

THE TEACHING
LEGACY
 OF DEREK PRINCE

Hope in Christ, part 2

The entire revelation of the Bible as God's Word centers in the atonement—the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross and His triumphant resurrection. Atonement restores the sinner to God's favor. It is a total reconciliation and union. Therefore the greatest event of all of history is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is the heart of the Christian message. In fact, without the resurrection there is no Christian message. It all revolves around the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The key components of the Gospel are revealed through three simple historical facts—events that have actually taken place in human history and are attested by many reliable witnesses: He died, He was buried, and He rose again the third day.

There are three ways in which Christianity—based on these facts—differs from every other major religion. The first way is that Christianity is totally centered in a person: Jesus of Nazareth. It is not merely that He was the one who delivered the truths of the Gospel, but it is in His life and death and resurrection that the entire Gospel is centered. You cannot take away Jesus and have the Gospel. You cannot take away Jesus and have the New Testament. That is not true of other religions.

A second distinctive fact about Christianity is that it is rooted in history. It is not something subjective or theoretical. It is centered directly in human history. If the events on which it is based are true, then Christianity is true. If they are not true, then Christianity is not true. There is nothing in between. It is a complete commitment to a certain set of historical facts.

Third, Christianity claims that it will be verified in the personal experience of those who believe—and base their lives around—these three vital facts: Christ's death, His burial, and His resurrection. Believing in Jesus and in these facts about Jesus will produce a supernatural transformation in the lives of everyone who believes.



Why Men Reject Him

Although the resurrection of Jesus is a historical fact, there are still many who reject it. I believe there are two main reasons for this: the first is psychological, the second is spiritual.

Psychologically, people do not wish to acknowledge the possibility of God's direct, supernatural intervention in human affairs. They resent the thought that somehow God can change what they regard as a fixed course of events. And yet, there are no logical or scientific reasons for this attitude.

The second reason why people reject the resurrection of Jesus is spiritual. In 2 Corinthians 4:4, Paul says, "*The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God*" (NIV).

The "god of this age" is one of the many titles of Satan. He is the life-taker, while Jesus is the life-giver. On the cross, Jesus met and conquered Satan. The work of the cross ends Satan's power to dominate humanity and inflict upon them his cruel will and the endless agonies for which he is responsible—

emotional, physical, and spiritual.

Therefore, Satan now has one supreme objective: to keep men and women from understanding the truth of what happened when Jesus died and rose from the dead.

Logical and Necessary

From God's viewpoint the resurrection of Jesus was both logical and necessary. It was His vindication of the obedience and righteousness of His Son. Paul states this in Romans 1:1–4:

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. (NIV)

In the flesh Jesus was a descendant of David, but in His eternal nature He was the Son of God, who declared Him so by raising Him from the dead. The

resurrection is God's great vindication of His Son.

Previously, Christ had been brought before two human courts—first, the religious court of the Jewish council, and then the secular court of the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. Both these courts had rejected Jesus' claim to be the Son of God and had condemned Him to death. Furthermore, both these courts had united in seeking to prevent any breaking open of the grave of Jesus. To this end, the Jewish council had provided their special seal, and the Roman governor had provided an armed guard of soldiers.

However, on the third day God intervened. The seal was broken, the armed guard was paralyzed, and Jesus came forth from the tomb. By this act God reversed the decisions of the Jewish council and the Roman governor, and He publicly vindicated the claim of Christ to be the sinless Son of God.

What should our response be? Matthew 28:8–9 describes the response of the women who first witnessed the resurrection:

So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and

ran to bring His disciples word. And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, "Rejoice!" So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. (NKJ)

What can we do when we realize who He is and what He did? There is no other reasonable response but to do as those women did: fall at His feet and worship Him.

How to Face Death

Our destiny depends on our personal relationship to Jesus Christ. Conversely, unbelief will just as surely bring upon us judgment and rejection by God. If you are to face death with peace, confidence and calm assurance, there are four main steps you are going to need to take.

Face It. Face the fact that you are going to die. Each one of us is going to die. I'm often amazed at how few people are prepared for death. People can go through life knowing full well that they are going to die and never make adequate preparation for that sure event. It is not morbid to face the fact that you are going to

die; it is simply realistic. On the other hand, it is very unrealistic to live out your life without making preparation for what inevitably will come at the end.

