witchcraft and the Church (Part 1)



Sermon
By Derek Prince

I have come to New Zealand this time in a season of preparation for tremendous evangelistic outreach in this nation. And I thank God for that. I have a passionate love for evangelism and a tremendous admiration of God-called evangelists, although that is not my own primary calling. I do believe in God's guidance and overruling in my life, and I believe there must have been a special purpose in bringing me here at this time. And I feel that, in a sense, God wants me to challenge you, the Christians of this nation, with what is implied in evangelistic outreach that's going to be taking place.

I want to suggest to you that, in the long run, there may be a greater challenge for you than for the unconverted. I've never met Brother Louis Palau, but I've seen the fruits of his ministry in London. I've seen how scores and scores of punks and skinheads and people like that, who'd never darkened the doors of a church, found Jesus Christ in a dramatic and phenomenal way. And I know particularly one church to which they were directed, and I can tell you that the impact on that church was traumatic, because they didn't know any of the church traditions about how you ought to behave. They weren't familiar with the hymns. They just came in, expected more of what they'd been getting. And they came in quite large numbers in that church, revolutionized it, turned it upside down. And quite a number of the older members complained, "These young people have taken 'our' church from us." Because their mistake was calling it 'our' church, because it was 'His' church.

I want to suggest to you that if there's a great harvest from the evangelist, and that harvest is directed into the churches of this nation, it's going to present you with a real challenge. See, in 1954, if you can believe that people were doing this long ago as that, I served as a counselor in Billy Graham's first crusade in Harringay, in London. And I went through all the counseling courses, and I thank God for the instruction I received, and I conscientiously did my best to follow all the instructions. I got 22 persons. I followed every one up with phone calls, with letters, with visits. I'd have to say, at the end of it all, I didn't have any real assurance that more than two of those 22 persons really became committed Christians and effective members of a church. Coincidentally, it was my church that they became members of. So that's one out of eleven. Now, that's no

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criticism of the message that Billy Graham brought. But somebody said at that time, about the situation with the church in London, "It's a mistake to put a live chick under a dead hen."

So, what I want to impress upon you is that in all probability, you are going to be faced with a tremendous responsibility to represent the reality of the Christian faith to people who didn't been in it, knew nothing about it, and perhaps still have some areas of skepticism within them.

And you know what they're going to do? They're not going to just listen to the sermons or sing the hymns. They're going to watch the lives of the church members. And that, ultimately, is probably what will influence most of them as to whether their commitment to Christ will be permanent or not.

So, I'm going to do my best, with the Lord's help, to teach on themes which I believe are desperately needed in the contemporary church in the West to produce the kind of Christians that Jesus expects.

See, I've been telling American Christians recently, "I don't believe that Jesus died merely to produce a slightly better average group of American citizens who meet fairly regularly in a kind of social institution every Sunday morning." I don't believe that you can find any hint of that in the New Testament.

What tends to happen in the church is that we receive what God has said in His Word, and we adjust it. And we suit it to our own convenience and our own way of doing things, and our own culture, and our own standards. And we still continue to give it the names and the labels of the New Testament, but we're mislabeling it.

Because the things to which we're attaching Christian labels are not things to which Jesus and the apostles attached them. I want to suggest that it would be good for all of us, and that does not exclude myself, to subject ourselves to a period of self-examination.

And in doing this, I want to lay a very thorough scriptural basis for it. I'd like to turn, first of all, to two passages in the first epistle of Peter. First Peter, chapter 1, verses 17 and 18.

I suppose it's not a coincidence that we were singing a beautiful chorus in which we were affirming that we called God "Abba," which, as I'm sure all of you know, is the Aramaic or Hebrew for "Father," or "Daddy." And it so happens that in this very passage I've selected, Peter reminds the believers, calling God "Daddy" carries with it tremendous responsibility.

> "And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each man's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your dwelling here in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers."

Now, that's very contrary to the thinking of most Christians that I meet in the Western world today. They'd say, "We call God 'Daddy,' and we know we've been redeemed by the blood of Jesus, so we're free. Please ourselves. To set our own standards. To live the kind of life that suits us."

Peter says the exact opposite. He said, "If you call God 'Father,' remember that He judges each one, not according to what he says, but according to what he does." And it's very, very obvious that he's not talking about God judging the unconverted. He's talking about God judging His people.

And he reminds us that in the light of this, we spend our earthly time of sojourning in fear. I wonder how many of you have really ever appreciated that. That's not a slave fear, but it's a sense of awe, sense of reverence, a tremendous sense of respect and of responsibility.

And Peter gives a reason. Remember what it cost God to redeem you: the precious blood of His Son. And in the light of God, of the price that God paid, don't ever make your faith cheap. God insists His grace is free, but it's not cheap.

Peter challenges us. I accept the challenge. It applies to me as much as to anybody here, but I pass the challenge on to you also. Remember, if you call God "Father," He's going to judge you on the basis of the way you live. And remember what it cost God: the infinite price, the precious blood of His Son. God doesn't consider you cheap.

One of the big mistakes that many Christians make is to consider themselves much less valuable than God considers them. If you owned a really precious stone of any kind, a ring, something like that, you would normally take extra precautions about where you keep it, how you protect it. You'd have it in your mind. Well, God thinks like that about you and me.

Because of the price He paid, He's particularly interested in and concerned about us. If you turn on in First Peter to the fourth chapter.

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Verses 17 and 18, Peter returns to this theme. And my personal impression is that this is a particularly timely verse for the people of God in what I call the Western Church. The church in United States, Canada, Britain, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, mainly English-speaking nations, not exclusively. Scandinavia would be included also. A church that has a long heritage of biblical knowledge and religious freedom. And nations, all of whom, all of whose history have been influenced beyond their other assets by the impact of the Word of God.

And this is what Peter says,

> "For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God."

Who are the house of God? We are, that's who. I mean, he doesn't leave it in any doubt because he goes on to say,

> "And if it begins with us, then what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now, if righteousness is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

I don't suppose that many of you have been confronted with that statement that "the righteous is scarcely saved." Now there are many other aspects, but that is one aspect that we cannot overlook. Furthermore, God's Word gives us the infinite privilege of judging ourselves. You turn to First Corinthians chapter 11. Paul urges us to do that. First Corinthians chapter 11, verses 31 and 32.

> "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged by God. But when we are judged, we are chastened or disciplined by the Lord that we may not be condemned with the world."

There are three levels. The best level is, judge yourself. Then God won't have to judge you. If you fail to do that, God will bring some kind of disciplinary judgment upon you to bring you to repentance. But if you fail in that, the lowest level is to be condemned with the world.

I want to provide you in these talks a number of scriptural standards by which we should judge ourselves. I cannot compel you to do it. I can merely give you the opportunity. I want to say that I'm not a hypocrite, and I have been ready to apply these standards to my own life. I'm going to spend much of my time for these studies in the Epistle to the Galatians. This is an epistle that I have more or less lived in for two or three years now.

