

Laws of Spiritual Progress - Part 2

by Derek Prince

Derek Prince explores the essential laws of spiritual progress, emphasizing self-denial, the paradox of losing life to find it, and the necessity of experiencing death to manifest the life of Christ.

Duration: 23:30

Scripture: Matthew 16:24

Topics: "Spiritual Growth"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of giving up worldly possessions and desires in order to gain eternal life. He shares a quote from a missionary who said, 'He is no fool who gives up that which he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.' The preacher also discusses the need to accept the sentence of death in order to transmit God's life. He warns about the dangers of misusing God's love and the importance of properly insulating it. The sermon references Bible verses such as Matthew 16:24-25 and 2 Corinthians 4 to support these teachings.

Transcript

So, you know now, I stop and think, am I willing to practice it before I preach it. Matthew 16 verse 24 and 25 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it.

And whosoever will lose his life for my sake, shall find it. Now let's go to 2nd Corinthians chapter 4. I think you'll notice that all the passages I'm going to read, all three passages, have got to do with a balance between death and life. 2nd Corinthians chapter 4, beginning perhaps at verse 7. 2nd Corinthians 4 verse 7 But we have this treasure in earth and vessel, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed. We are perplexed, but not in despair. Persecuted, but not forsaken.

Cast down, but not destroyed. Always bearing about in the body, the dying of the Lord Jesus. That the life also of Jesus, might be made manifest in our body.

For we who live, are always delivered unto death. For Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus, might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then, death worketh in us, but life in you.

And then in Philippians chapter 3. I hope I can get around to preach on these. They're so good. Philippians chapter 3, we begin at verse 8. Read through verse 10.

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but lost. For the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. For whom I have suffered the loss of all things.

And do count them but done, that I may win Christ. And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law. But that which is through the faith of Christ.

The righteousness which is of God, by faith. That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection. And the fellowship of his suffering.

Being made conformable unto his death. If by any means, I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. You know for years and years, I mean 20 years or more.

I used to read that 10th verse. And I would say, Lord I know it's in the Bible. I'm sure it's right.

But to be honest, I can't say it. And I don't want to say anything, I don't mean. I mean Paul said it, it's in the Bible.

But to say that I want to know the fellowship of your suffering. I just can't bring myself to say it. So I have a pending file that I put things in.

When I can't ignore them and I'm not ready to deal with them. So I just have my pending file and I slip them in there. Well gradually over the years the Lord has dealt with me.

To the point where with a kind of gulp, I can say it. That I may know him, the power of his resurrection. The fellowship of his suffering.

Being made conformable unto his death. I hope I'll be able to explain this. In some ways it's perhaps difficult to say it.

But this is the second law of spiritual progress that I have learned. It's in the scripture. Let's go back to Matthew 16 and look what he says there.

First of all. If any man will come after me let him deny himself. And take up his cross and follow me.

I believe there are certain specific steps. That we cannot avoid if we're going to follow the Lord. The first one is to deny ourself.

Somebody said that's very simple. To deny means to say no. And to deny yourself is to say no to yourself.

Yourself says I want and you say no. And I believe that is really the first requirement for following the Lord. Is learning to say no to myself.

Let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. The second thing that Jesus says we have to do is take up our cross. Now I do believe the cross is voluntary.

It isn't imposed upon you. You can take it or refuse it. But if you don't take it you can't follow him.

What is the cross? Can be defined in many ways. But I think one of the best definitions I heard is the cross. Is where your will and God's will cross.

There is a cross for everyone. There's a hymn that says that. It's also true.

The cross is the place where you die. You don't have to go there. But we sung a very very beautiful song.

Which said that if we follow Islam. It'll lead us where? To Calvary. There is no bypassing that.

There is no other way. Let's look on the next verse. Verse 25.

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it. And whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. Now that's the paradox.

If you want to find life you have to lose it. And you have to lose it before you find it. It's always faith.

I believe in the kingdom of God. God has got a precise price tag on every item. You want it.

It costs that much. God never has a sale. But the good side to the situation is there's no inflation.

The price is just the same as it was 19 centuries ago. It hasn't changed. Now what does it mean to lose your life? I want to try to explain this in a very practical way.

Not an emotional way. Not to tell you a sad story about a missionary laying down his life in darkest Africa. But to relate it in a very practical way.

There are three words in Greek that are translated life in the New Testament in English. And it's really important to distinguish them. If you want to do it you can always do it through a concordance.

