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MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Teaching Letter

Walking Through the Land of God's Promises - Part 2



Part 2/6
Walking Through the Land of God's Promises
By Derek Prince

Receiving God's Forgiveness

In my previous introduction to the theme of this series, I outlined the overall purpose for "Walking Through the Land of God's Promises." What is that purpose? To identify and apply the great promises of Scripture to our lives. In each installment of this teaching series, I intend to show you in a practical way how to solve the various problems that arise in daily life. How does that happen? By appropriating specific promises in God's Word, applying them to each particular obstacle we encounter in life.

In this teaching, the problem we address is the matter of sin. Without going into a long theological dissertation on the subject of sin, let me just state what each of us already knows so well. Sin is a basic human dilemma that affects the spiritual life of every human being. Every day, you and I are confronted with the fact that we have sinned. What's more, each of us struggles with the perplexing question: "How can I be sure that God will forgive me?"

The Reality of Sin

We must start this discussion by squarely facing the reality of sin. The Bible states very clearly that every person has sinned—there is no one who hasn't. This pronouncement applies to people of all races, all faiths, and all backgrounds. It is one of the human attributes which we all have in common—a fact made absolutely clear by what the Word has to say about sin.

In 1 Kings 8:46, Solomon is speaking. He says:

> "...there is no man who does not sin..." (NAS)

Likewise, in Isaiah 53:6, the prophet says:

> "All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way..." (NAS)

Please notice how emphatic the words "all of us" and "each of us" are.

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We have **all** gone astray; we have **each** turned to our own way. Notice as well what constitutes the essence of going astray. It is not necessarily that we have all committed a heinous sin like murder or adultery. However, all of us have one shortcoming in common: we have all been stubborn, self-willed and disobedient toward God. At some point in life, each of us has made the choice to leave God's way to follow our own way instead.

In the New Testament, Paul states in Romans 3:23:

> "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..." (NAS)

Once again, we see that the essence of sin is not necessarily committing some terrible crime. Rather, it is falling short of the glory of God. How very important it is for us to understand the essential nature of sin! This is how I would define it: *Sin is a failure for which we are accountable*.

Sin is a refusal to live according to God's requirements—a failure to fulfill the purpose for which God created us. What is that purpose? To live for His glory—an unspeakable privilege! Our ultimate purpose is to bring glory to our Creator. When we sin, we rob God of His glory. How? By not fulfilling the purpose for which we were created.

Is that an understandable definition for you? Sin is simply a failure to carry out the function for which we were created by God. For that failure, we bear the primary responsibility. We cannot excuse ourselves by saying that we could not help it. We are accountable for our sin.

The Result of Sin

Now that we have established the reality of sin and our accountability for it, let's look into the subject a little further by examining the prognosis of sin.

Prognosis is, of course, a medical term. When one has a disease, the doctor must first diagnose it—identifying its presence in the person's system. Once identified, the doctor is able to predict the course the disease is likely to follow, as well as its outcome. That is the prognosis. In the Bible, the prognosis of sin—the ultimate effect of its presence in our lives—is extremely clear. In Romans 6:23, Paul leaves no doubt about the final result of this disease:

> "For the wages of sin is death..." (NAS)

The word "wages" refers to what we earn based upon our actions. What does every person earn for sins committed? Death. This is clear, emphatic, simple and undeniable. It is an absolute law.

We read the following added insight in James, chapter 1, verses 13–15:

> "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust." (NAS)

In this passage, James very carefully closes the door on any tendency we may have to put the blame on God for our wrongdoing. He says, "God is not tempted by evil and He does not tempt others with evil." Instead, when we are tempted, it is our own lust—our own corrupt desires—that carry us away and entice us into sin. Like our earlier citations, we once again see the prognosis for sin. In verse 15 of that chapter, James clearly explains the process of sin, as well as its inevitable outcome.