The Epistle to the Galatians was written, I would say, by Paul primarily to deal with a problem. What is the problem? Well, people could offer different suggestions, but I think most serious Bible commentators would say that the problem of the Galatian church was legalism. And it's very interesting to see Paul's attitude towards it. Normally, when he wrote to churches such as the Corinthians or the Thessalonians, or the Colossians, or others, he began by thanking God for what God was doing in them. It was very rare for him, and in fact, I think this is the only case in which Paul doesn't begin his letters by thanking God for the people he's writing to. When he wrote the first Epistle to the Corinthians, there were all sorts of problems in the church. There was immorality, incest, drunkenness at the Lord's table. But Paul still began by thanking God for his grace to the Corinthians. Now, by the standards that most of us are used to, legalism would seem to be much less of a problem than drunkenness, immorality, or incest. But the amazing thing is that Paul was so disturbed about the condition of the Galatians, he didn't have time to thank God for them. He just said,

> "I'm amazed that you've so quickly departed from the gospel."

In other words, for him, legalism was a much greater threat to the well-being of God's people than some very obvious carnal sins like drunkenness or immorality. I was speaking to quite a large group of Christians a little while back, and in the course of what I was saying, I said something which I didn't think would be the least surprising. I said, "Of course, you realize that Christianity is not a set of rules." I looked at those people's faces. I felt to myself if I'd told them there was no God, they would have been less shocked. But I still affirm that Christianity is not a set of rules. Israel had had a God-given set of rules for something like 14 centuries before Jesus came. God couldn't improve on that set of rules; it was perfect. Jesus didn't come to bring a set of rules. He came with a different objective. And anytime we reduce Christianity to a set of rules, we've missed the purpose of God. And I suppose God is as much concerned as Paul was about these issues.

Now, I want to start in Galatians with a verse that has absolutely burned itself into my consciousness. Galatians chapter 3 and verse 1. And I suppose I read this verse over many years, perhaps 40 years, I suppose hundreds of

times, and it never impacted me. But just recently, I just can't, every time I come to it, I have to stop.

> "O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?"

Now, if you have one of the modern versions, like the NASB or the NIV, part of that verse is left out. Don't let that confuse you. It just, it so happens that there are many different Greek texts of the New Testament, and some have words in that others don't. And it's a matter for scholarship and prayer to determine which is the more probable text, but it doesn't make any real difference to the meaning. Let's take the shortened version, which is,

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

Now, you say, "Well, what kind of Christians were these that they had been bewitched?" Well, the answer is they were charismatic Christians by our standards. They knew the Lord, they'd received the Holy Spirit, and they had witnessed miracles performed amongst them. This follows from the next verses.

> "This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?"

So they'd received the Holy Spirit.

> "Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you being made perfect by the flesh? Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?"

You see how deeply concerned Paul is. He said, "Maybe it was all in vain." He says a little later on in the epistle,

> "I'm afraid lest I have bestowed labor upon you in vain."

I've wasted my time. I'm not going to see any real permanent fruit. Verse 5,

> "Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?"

So Paul emphasizes that they had received the Holy Spirit, and they'd experienced God working miracles amongst them. So, we charismatics don't have any experience as charismatics that they hadn't had. And yet, says Paul says,

> "You're bewitched."

That's a rather shocking statement, isn't it? Where is the evidence that they were bewitched? Paul continues,

> "Before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed crucified."

Paul had come and presented the truth of the death and the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus in tremendous power. They'd received it, believed on it, and enjoyed all these experiences. But then another spiritual force had come in, and what had it done? It had obscured what was accomplished by the death of Jesus on the cross.

So that Paul says, "Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed crucified, but you've lost the vision. You don't see it any longer. Its fruit are no longer manifest among you." You see, the cross is the place where all human needs were met once and for all. But once we lose sight of the cross, we begin to live in our needs again. The cross was the place where Satan was finally and totally defeated. That's number one reason why he wants to obscure what was accomplished on the cross. Because once that's obscured, he begins to regain his power over us.

This has caused me to follow two themes, and I'll try to follow them both. First of all, I became extremely concerned as to what was the real nature of witchcraft. How could witchcraft gain influence over Christians who'd been baptized in the Holy Spirit and experienced the miracle-working power of God? Secondly, and parallel with that, I gained a tremendous desire to know really what was the significance of the death of Jesus on the cross. What was accomplished by it that Satan was so eager to steal from us? And so this caused me to go in two directions. One was to analyze the nature of witchcraft. The other was to analyze what we are entitled to as our inheritance through the death of Jesus on the cross.

I don't intend to dwell for too long on the nature of witchcraft. My main theme in these meetings will be the cross and what was accomplished by it. First of all, let me say when I speak about the cross, I'm not speaking about a wooden or a metal cross that hangs around a person's neck or on the wall of a church. I'm not criticizing those; I'm not against them, but I don't mean that. When I talk about the cross, I mean that which was accomplished by the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross. But rather than use that long phrase all the time, I'm simply going to say "the cross."

What is the nature of witchcraft? Well, perhaps I better go back because there's a personal background to this. In 1979, I was at a convention or conference in the state of Missouri in the United States. And in the middle of one of the meetings, a young man, whom I'd never seen before, and I don't think I've ever seen him since, came forward and gave a very remarkable prophecy. And it wasn't really directly connected with any of the themes of the conference. Now, I have this prophecy. It was recorded on tape, and I have a typed version of it, but I won't try to quote it at length. I'll simply say two things. It didn't kind of begin with a preamble. It said, "All the Lord has been doing against witchcraft up to this time has been nothing but preliminary skirmishes. But from now on, God is declaring total war on witchcraft." And then it said, "The reason is because witchcraft has millions of men bound whom God needs in his end-time army." And then, as a kind of PS, it said, "And as you engage in this war, you will encounter people who are under curses that have been passed on from generation to generation. But you do not need to be afraid because you will have power to release them from those curses." But up to that time, 1979, I had hardly given any thought whatever to the theme of curses. And I didn't immediately decide, "Well, this is a theme I must examine." But in the course of experience and dealing with people and situations in the next five years or more, I was brought face to face with the reality of curses, which is totally scriptural. The word 'curse' is used more than 200 times in the Bible. And I discovered that one root problem that keeps multitudes of Christians from all that God intends them to enjoy is the existence of a curse over their life.

Now, when I was here in New Zealand last time, I preached on this in Wellington Town Hall, and it was one of the most powerful meetings I've ever been privileged to participate in. And the repercussions of that have been felt all around New Zealand. A printed version of my message was produced here by Warren and has circulated in New Zealand, and I don't doubt it's available if you want to purchase it. Later, in my radio program, which most of you are familiar with, I devoted two weeks of teaching to the theme "From Curse to Blessing." And in advance, we produced a transcript of my messages. And for weeks, I told people if that message seemed to meet their need, they should write in for a free copy of the transcript. Now, the program was aired for two weeks to about 65 stations in the United States. And in response, more than 6,000 people wrote in for the transcript. That is more than three times the response we've ever had to any of my other messages. And my message on "Rejection: Cause and Cure," which most of you, I'm sure, have heard, had produced a tremendous response. But the response to this message on curses was just staggering. So this past month, we aired again for two weeks, and the response was even greater. And more than 6,000 people wrote in for the transcript. And with their letters, many of them submitted testimonies of the remarkable change that had taken place in their lives when they followed me in the prayer with which I closed those messages, a prayer of release from curses. I would say in my own experience in ministry, I have seen more dramatic, large-scale results from teaching on curses than from any other ministry. And many of you know I've had a lot of dramatic results from teaching on deliverance from evil spirits. There's a number of my messages that produce dramatic results. But this message, "From Curse to Blessing," is in a class by itself at the present time. Now, I just relate that because I want you to see that it was not my initiative. And I'm always afraid of anything that I initiate. But God initiated this new thrust of seeking Him and His Word, the truth needed for His people.