Consider what Paul says about himself in Philippians 1:21: "*For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain*" (NKJ). He was not afraid of dying. He had faced the realities of sin, of judgment and of God's requirements in his life, and because he had been willing to face them and to face the issue of death, he had passed into a relationship with God where there was no more fear. There was only a keen desire to be released from the bondage of this fleshly life and to enter into the fullness of God's presence.

Every one who will do the same as Paul can have the same calm assurance. Connect with God through Jesus Christ in such a way that there is no more condemnation, fear or uncertainty.

Accept God's Offer. Facing death leads to the second step: accepting God's offer of pardon, peace, and eternal life. Then you can say with Paul: "*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Romans 5:1 NKJ).

In order to be justified we must

put our faith in the sacrificial death of Jesus, acknowledging that He has borne the guilt of our sin.

And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.

1 John 5:11–13 NKJ

God has given a testimony to the entire human race that He has offered us eternal life. This life is in the person of His Son. If we receive Jesus Christ, in Him we have received eternal life. Notice, it is in the present tense. It is not something that is going to happen after death, but something that happens now. If you leave it until after death, you will have left it too late.

Notice that in verse 13 John says, "*These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.*" It is not merely that we believe, but that through believing we can come to know. The end purpose of believing is knowing, and those of us who

believe the way God requires us to believe in Jesus Christ also *know* that we have eternal life.

Dedicate Yourself to Christ's Service. We must dedicate ourselves to Christ in such a way that what we do is good and that it is acceptable to God. In this connection, we need to check ourselves in three areas: motives, obedience and power.

What are our motives? Are we seeking our own ambition, our own pleasure, our own self-satisfaction? Or are we sincerely motivated by the desire for God's glory? God is going to sift our motives one day.

Second, are we serving God on His terms, or on ours? Are we obedient to the clear statements and requirements of Scripture, or are we trying to fashion some kind of new religion of our own that suits us better than the requirements of Scripture? We are going to be sifted on the question of obedience.

Third, are we serving God in our own power or in His power? Have we allowed the Holy Spirit to come in and take complete control of us, to motivate and empower us. Are we serving God in a way that is acceptable to Him?

Let God Wean You from the Things of Time. This fourth step is more complex, but very important

nonetheless. I will introduce it with one of my favorite passages, Isaiah 40:6–8:

*The voice said, "Cry out!"
And he said, "What shall I cry?"
"All flesh is grass,
And all its loveliness is like the
flower of the field.
The grass withers, the flower fades,
Because the breath of the LORD
blows upon it;
Surely the people are grass.
The grass withers, the flower fades,
But the word of our God stands
forever." (NKJ)*

How vivid! We are surrounded by things that are beautiful and by people we love. There is so much to love and to appreciate, and yet everything that we see is grass—ourselves included. It blossoms and flourishes in the morning and perishes by nightfall.

God gives loveliness in the temporal world, and then He causes it to wither. Why? Because He wants us to know about loveliness.

God wants us to know the loveliness that He is capable of producing, but He never wants us to be permanently at home in this world. So He arouses our awareness of loveliness, our

appreciation of beauty in all that is good, and then He causes the temporary loveliness of this world to wither. He does this so that we may set our hearts on the loveliness that is beyond this world and in the next.

In 1 Corinthians 15:19 Paul says, "If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men" (NKJ). Does your faith in Christ extend into eternity? If not, your religion is a pitiful fantasy. If our hope in Christ is genuine, it does not cease with this life. It gets brighter and brighter throughout eternity.

ADAPTED FROM DEREK PRINCE'S TEACHING, "VICTORY OVER DEATH," AVAILABLE AT WWW.DEREKPRINCE.ORG.

FOR FURTHER STUDY, WE RECOMMEND DEREK PRINCE'S BOOK:

THE END OF LIFE'S JOURNEY

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DEREK PRINCE MINISTRIES
UNIT 21
317-321 WOODPARK ROAD,
SMITHFIELD NSW 2164 AUSTRALIA
PHONE: 02 9604 0670
FAX: 02 9609 4255
EMAIL: ENQUIRIES@AU.DEREKPRINCE.COM
WWW.DEREKPRINCE.COM.AU