Either young's or strong's. Because they separate the words according to the original word that's translated. So it's not a secret that's confined to a few people.

Anyone that's got enough money to buy a concordance or friend to lend it. And willing to work at it can find these things. The three words are zoe which in Greek means basically divine life.

That's a little oversimplified. But in John 1 for it says in him Jesus Christ was life. And in 1 John 5 12 it says he that hath the son.

S O N. Hath the life. Zoe. That's essentially a life which we cannot have apart from God.

Its source is God. The second word is bios which gives us the English word biology. And that means basically Jesus talks about the cares of this life.

And the deceitfulness of riches. The word is bios. It means the kind of life that every person has.

Getting a job. Getting married. Finding enough food.

That whole realm of physical material life. But the third word. The one that's used here.

The Greek word psuche. Which gives us sort of English words like psychology, psychic. Though they're not exactly in line with the meaning of the Greek.

Now the Greek word psuche means soul. S O U L. And that's what Jesus said. He said if any man will.

Let's look at the words and get them right. For whosoever will save his soul shall lose it. And whosoever will lose his soul for my sake shall find it.

What does it mean to save or to lose your soul? I want to try to illustrate that to you in a practical way. When I came into the ministry of deliverance. I got like most people.

I got caught up with the dramatic spirits of suicide. And witchcraft. And anger.

And addictions. It was all very dramatic. And resentment and so on.

But after a while I began to realize. That I was only dealing with small branches of man's total problems. For instance just to give you an example.

I discovered that if a person has an addiction. It almost always arises out of a frustration. So you don't solve the person's problem.

If you just deal with the addiction. But don't deal with the frustration. And as I went on.

I began to see always going further and further down. From the twigs to the branches to the limbs. And then to the trunk.

But then I read in Matthew 3 10. Where John the Baptist says. Now also the axe is laid to the root of the tree.

And I saw that in actual fact. If you really want to get rid of the tree. You don't just cut off the branches.

You don't even just cut down the trunk. You've got to get to the root. And the root is below the surface.

Now that I believe is true of human nature. And I would say that the root of man's problem. Is his self light.

The ego. The eye. And in my mind.

I well I once drew a little diagram of that tree. The line where the earth comes. And then what's below the surface.

That you don't see. And most people resent you going below the surface. You know that.

And I in my mind's eye. I drew three roots. One big central root.

And one on either side. And I would say those are the roots of the soul life. That we have to lose.

And each of them begins with an eye. The big central one is. I want.

My will. The one on the other side is. I feel.

My emotion. And then the other side. I think.

My mind. I want. I feel.

I think. You study unregenerate man. He's ruled by those three eye.

I want. I think. I feel.

That's the soul. In its rebellion against almighty God. The soul is the rebellious area of man.

Jesus says if you want the life that God has. You've got to lose that. You've got to let it go.

You are no longer to be governed by. I want. I think.

I feel. There's got to be a death. And if you're willing to let them die.

They'll come a new life. But if you hold on to them. You never find the life that God has for you.

I don't mean that you go to hell or heaven. That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about finding the life that God has for you.

Here and now. If you want that life. You've got to lose the other first.

If you're not willing to lose it. You won't find it. And it's a death.

Death is never pleasant. Let no one ever deceive you with pretty words about death. Death is the last enemy.

Thank God that Jesus has conquered death. No one welcomes death. No one ever will welcome death.

Let's go to the next passage I read. 2nd Corinthians chapter 4. See again the contrast. Always bearing about.

Verse 10. 2nd Corinthians 4.10. Always bearing about in the body. The dying of the Lord Jesus.

That the life also of Jesus. Might be made manifest in our body. If you don't carry the death.

You can't manifest the life. Verse 11. For we who live are continually being delivered unto death.

For Jesus sake. That the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. That's divine healing and divine health.

But you see. There's a basic requirement. Your own will.

Your ego. Your ideas. Your desires.

Your ambitions. Shut off the life of God. As long as you cling on to them.

His life cannot flow through you. So then you come to this statement. Verse 12.

So then death worketh in us. But life in you. Do you want to minister life? There's a price.

Death in you. See. That natural soul life.

Is at war with God. It's opposed to God. It's an enemy.

It's contrary to the spirit of God. It doesn't receive the life of God. You want to be a life transmitter? All right.

Accept the sentence of death. When you die. God's life flows through you.