Because of the experience that I've had in fulfillment of that promise that I would be able to release people from curses, I am truly satisfied that that particular prophetic message was inspired and given by God. That is, as it were, objective confirmation.

So, God has declared all-out war on witchcraft. You need to know that. God very clearly challenged, through me, to win, to join Him in that war. I don't think we could say, in this, we were conscripted. I'm not sure it would have been left to us to elect whether we would have decided to do so.

And so, one of the results was that I began to say to myself, "Well, what is witchcraft? What is the nature of it?" I had already encountered the spirit of witchcraft in the ministry of deliverance.

Now, this will probably, may shock you, but what startled me was I encountered it so often in churches. And generally speaking, it was in the most unexpected people. Like the pastor's wife, or the deacon's daughter, or the church secretary.

And after a while, I began to say to myself, "You know, could this be true?" And at a certain point in my ministry, and I'm rather glad that didn't continue any longer in that sense, when I came close to certain people, they would start to tremble.

And they'd say to me, "I don't know what's the matter with me, but every time I come near you, I tremble." Well, I would say to them, "I know what's the matter with you. I've learned by experience. You need deliverance from witchcraft."

So then I said to God, "God, if this is true, I don't want to be, I don't want to get into error. I don't want to do something that's off the truth. What is the nature of witchcraft?" And the answer I got at that time was this:

> "Witchcraft is the attempt to control people and get them to do what you want them to do by the use of any spirit which is not the Holy Spirit."

And then God added this:

> "If any person has a spirit which he or she can use, it is not the Holy Spirit, because no one uses the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God."

Well, that satisfied my need in the ministry of deliverance. But when God thrust me into this further aspect of the war, I did further study on witchcraft. And I want to share my conclusions with you briefly. I don't know whether I have got you with me, but I want you to know that, in my opinion, this is not irrelevant.

This is something which, in one way or another, probably concerns every person in this auditorium at this time. You may think it sounds far out and improbable. I think you're mistaken.

I'd like to go now to Scripture in First Samuel, chapter 15, which I think is a key text. These are words that were spoken by the prophet Samuel to King Saul after Saul had been sent on a mission to destroy the Amalekites and had returned without fulfilling his mission. He claimed to have done what God said, but he hadn't.

We won't go into the details, except let me share the lesson of that story with you, if I may. Because I was teaching it years back in Kenya, in East Africa, to the students in the teacher training college of which I was principal. And one of the principles we gave them for teaching Bible stories was you had to teach the lesson of the story.

So, I was doing this as a model lesson. And having gone through the lesson, I was walking to the chalkboard, and I said to them, "The lesson of this story is this." And between my desk and the chalkboard, the Lord spoke to me. And He said, "I'll tell you the lesson of this story." And when I got to the chalkboard, I knew what it was.

> "Incomplete obedience is disobedience."

Meditate on that one for a moment. Saul did as much what God required as suited him, and he claimed to have obeyed God. Samuel said, on the contrary, "You have disobeyed." Could that be true of some of us? That when God tells us to do certain things, we do as much as seems good and we're willing to do and leave some of it undone and then say, "God, we've obeyed you."

But God says, "Incomplete obedience is disobedience." And this is what Samuel then said to Saul. First Samuel, chapter 15, verses 22 and 23:

> "Then Samuel said, 'Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.'"

In other words, all your religious activities and sacrifices and offerings are of no value if they're accompanied by disobedience. Disobedience robs them of all value.

And then Samuel went on to make this remarkable statement. Remember, he made it to the king of Israel. In essence, he accused the king of Israel of witchcraft. And the essence of what Samuel said is that before Saul died, he actually ended up consulting a witch. That was no accident. It started when he disobeyed the Word of God.

> "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king."

Brothers and sisters, could it be that in certain circumstances that would be said to us? "Because you have

rejected the word of the Lord, He's rejected you from your office, your position, your responsibilities, your ministry."

Now, Samuel uses two words: rebellion and stubbornness. He says, "Rebellion is the same as witchcraft. Stubbornness is the same as idolatry." Let me tell you in my simple words the difference between rebellion and stubbornness. Rebellion says, "I won't do it." Stubbornness says, "I'll do it my way."

I tell you, I'd much rather deal with rebellion than stubbornness. You've got something clear-cut to deal with. And it says, "Stubbornness is the same as idolatry."

You see, we would not accept in our churches, I suppose, people who openly worship idols. But we tolerate a lot of stubborn people in our churches. You were a pastor. Not right now.

Shall I tell you one aspect of the idolatry of stubbornness? A stubborn person makes idols of his own opinions. And that's idolatry. We're not going to deal with stubbornness. We're going to deal with rebellion. Rebellion, Samuel says, is equivalent to witchcraft. Now, that's the key to understanding.

I'll try and explain it to you this way. Rebellion consists, first and foremost, of setting aside the legitimate authority of God. Whether it's God Himself, or a God-appointed ruler, or a God-appointed figure of authority. It might be a father, a husband, a pastor, or someone else. But all true authority has only one ultimate source, which is God. But rebellion rejects the authority of God and rejects the person who represents God's authority.

And so, it's setting aside the legitimate authority of God. But you can't live in rebellion without some substitute. You can't live without any kind of authority. So, the second phase of rebellion is inserting, or installing, or substituting an illegitimate authority. And that illegitimate authority has to be supported by signs of power. And the power that supports illegitimate authority is witchcraft.

Once you see that, it'll open up whole vistas of truth to you. Witchcraft is the power, the illegal power, the evil power that supports illegal, illegitimate authority. Authority that's against the authority of God.

Now, in Ephesians, which is a study in witchcraft and its consequences, Paul points out that there are two aspects of witchcraft. In Galatians 5:20, Paul lists the works of the flesh. It again says in verse 19,

> "Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery,"

and so on. Now, if you have the Authorized Version, instead of sorcery, it says what? Witchcraft. That's right.

So, witchcraft is a work of the flesh. It's an expression of man's disobedient, carnal nature. Let me say a little bit about the words we use so that we don't get confused. In the English language, there are three main words in this area. There's witchcraft, there is divination, and there is sorcery. They're all part of one package deal.

If you want a distinction, witchcraft operates primarily through spells and curses. Divination is the fortune-telling aspect, and every fortune teller is demonstrating divination. And sorcery operates through some kind of object to gain power over people. Like, one example is love potions. You want to make somebody fall in love with you, so you put something in his drink that makes him love you. In Africa, the majority of barren women, more than 90%, if they can't have children, will go to the witch doctor and get a potion that will enable them to become pregnant. That's sorcery.

