

THE TEACHING
LEGACY
 OF DEREK PRINCE

Ethics of Ministry, part 1
 Behavior Reflects Character

The message for this Teaching Legacy and the next was brought by Derek to a group of pastors and lay leaders in Cuba in 1996. Because of restrictions imposed by the Cuban government, Derek was allowed to speak only to small groups in house settings. His comments were addressed to leaders in that locale, but can be equally applied to Christians across the board.

The LORD will give strength to His people; The LORD will bless His people with peace.

Psalms 29:11

This is a subject I have never actually spoken on directly before: Christian ethics, or how Christian ministers should treat one another. First of all, I want to look at the situation from God's perspective. In a city like Havana, we say there are many different churches. But I don't think that's how God sees it. God sees only one church. After all, Jesus is going to marry the Church, and He is not a bigamist! He is only going to marry one church. So, while we think about many different churches, God sees only one church. And I believe God acknowledges only one church in Havana.

When Paul wrote his epistles, he never wrote to the Baptist church in Corinth or the Church of the Open Bible in Ephesus. He didn't write to the Evangelical Church in Philippi or to the Catholic Church in Rome. He always wrote to the Church in the city. We have departed a long way from that with our denominational labels, but I don't believe God has ever changed His

mind. What we see as many different congregations, God sees as one. He would call the leaders of those congregations elders, but elders in one church. What we call *pastors* of churches, God calls *elders* in the Church. Because of that, it is very important that the different elders know how to relate to one another. It's very easy to become self-centered and to think about *my church* and to focus on that alone. But that is not really a scriptural attitude. We should see one another as co-elders in the same church. It is very important that we know how to relate to one another.

Grace Produces Works

I would say the real basic question is Christian character. After all, the way we behave is an expression of our character. So I am going to talk about Christian character. First of all, I want to say that what we are derives from grace. It all begins with God's grace, but grace always produces works. To say you have grace without works is to deceive yourself. Let's look at just one or two passages. Ephesians 2:8–9:



way he looks.” He had a club foot and his body was twisted. After I awoke from the dream, I thought, *I just don’t understand it.*

About a week later, I had exactly the same dream. So I realized God must be trying to tell me something. So I said, “Lord, about that dream and the man who was preaching. What he was saying was good, but I didn’t like the way he looked. There was something crooked about him.” So I asked, “Who was the man?” And God said, “*You are the man. Your preaching is all right, but there are things in your life I don’t like at all.*”

As it was the season of Easter, I was thinking about the death of Jesus on the cross and I had a mental picture of a hill with three crosses on it. They were empty, and the middle cross was taller than the other two. The Holy Spirit said to me, “For whom was the middle cross made?” And then He cautioned, “Be careful before you answer.” So I stopped for a while and thought. Then I said, “The middle cross was made for Barabbas, but at the last moment Jesus took his place.” Then the Holy Spirit said, “But I thought Jesus took *your* place.” I said, “Yes.” The Holy Spirit said, “*You must be Barabbas.*” And I had this immediate understanding that my nature was as sinful, as crooked and as evil as that of Barabbas, and that I deserved to be on that cross just as much as Barabbas. When Jesus came on the cross, He not only took the place of Barabbas, but He took the place of Derek Prince. And I thought to myself, *Well, I understand that, but how can it ever become true in my experience?*

Then I thought about the phrase, “*Believe in your heart and confess with your mouth*” (Romans 10:9–10).

And I realized, “It is not enough for me to believe in my heart, I also have to confess it with my mouth.” Then I thought, “Suppose it doesn’t work?” In the end I saw I had to make that confession. So I began to say, “When Jesus died on the cross, my old nature died in Him.” And gradually it became true for me and I experienced an inner change of my nature. I am not yet perfect, but I am very different from what I was.

The Double Solution

This is the double solution. We have to have our sins forgiven, but we have to have our old nature put to death. As Paul says in Romans 6:11:

Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Earlier, in Romans 6:6, Paul said, “*Our old man was crucified.*” But in verse 11 he says, “Reckon yourselves to be dead to sin.” First of all, we need to know the fact; then we have to *reckon it true* in our experience.