I've learned this in innumerable different ways. I remember I was going to preach in Denmark. Through an interpreter.

In 1947. That's good many years ago. In fact 30 years ago.

And it was really important to me. I did well. I mean I really wanted to do well.

When I got there. I discovered my interpreter didn't understand what I was talking about. And I thought what am I going to do? And I said Lord into your hands.

I commend my spirit. I just can't do anything about it. God blessed that meeting in a remarkable way.

Because I died. When I got myself out of the way. God could do something.

I remember being in the same church two or three years later. And they had in that Pentecostal church in Copenhagen. Where Eric knows the church.

They had a members meeting. Every week. Well they invited me to speak.

I thought it was a gospel service. So I came along with a gospel message. And I got them comparing themselves by themselves.

And measuring themselves by amongst themselves are not wise. I was going to talk to sinners. Well when I got there.

Again I was not sufficiently able in those days to preach. That I could change my message. And preach through an interpreter.

So I had to preach my message for sinners to saints. And God sent a revival. It turned out the saints were sinners.

Why? Because I'd given up. I mean I had just come to the point where I said. I cannot do anything in this situation.

Those are very simple examples. I discovered that when God uses me to bless others. I always have to do it at my own inconvenience.

It always demands self-denial. Somewhere or other. I have to give up something to bless others.

All right I've just settled down to listen to my favorite record. Which is anybody may know it. Christopher Parkin and Klezbach.

And the phone rings. All right it's a black lady I met in a convention. I won't give her name or location.

Because who knows where tapes will end. And she wants to counsel with Brother Prince. And I give her 15 minutes.

When I could have been listening to Christopher Parkin. Don't you think that costs something? Believe me it cost me something. But I know if I do it.

God will bless. Because I've got my ego out of the way. My soul life.

The I want. I think. I feel Lord this is the time I set aside for myself.

You know I always like 30 minutes alone before I go to bed. The Lord knows too well. Actually this has happened twice.

I have to be careful what I say. Because this lady may one day hear this tape. I've got to this stage.

And people that know me know. I unplugged my phone. Then in Florida they've given us those nice phones.

Where you just pull the thing out anytime you want. You know terrific progress. And I got three phones with my number.

And when I want to be by myself. I go around and unplug every phone. And when I'm writing a book.

And I've been writing a book. I unplugged the phone. But then if I want to phone somebody.

Like my daughter or something. I just plug the phone. Make the call.

And then unplug it. Well twice I forgot to unplug it. And guess what happened? Each time this black lady phoned.

From right halfway across the nation. And I had to see God wanted me to talk to her. That's why he let me forget to unplug the phone.

Well that doesn't sound very grand and dramatic. That's a daily life of dying to minister life. We are continually being delivered unto death.

For Jesus sake. That the life also of Christ. Might be manifested in our mortal body.

I do think it goes a lot further than that. I mean to say it's more than just being willing. To talk to a lady on the phone.

Because it depends what your priorities are. To me. Talking on the phone.

Is a chore. I hate it at the best times. That's.

I mean that's. I'm just like that. I mean I. If I make you a phone call.

You may not know it. But it's a. It's a tribute as far as I'm concerned. I mean I've really paid the price.

I just. I'd rather the phone. You know in a certain sense.

I'd rather they didn't exist. But anyhow. Let's go on to the last passage in Philippians.

Chapter 3. Verse 10. That I may know him. The power of his resurrection.

The fellowship of his suffering. Being made conformable unto his death. If by any means.

Through that. I might attain unto the resurrection. The dead.

Do you think that Paul didn't know Jesus. When he wrote those words. I mean it's obvious that he did.

He'd known him better than most of us. For many years. And he said that I may know him.

Better. More intimately. More completely.

And he said that I may know him in two aspects. The power of his resurrection. The fellowship or sharing together in his suffering.

There are some people. That all they can talk about is crucifixion. The crucified life.

And many times I found them rather miserable. I don't believe God asks us. To share the crucified life.

Until we've tasted the power of his resurrection. You notice the power of his resurrection comes first. Then the fellowship of his sufferings.

If you don't have the power of his resurrection. What will you do with the fellowship of his sufferings. You won't be able to handle it.

I think. I have. This is going to be difficult for me to say.

And I wouldn't say it in most places. Maybe I shouldn't even say it here. I think I really came to understand this.

When the wife took. When the Lord took my wife home. The fellowship of his suffering.