Sorcery operates through charm, through superstition, through lucky horseshoes, through black cats, and it operates through music. This is nothing new to those who've spent time in Africa. Basically, most original Afro-beat was designed to expose people to demonic power. And they would go on beating the drums and dancing until the demon entered. That was what they were aiming at.

Well, it came from Africa by way of South America to America, and we call it rock and roll. But the same power is in it. You watch a teenager who goes in and listens for a couple of hours to that music, and that young person will come out with glazed eyes. They're under a different power.

Now, I'm not really concerned whether we use the word witchcraft or sorcery. Whichever I use, it's one and the same thing. Let's stick with witchcraft. So, witchcraft is a work of the flesh. Now, that would surprise you if you didn't, didn't go to the scripture for revelation.

What is the way that the fleshly nature expresses witchcraft? Well, it sets aside divinely appointed authority. It may be in the home, maybe in the church, maybe in the school, it may be in various areas.

The three key words that represent witchcraft are: manipulate, intimidate, and dominate. And wherever you

meet manipulation, intimidation, and domination, you're in contact with witchcraft. God never manipulates, He never intimidates, and He never dominates.

Witchcraft is the way that the disobedient, rebellious, fleshly nature gets what it wants. Man was born to have dominion. Made to have dominion. When he fell, he lost the right to have legitimate dominion. And as long as he was in rebellion against God, he could not exercise legitimate dominion. So, he still has the desire to dominate, but he can't use legitimate authority, so he uses witchcraft.

And you'll find this prevalent all through our culture. Let me give you just some simple examples. We start with a little baby in its crib. Its nappy is wet, it's uncomfortable, so it starts to cry. Along comes mummy, finds out what the problem is, picks it up, changes the nappy, and cuddles it.

Well, next time it wants to be cuddled, it cries as if its nappy was wet. But it isn't. What's that? Manipulation. How else does it start? See, I'm not talking about something from the moon. Or the little girl wants a, I was going to say a candy, but I've realized I'm in the wrong place to say that, wants a sweet. And her mummy doesn't want to give her a sweet, but a neighbor's come in to visit. And the little girl comes and says, "Mummy, can I have a sweet?" She says, "No." And the little girl starts to act up and scream, and the mother is embarrassed. So, in order to quieten her, she gives her the sweet. What? Manipulation. The little girl knew that while the neighbor was there, the mother wouldn't impose discipline.

Perhaps the commonest general expression of witchcraft is the way wives deal with their husbands.

Now, you may think I'm joking, but I—I mean, you can smile, but I'm not the least bit joking. I—I would have to say, let's take another nation so as we don't embarrass ourselves here, I would have to say, in the United States, there are millions of women who've never known any other way to deal with men but to manipulate.

"Oh, you don't really love me."

"Oh, you're not being careful with me."

"I feel so hurt."

"What do you want?" "I want a new dress."

I mean, that's a little bit—it's done with more subtlety than that, but there it is.

In the 1960s, in the United States, a book was published called *How to Be a Jewish Mother*. It was written by a Jewish young man, and his mother wrote the introduction. She said, "I know this is a book. I haven't read it, but my son wrote it." It's a—it is a classic study in witchcraft. There's a whole series of different applications, but one of the lessons is entitled, "How to Get Your Son to Play the Violin in Public Without Using Any Motivation but Guilt."

"You know how much your father and I have paid for your lessons? Yes, your aunt Jemima, and she's come all this way, and she's just come to hear you play."

Let me tell you, anytime people use guilt to get you to do things, they're manipulating you. God never does that.

So, the divine way is to be honest, to be open, to confront one another in love.

There are many other forms of manipulation. A father tends, rather than manipulate, to intimidate. He may—he has a son. This is such a common scenario. He's a critical man. He's a perfectionist. He's quick-tempered. His children don't live up to his standards, and every time they displease him, he throws a fit. Well, the result is that everybody in the family will do anything. They'll bend over backward to avoid another of those fits of rage. What is that? Manipulation or intimidation, whatever you like to call it. It's always an illegitimate way of getting your wants.

Then you've been to church life. Of course, I'm aware in dangerous territory, but many—thank God, not all, but many ministers are very insecure persons. I mean, I know hundreds. I'm not generalizing. I think insecurity is the greatest single personal problem of men in the ministry. And an insecure person is liable to act in very—some ways illogical ways.

So, the pastor is building his congregation, and he's struggled along till he gets a hundred people, and he's working hard at it, and one of the main families decides to go to another church. This, of course, never happens in New Zealand. So, now, it threatens his ego, understand? It threatens his security. So he says something like, "I promise you this, if you leave this church, you'll never prosper. You'll never be successful wherever you go." I've talked to many people that that kind of pronouncement made upon them. What is that? Witchcraft. Right inside the ministry.

Another way it happens—none of you have ever seen this—but here's the young Pentecostal pastor struggling to maintain his congregation, and there are two ladies in the church who've been Christians 20 years each. And they know exactly what that pastor should do. And every time he steps out of line, one of them gets a message in tongues, and the other gets the interpretation. And between them,

they tell him what to do. But, of course, how can he argue because it's—

Now, don't—don't look around. But I'll tell you, the people that are exposed to this stuff suffer more than you can understand, whether it's the young pastor or whether it's the family that were threatened with disaster if they would leave this church.

There are just two out of many different ways. I'm just awakening your understanding to begin to recognize this because when I describe it accurately, you'll see that it's not something from the moon. It's something that fills our society, our families, and our churches.

We are not different, in most cases, from the Galatians. By the time we've been through this, I think you'll see that there's another, very common example. And I'm talking about this because it's so relevant. And you can put me, if you like, in the picture. I trust, by the grace of God, I'm not guilty of this. But it's the man who's building his ministry, and he's got a program to maintain, either television or video or radio, and he needs support. And he says to the people, "Now, if you'll offer $50 to this ministry, you'll get $500 back from God. God has shown me there are ten people here tonight who'll give $1,000 each." Now, it's possible that God really did show him that, but in most cases, God didn't. It was a strategy that he worked out. To what? To manipulate.

I think that in the United States, I would say probably billions of dollars are manipulated out of God's people. Sometimes I could weep at the gullibility of the people of God.

I've got to talk a little further about ministries that become corrupt. I think New Zealand's got a bit more sense. I think it would take a more powerful brand of witchcraft to get money out of New Zealanders. But you're not immune, brothers and sisters. Don't imagine you are not immune.

Now, I think we're pretty close to the end of our first session, and I think I have to stop basically where I've got to because I don't want to start on a new area. But I just want to make it clear to you that I'm not going to major on negatives. I'm going to present the problem, and when you see the problem, I'm going to show you the solution. And the marvelous thing about the Bible is that Galatians not only presents the problem, it presents the solution.

And we saw that it was witchcraft. Something that would probably be surprising and shocking to many Christians who've read the New Testament many times but never seen that. Perhaps, or even more surprising and shocking would be my statement that I think the same problem is common in multitudes of churches today.