When I asked myself, “What does it mean to be dead to sin?” I came up with this little story about a man, his wife and his children. The man was a very bad man. He did all the things that people who go to church don’t do. He drank whiskey and smoked cigars and watched bad programs on television. But he let his wife and children go to the gospel service on Sunday evening.

So one particular Sunday evening they went out, leaving him sitting in his chair with a glass of whiskey by him and cigar smoke going up as he watched television. That Sunday evening, they had a wonderful

service. They came back feeling so happy. They were actually singing the choruses they had heard in church. They suddenly realized that the man would get very angry if he heard the choruses. So they quieted themselves and tiptoed into the room, but the man did not stir. His cigar was right by him, but he wasn’t smoking it. The whiskey was right there beside him, but he wasn’t drinking it. And suddenly they realized what had happened. He’d had a heart attack and died. So, you see, he was dead to sin. The cigar didn’t attract him. The whiskey didn’t attract him. He wasn’t interested in the television. He was dead!

To the question, “What does it mean to be dead to sin?” my conclusion is this: It means sin doesn’t interest you. You’re not attracted by sin, and it produces no reaction from you. Paul says, “Consider yourself to be dead indeed to sin” (Romans 6:11). That is the only way out of the problem of sin. But it comes only through the cross. There is no other way.

The Cross Applied

I have been very concerned lately about all the foolish things that are taking place in the Body of Christ. And all the false doctrines and false prophecies that are flooding the Church. I have been asking God to show me, What is the protection? Just recently, He showed me that, very simply, the only protection is the cross—the cross applied in the life of a believer. Where the cross is not applied, Christianity is a false religion, because the whole religion is built around the cross. That is the reason for the problems in the Body

of Christ. That is the reason for all the deception, the false teaching and the false prophecies: When the cross is not preached, and when the cross is not applied.

Without the cross, Christianity is a false religion. It has no solid basis and its claims are not true. Like every false religion, it is open to the infiltration and the deception of demons. The only protection is the cross. Seeing that really lifted a burden from my mind. Not that I am happy with the situation, but at least I understand it. I realize there is no protection against Satan except the cross.

I have to ask myself, *What about my life? What place does the cross play in my life?* So I turn now to Galatians 2:20, which is Paul's own testimony.

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me . . ."

Is that true in my life? Have I really been crucified with Christ? Am I still very much alive? The cross is the only protection for me.

Then, Galatians 5:24 says:

And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

This is a description of those who truly belong to Christ. It doesn't say they are members of a particular church. These are not Baptists or Presbyterians or Catholics. That is not the defining mark. The only mark of those who truly belong to Christ is that they have crucified their flesh.

Our Part

We saw in Romans 6 that Paul said, "Our old man was crucified." That was something God did. But

in Galatians 5:24 Paul says this is something *you* have to do. *You* have to put the nails into your own fleshly nature. And crucifixion is always painful. There is no painless way around it.

Take one example of a young woman finding the right husband. Here is a sweet young girl of eighteen, who is a Christian and a member of a good church, and she meets a young man of twenty, who becomes very interested in her. He is not a Christian, but he starts coming to church with her on Sunday. Her perceptive pastor counsels, "He is not coming to church because he wants Christ; He's coming to church because he wants to marry you. And once he's married you, he won't come to church any more." This young woman has a difficult choice. She can put the nails in her own flesh and say to this young man, "I won't have any more to do with you. You are not a Christian. I am." That is painful, but the pain doesn't last very long.

The other thing she can do is ignore her pastor's advice. To say good-bye to this man would be too painful, so she marries him. Fifteen years later after she has had three children, he runs off with another woman. Tell me, which is more painful? To say no to the young man? Or marry him and have a miserable life for fifteen years and be left without a husband? One way or another, you are going to suffer pain. One pain will bring you release. The other will end in disaster.

Every one of us at one time or another has a choice. Am I going to put the nails in my own flesh? Or am I going to indulge my flesh and end up in a disaster?

In my next letter, we will be

taking a closer look at the picture of character that God expects, which is found in the book of Psalms. We will find out who may abide in God's tabernacle and who may dwell in His holy hill.

TAKEN FROM "ETHICS IN MINISTRY,"
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FOR FURTHER STUDY, WE RECOMMEND DEREK PRINCE'S CD:

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