> "Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death." (NAS)

Here we see that the sin process follows a progression. When we yield to our lusts—our corrupt desires—it produces sin. When we continue in that practice of sin, it produces death. It is important for me to warn you in all honesty that death is not merely the cessation of physical life. The death of which this verse speaks can also be understood as an ultimate state of eternal separation from God. Spiritual death—a point that can be reached from which there may be no turning back.

So, here is the process and progression of what sin can do in a life. It starts with one giving in to lust (that is, a corrupted desire). This surrender to lust produces sin. Then sin, if allowed to take its course, brings forth death. That is the prognosis of sin.

The Burden of Sin

Before we move on to the remedy promised at the outset of this teaching, let's examine just one more significant impact of sin upon our lives—the burden of sin.

This aspect of sin is vividly described in the Psalms by David. Although he was a righteous man at heart, David

knew what it meant to fall and to sin grievously. (Thankfully, he also knew what it meant to repent, return to God and find His mercy.) This is what David observes in Psalm 32, verses 3–5:

> "When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord'; and You forgave the guilt of my sin." (NAS)

We can all thank God for that last statement, can't we? "You forgave the guilt of my sin." But notice what David went through before he confessed his sin. He said, "My body wasted away through my groaning all day long. My vitality was drained away." Sin had a palpable effect upon his entire being.

Speaking directly to the Lord, David made this statement in Psalm 38, verses 3–4:

> "Because of Your wrath there is no health in my body; there is no soundness in my bones because of my sin. My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear." (NIV)

Do you feel that way right now? That your sin—your guilt—is a burden too heavy to bear? Well, I have good news for you. There is a way you can be delivered from that burden of guilt and be free from it forever.

Finding Mercy

We have examined the fact of sin, the prognosis of sin, and the burden of sin. Now we will turn to the good news—God's promises of forgiveness. In doing so, we will only look at two specific promises: one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament.

Let's look first at Proverbs 28:13:

> "Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy." (NIV)

The first phrase above is exactly the opposite of the promise God gave to Joshua—the one highlighted in the first installment of this teaching series. God told Joshua, "If you will do what I tell you, you will make your way prosperous. You will have success." However, as this proverb shows us, there can be one insurmountable barrier to true prosperity. Sin.

Sin can block the way to success if we hold on to it—refusing to confess and renounce it. "He who conceals his sins does not prosper." Please bear that in mind. It is a very important warning. However, let's also bear in mind the promised positive result: "Whoever confesses and renounces them [their sins] finds mercy."

Two Vital Steps

Clearly, we see from this verse in Proverbs that God promises us mercy if we take two vital steps. What are they? First of all, confess. Secondly, renounce. God requires that we honestly acknowledge to Him the sins we have committed.

I have met some people who somehow had the impression that if they didn't tell God about their sins, He would never know! Of course, that is ridiculous. God doesn't ask us to confess our sins for His sake, but for our sake.

When we confess our sin—when we bring it out into the open, honestly and humbly before God—we open the way for God to deal with our sin and deliver us from it. But as long as we hold on to it and try to keep it concealed, we resist God's redemptive process—essentially cutting ourselves off from His mercy.

Secondly, we have to renounce our sin. We have to let it go. We have to turn from it. We have to decide not to go on living that way and committing sins of that kind any longer. This is a decision of the will. Our will is definitely involved in this transaction with God. If we do not make a deliberate choice to follow God's prescribed pathway, then we cannot experience God's mercy.

Standing By His Promise

Now for the New Testament promise we mentioned earlier. We find this promise in the first epistle of John, chapter 1, verse 9:

> "If we confess our sins, He [God] is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and

purify us from all unrighteousness." (NIV)

Please notice again God's requirement to confess our sins. When we meet that condition, Scripture cites two truths we will discover about God. First, that God is faithful. Second, that He is just. It is vital for us to understand both of these truths.