I pointed out that Paul shows in Galatians chapter 5, where he lists the works of the flesh, that witchcraft is a work of the flesh. That is, it's an expression of man's unregenerate, rebellious nature. It's one of the ways in which man seeks to regain his lost dominion without meeting God's conditions.

> "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies..."

And I pointed out that the three key words that are indicative of witchcraft are the words—see if you can remember them—manipulate, intimidate, and dominate. All right. Now, the second aspect of witchcraft which we're going to look at now is that it is also an evil spiritual power, and it emanates from Satan. Satan is the arch-rebel, and he has a kingdom of rebellious angels, and their aim is to gain dominion over the human race.

Their dominion is illegitimate. It's not from God's authority, which they've forfeited by their rebellion. Consequently, the means by which they seek to gain dominion is illegitimate power, summed up in one word, which is? Witch. That's right. Witchcraft is the power that Satan and his rebellious angels use to gain control of humanity.

It is actually the natural religion of fallen man. In other words, anywhere in the world, in the history of the human race, where there has been religion that has not had its basis in the Word of God, that religion is witchcraft. It is the normal religion of man in his unregenerate, rebellious state, and it's found in almost every nation on earth, in almost every continent, every land. Whether you're in Africa, Asia, South America, islands of the Pacific, Europe, makes no difference. North America, South America, original religion was witchcraft.

That makes it very simple when you grasp that fact. In certain areas of the earth, Christianity has driven witchcraft back, but nowhere has it totally, finally overthrown witchcraft. And one of the features of our contemporary situation is that Satan, by witchcraft, is seeking to restore the power that he exercised through those primitive religions. Nowhere is this more obvious than in New Zealand today, where there is a tremendous research of the original religions or religion of these islands.

You see, once you've grasped that simple fact, you can see history and the world situation with much greater clarity. It's no longer a kind of confused blur of pressures and forces, but you see the essential nature is the same everywhere. It's got a lot of different forms. It's different in South America from what it is in Africa, from what it is in Asia, but the essential nature of primitive religion that has not been based on the Scripture is witchcraft.

Now, I have said that witchcraft establishes an illegitimate authority. I'm saying, Paul said, witchcraft was operating in the churches of Galatia. The first evidence was that they lost the vision of the cross. They were no longer clear as to what had been accomplished by the death of Jesus on the cross on their behalf. And when they lost the vision, they began to forfeit the benefit.

And the two immediate results, which Paul pinpoints, were carnality and legalism. And I would venture to say to you that in most places where you find carnality and legalism in the church today, the same cause has produced the same effect. We are dealing with witchcraft.

Let's look at some of the statements that Paul makes. And let me point out also that the result of witchcraft taking over is that people come back under bondage. Now, "bondage" is a nice authorized version word that we're used to in religious circles, but the real problem meaning is slavery.

And let's say it very simply, witchcraft produces slavery. I'll read a passage in Galatians chapter four. Paul brings this out. Very remarkable passage. I'm not sure that I fully understand the implications of it, but at least a major part of it is clear. Paul is talking about the difference between the condition of people under the law of Moses and those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ and become his children. Paul says all heirs.

And he explains it this way. We're in Galatians four, beginning at verse one.

> "Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all."

Paul is bringing out that while Israel were under the law, though they were due to be heirs, they were actually in a condition similar to slavery.

> "He is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the Father. Even so we," Paul is talking primarily as an Israelite,

> "Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage," slavery, "to the elements of the world. But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law."

To redeem them from what? From slavery to the law,

> "that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying 'Abba, Father!' Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."

You see, the choice is simple. It's a son or being a slave.

But, when God's people lose the vision of the cross and what has been accomplished by it, and come back under the influence of witchcraft, they lose the experiential status of sons and become slaves again. So Paul goes on,

> "But then indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods."

Paul's on.

> "But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in slavery?"

See what witchcraft was doing? It was thrusting them back into a condition of slavery to a next system, weak and beggarly elements.

> "You observe days and months and seasons and years."

All aspects of the law.

> "I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain."

That's a strong statement, isn't it? As I pointed out, these people weren't drunkards. They weren't fornicators.

But Paul was really in a way much more concerned about their condition than he was about the others. And then if you go on a little further in Galatians chapter five, beginning at verse one,

> "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of slavery."

What was the yoke of slavery? Legalism. Who was pressing that yoke upon them? Witchcraft.

> "Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised," that is in order to keep the law, "Christ will profit you nothing. And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law."

If you once start seeking to achieve righteousness by keeping the law, you've got to keep the whole law all the time. There's no such thing as keeping part of the law at part of the time. It's either the whole law all the time, or you cannot achieve righteousness by it.

> "You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace."

Those are tremendously serious words.

But the two elements in that situation that I want to focus on are the evil power of witchcraft, the result which it produces, which is slavery, and slavery is manifested in what we call legalism.

We look also for a moment in Romans chapter 8, verses 14 through 17.

> "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."

How do you qualify to be a son of God? By being led by the Spirit of God.

> "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by which we cry out 'Abba! Father!'"

See again, it's the same alternative. Are you going to be a son, or are you going to be a slave?

You've been released from the slavery of the law, but if you go back under the law, you become a slave once again. And the pressure that's causing you to do that is the unseen evil power, witchcraft.

Then again, Romans chapter 8, verse 7 and 8. Paul says, the carnal mind, the fleshly mind, is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. It doesn't matter how hard you try to please God, if you're doing it out of your fleshly nature, you cannot do it. It is impossible.

> "Those who are flesh cannot please God."

When we come under legalism, we come into the flesh. And no matter how hard we struggle, and how many rules we observe, how earnest we are, we cannot please God. We have become slaves instead of sons.

Now, I said that the effect of witchcraft is to establish an illegal dominion, to set aside the legitimate authority of God, and to substitute an illegal dominion.

If this is so, then we need to ask ourselves, what is the illegal dominion that is established by legalism? What has it done? What has it reversed of God's plan and God's order?

And I would say this, it restored the illegitimate dominion of the flesh, the carnal nature, over the spirit, and the result is slavery.

In what way do we see this manifested in the church? Countless ways. But let me offer you some, a few examples. We place theology above revelation. We place the mind above, above the spirit. Now, I would say, and you are free to, to question it, the majority of Christian groups are operating on the basis of theology. Theology has been exalted, but theology is the product of the natural mind. Christianity comes by revelation. You don't understand the Bible by reasoning. I tried to do that as a philosopher. I couldn't make sense of it. You only understand the Bible by the revelation of the Holy Spirit.

And basically, you will find that the people who try to establish reason and intellectual processes as the basis of

the order of the church have set aside the moving of the Holy Spirit and ultimately the authority of Scripture.

They have placed education above discipleship. How many of Jesus' disciples ever went to a theological institution? You know, it's common, and I mean it's, it's done with me, so I'm not criticizing anybody. When, when a preacher or an author presents himself in Christian circles, they give his educational qualifications. He graduated from such and such a college, and he attained his master's degree here, and his doctorate here. And really, the general attitude of the church is, if he doesn't have that, he's not worth listening to.