Because one of the greatest privileges of my life. Was to be with her. Till the Lord took her.

And to share her sufferings. There wasn't anywhere else in the world. That I would have been at that time.

And if I'd not. I'd let the Holy Spirit nudge me. And told me not to go on a preaching trip.

And that's why I was there. But I then learned this. That if you really love a person.

You wouldn't want to be anywhere else. When they're suffering. And I see that's how it is with the Lord.

If we really love him. We want to share his suffering. We don't want to leave him.

When the going gets tough. And again I've seen this. That the most powerful thing in the universe.

Is love. In the Old Testament it says. Love is strong as death.

And you know death is strong. Death is irresistible. When death comes.

There's no man can say no. The Bible says. Love is strong as death.

Love is irresistible. When it comes. No one can say no.

But it's like with electricity. The higher the voltage. The more you have to ensure.

That it's properly insulated. Otherwise it's very dangerous. And I don't know whether you can take this.

But if you can't. About 10 years from now. You think it over.

But you may need experience. But the more God gives you his love. The more carefully it has to be insulated.

Because if you play around with the love of God. You can control people. You can be like a pied piper.

You can have people running after you. It sounds strange. But it's true.

And you've got to be. Never have you got to be so careful. As when you know.

The love of God is flowing through you. Because you can manipulate people. The average person.

Never felt the love of God in his life. You come there to channel of God's love. And you're not insulated.

Then going to be a problem. The insulation is death. Death worketh enough.

But life in you. You want others to have life. There'll be a moment.

Where you have to experience death. Don't go looking for it. Because God will arrange it.

When it comes. Just bear that in mind. That's the price.

And it just doesn't happen once or twice. There may be real critical moments in our lives. Where we can say.

Well that moment I died. Maybe you accepted to calling us a missionary. I can look back now and think.

When the Lord called me to be a missionary. In Jerusalem. I had been overseas in the British army.

For four and a half years. My grandfather whom I dearly love. Was dying of cancer.

He's. The Lord had kept him alive. Three years through my prayer.

The British army owed me a trip. Back to England. Because that's where I was enlisted.

But the Lord had called me. To serve him as a missionary. In Jerusalem.

And I said to myself. Well I'll just go home. See my grandfather.

My father and mother. And my family. Come back again.

Start my missionary calling. And the Lord gave me. A most beautiful utterance.

Interpreted. And was a picture of a ship. In a harbour.

A sailing ship. Fully manned. All the sails in place.

Everything ready. Just about to set sail. And he said.

The ship is in the dock. You can get on now and go. If you don't get on now.

The ship will go without you. And I learned one thing. God's calling doesn't suit man's convenience.

And I said no to my parents. No to my grandfather. No to my university career.

And I stepped on the ship. That was a death. But I have never never never regretted it.

Every time God is going to open. Some new level or experience of life to you. The price is death.

It comes in many many different ways. God suits it to your particular situation. You may have to give up a boyfriend.

Or a girlfriend. Might be a very nice person. But not the one that God can bless your life with.

God has got his ways of doing things. There was that lady that was called to West Africa. What was her name? She was known as the White Queen of Calabar.

Mary Slessor. When the Lord called her. She was very interested in a man.

And he was very interested in her. And so he sent her a letter. And said if you write back.

We'll get married. She mailed the letter. And it got lost in the post.

It didn't arrive till 10 years later. So she left for Calabar. And they never got married.

That was God's way of cutting that root. So who knows what will happen. But I tell you.

God has always got something much better. Than you could ever dream of. God demonstrated that to me with our house.

And I'm not. I am not proud of our house. I'm not coveted.

I've walked out of two houses. Left them fully furnished. And never gone back to them.

So you know. I've been tested that way. But God showed me.

And he's shown me again. And again. And again.

In every area of my life. If I will let him plan. He'll plan better than I would ever do it for myself.

I mean that. Better every way. On a higher level.

But always the price is. Death to my own ideas. Death to my own will.

Death to my own feelings. If you want to find your life. What do you have to do? Lose it.

If you hold on to it. Then you do lose it. You've heard about.

I think one of those missionaries that was killed. In South America some years back. I forget which one it was.

But he wrote this in a book. And I really. I'll leave it with you.

I think. I can't say it any better. He said.

He is no fool. Who gives up that which he cannot keep. To gain that which he cannot lose.

So when the choice comes. Remember you're not a fool. To give up what you can't keep.

To get what you can't lose. God bless you.

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