God is faithful to forgive us because He has promised to do so. He will never go back on His promise—if we meet His conditions. God is also just to forgive us, because He has already visited the penalty for all our sins upon Jesus. When Jesus hung on the cross and died there, He paid the final and full penalty for the sins of the whole human race. Therefore, if we meet God's conditions—if we confess, repent and turn to God—we open the way for God to forgive us totally and finally without compromising His own divine justice.

What Must We Do?

In response to all we have discovered about the attributes of sin and the promise of forgiveness, what then do we have to do? Let me sum it up very simply and clearly for you. We have to take three steps. First, we have to confess our sins. Second, we have to renounce our sins. Then third, by faith we have to receive God's forgiveness, believing God will do what He has promised. Confess, renounce, and receive.

Would you like to respond to these truths by taking those steps right now? That area of sin which is even now weighing you down, sapping your spiritual strength, can become a thing of the past when you pray the following prayer:

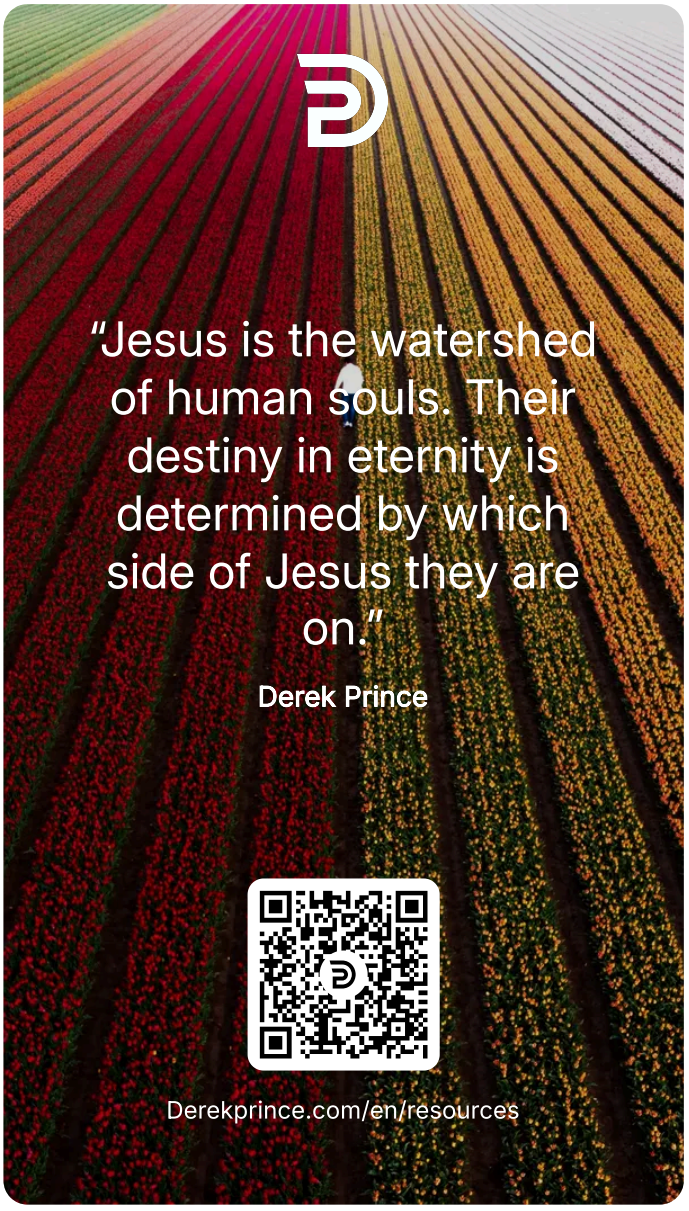
Lord Jesus, I confess this specific sin to You—acknowledging that it is indeed a sin in Your sight. I renounce it completely—pledging here and now that I will lay it down and stop doing it. Now, by faith in You, Jesus, I receive Your cleansing forgiveness for this sin. Amen.

By praying in this way, you have just dealt with one of the most imposing barriers to walking in the land of God's promises.

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