Well, in that case, I suggest Jesus made a very bad choice. And He did not take His disciples into a classroom. He trained them in action. The education is no substitute for discipleship. Education is the carnal approach. Discipling is a spiritual process.

This illegitimate order that we're talking about puts eloquence and methods and programs over supernatural direction and supernatural power.

My impression is, and you again are free to correct me, that the majority of religious leaders in the church today are afraid of anything they can't control. But anything they can control lacks the power to do the job.

What has been, what has happened? The carnal mind has been re-established as the ruler over the spirit. Paul has got some things to say about the carnal mind.

> "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be."

There's no way that the carnal mind can submit itself to God.

See, basically, when we insist that candidates for the ministry, quote, attend theological institutions, and often for many years, what we're really is educating the carnal. But at the end of all that, all you've got is an educated enemy of God.

I mean, I can understand your smile. It's not, I'm not jesting. And I would probably, the most virulent opponents of God and the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures are the products of seminaries. Now, I am under no desire to speak evil of anybody, but I just want to state the facts. And I want to lay bare the root cause.

The root cause is that the divine order of spirit over mind has been reversed. The fleshly nature has put in authority over the spiritual. Esau has been given authority over Jacob. You could give it another half a dozen different expressions. And we're so used to it being that way that it takes a real jolt from the Holy Spirit to see how totally contrary it is to the divine order.

I really aim not to speak disrespectfully of anyone, but I have to, I believe I have to obey what God has disclosed to me. The church is being upturned. Now, I mean, there are wonderful exceptions. Thank God, I've been privileged to be amongst those of the exceptions in many different countries. But if you view the church as we know it as a whole, the divine order has been reversed. And man's carnal nature has been reinstated as the authority.

What is the power that's done that? Witchcraft. That's my conviction. See, I personally believe the problem of the Galatian church is the commonest single problem in the church today as we know it. George Verwer, who's the founder of Operation Mobilization, said in one of his books that the greatest single stumbling block in the church to converts is legalism. And I echo that personally. I think that's right.

Let's just contrast that with what Paul said.

Let's look at the order Paul established and contrast it with what we know. First Corinthians chapter two, verses one through five. Now, when you read this, you need to bear in mind that the historical background is Acts chapter 17 and 18.

In chapter 17, Paul was in Athens, which was the called university city of the ancient world. And he gave a lecture to the political leaders. And it was a very intellectual discourse, and he quoted their own poets. He sought to meet them on their own ground, but the results spiritually were very meager. A few people believed.

Then Paul went on from Athens to Corinth, which was a large, wicked port city with all the typical vices and problems of a port city. And somewhere between Athens and Corinth, Paul made a decision.

And he said, in effect, "I'm never going to do again what I did in Athens." This is his decision:

> "And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined, I made up my mind,

> not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

What was he focusing on? The cross.

He said, "That was my mistake in Athens. I didn't tell them about the cross." He said, "I'm not going to make that mistake in Corinth. I'm going to forget all I knew. I'm not going to quote poets and philosophers and psychiatrists."

What he didn't say, psychiatrists. That's just added by Derek Prince.

> "I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. My speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

What's the alternative? The supernatural power of the Spirit demonstrated.

And he gives the reason in verse five:

> "that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God."

I don't want your faith based on theology, on religious theory, on intellectual discourses. I want your faith based on one thing: a personal experience of the supernatural power of God in your own life.

I can identify with that because I was in educational work in East Africa. Five years, I was principal of a college for training African teachers for African schools in Kenya. And my primary purpose was to win them for Christ, although I also was responsible for their education.

And after a while, I realized that they were immunized to the kind of Christianity that they'd been exposed to. And that just kind of teaching wasn't getting anywhere. So I called the student body together. There was about 120 students.

And I said to them, "Now, I thank you that you're really very obedient and very cooperative. And whatever we tell you to do, you do. If we read, you read. If we say, 'Be baptized,' you get baptized."

And I said, "I know the reason why, because your education depends on obeying us. And education is the thing you want more than anything else." I used to tell the Africans they'd changed their gods. They used to have gods of wood and stone, and now they have a new god. And I said in Swahili, his name is 'Elimu,' which is the Swahili word for education. Which was exactly the situation.

Then I said to them, "Somewhere in the backs of your minds, there is a big unanswered question." They got very interested at that. And I said, "This is the question: Is the Bible a book for Africa, or is it really just a white man's book that doesn't work for us?" "That's your question," I said. "Many of your own African elders are telling you the Bible is just a white man's book, and Africans shouldn't be expected to follow it."

Then I said to them, "And I want to tell you something more. I can't answer that question for you." Well, that surprised them because they thought teachers and missionaries could answer every question. I said, "There's only one way you'll ever find the answer to that question: If you have a personal experience of the supernatural power of God in your own life, you'll know one thing for sure: It didn't come from America, and it didn't come from Britain. And until that happens, you won't know."

And I went away, and I prayed. About six months later, a young man came who'd never been beyond class four with a rather broken down, musical instrument. And he started to declare the truth of Jesus. And of course, they despised him. They'd just smiled at each other the day before. But the power of God came and broke out upon those people in a supernatural, sovereign visitation of the Holy Spirit. And basically, almost every student in that body was supernaturally touched by God.

Up to that time, we used to give them lectures about praying before they went to bed. After that, we stopped them praying. They prayed all night. During the next 12 months, I would say we saw all the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit manifested among those young people.

Well, then I called them together, and I said, "Now, I want to tell you something. Now you know that it didn't come from America, and it didn't come from Britain. You've had it on loan. And this is God's personal testimony to you that the Bible is true. And that He's doing what He said He'd do in Acts chapter two: pouring out His Spirit upon all flesh. 'Your young men will see visions. Your old men will dream dreams. And your maidens and your servants will prophesy.'"

And that place was revolutionized. In the course of the next two years, we saw two people raised from the dead. And it has been a permanent lesson to me: Any kind of effective faith is not built on human wisdom. Built on the supernatural power of God.

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And Satan's, one of his favorite tactics, is to get us substituting education, human wisdom, theology, and theory for the sovereign, supernatural work of the Spirit of God. There's only one good reason why our faith should not be based on human wisdom: because it changes with every generation.

And if you base your faith on the wisdom of the previous generation, it would be out of date. Look, it also, in First Corinthians 4:20, if you will:

> "For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power."

It's not what we say, it's the power that works in us and through us.

Now, I've tried briefly, and I could have spoken much further length, analyzed the specific problem of the Galatian churches as revealed in Paul's epistles to the Galatians. I don't want to focus on the problem. I trust that in some way I've shown you it's a real, up-to-date problem. It's not something that just exists among primitive people or in past generations. I think the problem is as prevalent in the contemporary church as it ever has been in any generation.

And now I understand why God said that He was declaring all-out war on witchcraft. I understand also, I think, to some degree what He meant when He said that it had bound millions of men who were needed in His army.

Now, I want to go to the remedy. The wonderful thing about this inspired Word of God is that Galatians possesses it. I mean, Paul didn't sit down to write a theological treatise. He didn't have a concordance. He didn't have a library. He might not even have had a desk to write on. He probably wrote it from somebody's home when he was in the middle of counseling people. All sorts of things were going on around him. He sends this letter, and its structure is such that it analyzes the problem and states the remedy.

And the remedy is the cross. There is no other remedy. And I have to look at five different ways in which the cross needs to be applied in the life of a Christian.

Of the five, one actually who's responsible for administering our Asian outreach, the one who supervises our Chinese broadcast, is also a graduate of Cambridge. After all, some people can escape. I escaped with five and a half years in the British Army. That beat Cambridge for me. My first wife, Lydia, said if I hadn't been in the army, she'd have never married me if I'd come straight from Cambridge. Well, God planned that thing, you know. But anyhow, this dear brother, who's a man of real perception, I visited him in Singapore nearly a year ago. And he just said to me casually, he said, "The church has got so many things in its shop window, the cross is lost from sight."

And that really speaks to me. I mean, the church is offering so much: prosperity, healing, insight, success, power, that, you know, the cross is just somewhere amongst all the other items for sale. That's a totally wrong picture. Everything that God provides depends on the cross.

And unless we restore the cross to its rightful position, we cannot be the kind of people God wants us to be, and we cannot have the kind of inheritance that God has provided for us. I'm going to speak about five different ways revealed in Galatians in which the cross needs to be applied in the life of every believer, including preachers.

Now, the cross is also the basis of God's total provision for every need. Every need that you have, spiritual, physical, material, financial, in time or in eternity, God has supplied one thing: the cross.

But I'm going to speak in these talks on what the cross has done for us. I want to speak about what the cross should do in us. And that's very seldom dealt with in contemporary Christianity.

Turn, first of all, to Galatians chapter one and verse four. This is part of Paul's greeting, and it actually is the, the text that opens up the whole revelation. We'll read verses three and four:

> "Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father."

That's the first provision of the cross that needs to be applied in our lives: deliverance from this present evil age. As within this Christian circle in which I move, and I see a good variety of Christians from different backgrounds and different nationalities, I don't think there's one in a hundred at the present time that is even aware that the cross has provided deliverance for us from this present evil age.

I'd like to make some statements out of Scripture concerning this age. Let me say, first of all, the word translated "age" in Greek is *aion*, from which we get the English word eon. And it is a certain, specific time period.

We're living in an age, a time period. But, through the cross, God has made provision for us to be delivered from this present evil age.

Let me ask you a simple question. How many of you were aware of that? Just—yeah, there are some. Thank God. But, I mean, it's one in twenty at the most. That's—I would say that's a rather better than usual average in the contemporary church. Let me, therefore, try to give you some explanation of why we need to be delivered from this present evil age. Because if you're not convinced you need to be delivered, it's improbable that you will seek deliverance.

Let's turn to Matthew chapter 13 for a moment. This is the great chapter of the parables. And interpreting these parables, Jesus makes the same statement several times. This present age is coming to an end. It's not going to last forever. Do you realize that? All right. Matthew chapter 13, verse 39. This is the parable of the tares and the wheat.

> "The enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age. The reapers are the angels."

This age is coming to an end. Verse 40:

> "Therefore, as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age."

You could say, in a way, one focus of these parables is the end of this age. And then in verse 49, the parable of the dragnet,

> "So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will go forth and separate the wicked from among the just."

And you could find many other similar references. Now, this is a very simple fact, but it's tremendously important. This age is *not* going to continue forever. I personally say, "Thank God." Paul calls it an evil age. And it's going to be an evil age as long as it continues. The second statement explains *why* it's an evil age. In Second Corinthians chapter 4 and verse four—we'll read verse three as well.

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

Who's the god of this age? Satan. That's why it's an evil age. As long as he's the god of this age, it's going to be an evil age. That's why Satan doesn't want this age to end. Because when this age ends, he'll no longer be a god. But as long as this age continues, he'll be the god of this age.

Hebrews chapter 6, verses four through six. Paul is speaking about certain experiences that are pattern experiences for us as Christians. Now, in this theme, he's saying that people who have these experiences and turn away from God deliberately, they have no further opportunity of repentance. That's not what I'm dealing with. I'm just going to deal with the experiences. If you look now, Hebrews chapter 6, verses four through six. I want you to notice these experiences.

> "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come..."

There are five successive experiences. They've been enlightened. They've tasted the heavenly gift, which is salvation, eternal life in Christ. Have become partakers of the Holy Spirit. And have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come. You see, through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we get a taste of the powers of the next age. We are lifted in that experience from our being totally immersed in this age to the realization that there's another age coming in which what is now supernatural will be natural. We taste it in advance. And I believe one purpose of God in permitting us to taste it is that we'll lose our taste for this age.

Then again, in Matthew 13:22, going back to that chapter of parables. Matthew 13:22. Interpreting the parable of the sower, Jesus speaks about the one who received the seed amongst thorns. And He says, now,

> "He who received among—the seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, but the cares of this world—the deceitfulness of riches—choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful."

Now, I'm reading the New King James. But it's an unfortunate fact that both the Authorized Version *and* the New King James use the phrase 'world.' The Greek is 'age.' Or any of you that have a modern translation, NASB or NIV,

it's 'age.' Isn't that right? Yes. Cares of this age. What do they do to a Christian? They choke the seed of the Word of God. That's another reason why we need deliverance from this present evil age.

And then in Romans chapter 12 and verse two,

Paul says to Christians, "Do not be conformed to this world." I mean, the New King James, but the Greek word is 'age.' Again, if we use the modern translations, it says 'age,' doesn't it? That's right. You see, 'age' is a period of time. 'World' is a sociological setup. Both have their place in New Testament theology, but we shouldn't confuse them. We're dealing at the present moment with this present period of time, this present 'age.' And it produces cares, anxieties, worries, ambitions, which choke the seed of the Word of God.

And then Paul says, no, in Romans 12:2,

> "Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

So Paul says we are not to be like the people who belong in this age. We don't belong in this age. We've been delivered from it. We're not to be of the same mold as those people. Because we have to be transformed, not so much by a set of outward rules. So much of religion consists in a set of rules. Don't do this, don't go there, don't touch that, don't wear that. I've been through it. I can give you the rules.

But God doesn't change people by rules. He changes them in their thinking. "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." When you think differently, you live differently. When you think like the world, you can change a little bit on the outside, but you're still really just the same inside. Let me ask you something. How do you respond when you suddenly get bad news? That's one of the ways of finding out whether you've been renewed in your mind or not. We just had the test. We came from Hawaii by way of Tonga. Checked our baggage in LA and not nothing arrived in Tonga. Not one out of four suitcases. I'd have to say, by the grace of God, we were renewed in our minds. We didn't worry, didn't get upset, just prayed. Sure enough, they turned up this morning, all four. But if they hadn't turned up, we still wouldn't have been upset. All this outward conformity with things, really doesn't touch the inner man. It's a substitute for inward transformation. It's legalism. We've got to change from the way we think, our values, our standards, our motives, our reactions. It's not so much your actions that give you away, it's your reactions. Then you know whether you've been renewed in the spirit of your mind or not. Then you'll know whether you've been delivered from this present evil age.

And then in Second Timothy chapter four, Paul makes a very sad statement about one of his trusted coworkers, who'd been with him many years, shared much hardship and labor with him. And he says in Second Timothy 4:10,

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

That word is 'age,' isn't it? Yeah, that's right. It's unfortunate that the Authorized Version doesn't distinguish because it leads to confusion. But if you, if you go to one of the modern translations, or you use a concordance, you can find out. The Young's Concordance, it takes you behind the translation to the original. Now I think that's a great tragedy. After all these years, I mean, Demas was one of Paul's trusted coworkers. He went off, he left him in prison, left him alone. Why? Why did he leave? Because he loved this present age. You cannot love this present age and be a faithful Christian. It'll show. One day, you may go through the motions for years, there'll come a moment where the love of this age will make you unfaithful to Christ. You cannot love both.

Let's look quickly at what I've pointed to you about this present age. First of all, it's coming to a close. It's not going to last forever. It's not eternal. Secondly, Satan is the god of this age, and it bears all the marks of Satan upon it. Third, we have tasted the powers of a new age, and that should have given us such an appetite that we're no longer tempted by this age. Fourth, it creates all these worries that make us unfruitful. They choke the Word of God. Fifth, believers must not be conformed to this present age. And sixth, a servant of Christ cannot love this present age and be faithful to Christ.

Now, let us briefly consider, in closing, what are the results of deliverance from this present evil age? What will we find in personal experience if we have availed ourselves of this deliverance? The first is citizenship in heaven. Philippians chapter three, verses seventeen and following.

Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. Was he talking about unbelievers? Obviously not. Were they the enemies of Christ? No. What were they the enemies of? The cross. That's the thing they didn't like. Oh, they liked

Jesus. He was a wonderful teacher. He'd saved them from so much. They'd been engrossed in all sorts of things, and he'd got them out of it. But there's one thing they didn't like at all, was the cross. They were the enemies of the cross. That affected the way they lived. Listen.

> "Whose end is destruction, whose God is their stomach, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things."

What are the causes of those? What is the cause of all of that? They didn't like the cross.

> "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself."

Now, you really don't qualify to have citizenship in heaven if you hate the cross.

It's possible to be very religious and still reject the cross. Somebody said this, and I may say it more than once, the cross is where God's will and our will cross. A lot of people that profess religion stop at the point where God's will and their will cross.

This passage also brings out a second related consequence of deliverance from this present evil age: the excited anticipation of the Lord's return. We are eagerly waiting a Savior from heaven. Let me give you two other passages. Hebrews chapter 9 and verse 28.

> "So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation."

To whom will he appear? To those who eagerly wait for Him. If you're at home in this age, you cannot be eagerly waiting for Jesus. It's impossible.

Second Timothy chapter 4. Let's go back to that chapter. I consider Second Timothy chapter 4 to be one of the great passages of English literature, amongst other things. Paul is here in prison, forsaken by his friends, some of them, cold, without his winter clothing, in shame, awaiting trial and probable martyrdom. And he says,

> "Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only, but also to all who have loved His appearing."

The Greek word for 'loved' is *agapao*, the strongest word. Those who passionately love His appearing. The International Version says, "Those who long for his appearing." To whom will he award the crown of righteousness? To who what? To what? Who long for His appearing. Are you one of them? You see, if you're at home in this age, you will not long for His appearing. Very inconsistent.

And finally, just to close briefly, and this is all closely related, the other consequence of deliverance from this present evil age is that we have here no continuing city. Hebrews 13:14.

> "For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come."

Again, a mutually exclusive alternative. If you're perfectly at home in this earth, you're not seeking the city that is to come.

And let me close with the scripture that has become very powerful in my personal experience. First Corinthians chapter 15. And simply verse 23—verse 19, I'm sorry. Verse 19.

> "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable."

And I think another translation says, "The most to be pitied." I've heard so many people say, "Well, if I got nothing but what I got in this life in Christ, it would be wonderful." That's not what Paul said. He says,

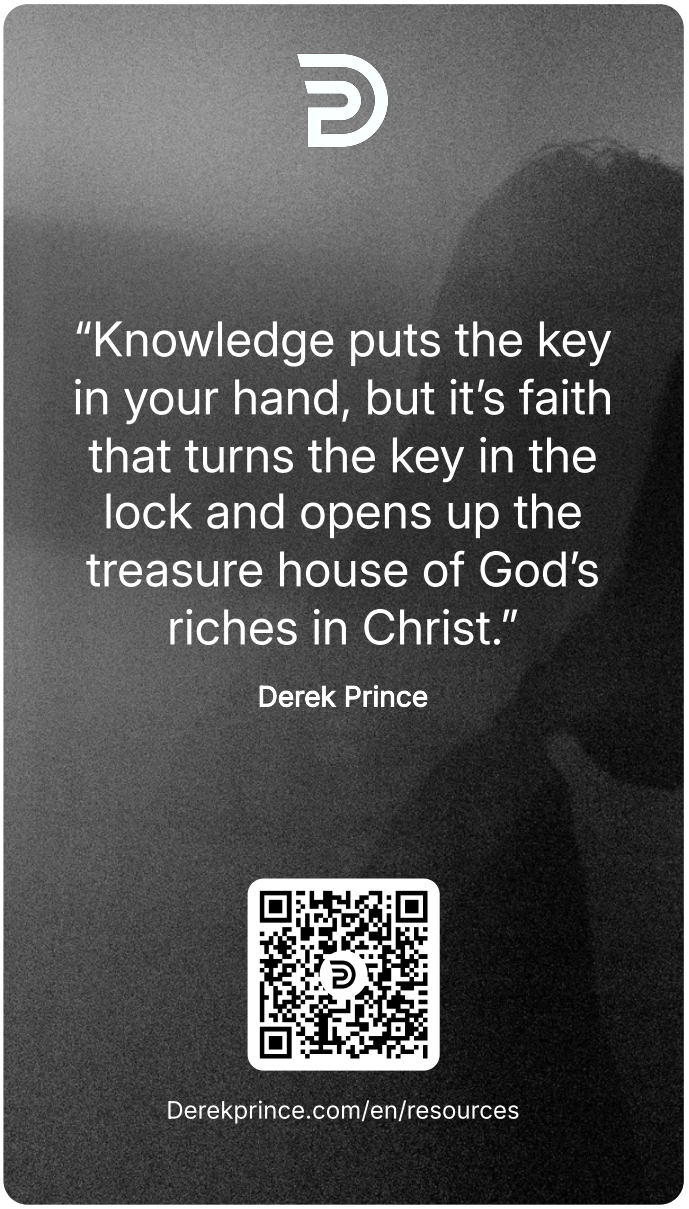
> "If our hope in Christ is in this life only, we are of all men the most to be pitied."

Let me recapitulate and close. The results of deliverance from this present, present evil age: citizenship in heaven,

the eager expectation of Christ's return, and the fact that we have here no continuing city. Amen.

Sermon

Transcript: MV-6050-100-ENG
Last Updated: 16 Sept 2026
Website: Derekprince.com/en/resources



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