

# The Cross in My Life - Part 3

by Derek Prince

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*To follow Jesus, we must deny ourselves, take up our cross, and let Christ live in us, crucifying the flesh with its passions and desires.*

**Duration:** 28:13

**Scripture:** Matthew 16:24, Galatians 2:20

**Topics:** "The Cross", "Sanctification"

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## Description

This sermon delves into the theme 'The Cross in My Life' from the Epistle to the Galatians, emphasizing the dual aspects of the cross: what it does for us and what it does in us. It explores the five-fold deliverance provided through the cross, focusing on deliverance from the present evil age, the law, personal ego, selfish ambition, pride, and self-centeredness. The message highlights the necessity of crucifying the flesh with its passions and desires to truly belong to Christ.

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## Transcript

We're continuing with the theme which I entitled, The Cross in My Life. This teaching is taken mainly from the Epistle to the Galatians, and in the previous session I began by pointing out that there are two main aspects to the cross. There's what the cross does for us, which we all get excited about, and quite a lot of people preach about, but there's another side which is what the cross is intended to do in us.

And for many people that's much less exciting, and I think a lot less is said about it. And I said also the remarkable thing about Galatians is it not merely pinpoints the problem, but it states the solution. And the solution is a five-fold deliverance which is provided for us through the cross.

And in the previous sessions we looked at the first two deliverances. Galatians 1, verse 4, deliverance from this present evil age. The second deliverance, how many of you can remember what that was? From the law.

That's right. And that was one which shocked some of you. I do want to say again emphatically, I am not talking about civil law.

I'm not talking about the law of the nation. I'm talking about the law only as a means of achieving righteousness with God. I personally believe the New Testament teaches that basically, with a few exceptions, Christians are obligated to be law-abiding people.

The only exceptions would be where the civil law conflicts with our duty to God, in which case our duty to God must come first. All right, now there are three more deliverances that I want to deal with in this session. The next one is in the verse following deliverance from the law.

Galatians 2.20. Galatians 2.20, Paul says, I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Notice again, it's the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross that provides this deliverance. Now what is it that is dealt with in verse 20? You can answer not just in one word, but in one letter. I, that's right.

The old ego. You know, ego is the Latin word for I. I think this is as important as any deliverance that's mentioned in Galatians. I have been crucified with Christ.

The old King James says, I am crucified with Christ. It's not just something that has happened, it's something that's a continuing state of my being. I am continuously and permanently crucified with Christ.

I have come to the end of myself. How many of you, don't put your hands up here, how many of you have had a hard time coming to the end of yourself? I see some of you are willing to put your hands up anyhow. How many of you discovered that God sometimes has to use a very hard road to bring us to the end of ourselves? And we complain, and we are disturbed and upset, and we think, God, what are you doing with me? He's bringing you to the place where Galatians 2.20 really is true in your life.

I am crucified with Christ. I've come to the end of me. You see, like most ministers, I've dealt with all sorts of people in all sorts of places.

And I meet many people who are running away from their problems. And they may be running away from their wife, or their husband, or their family, or some particular problem they got in. But what I discover is, the real problem is one we can't run away from, because we take it with us wherever we go.

What is that? It's me, myself. The only way that we can get free from that problem is through the cross. I would interpret this statement as escape from personal ambition, pride, and self-centeredness.

Let me say those three words again. Personal ambition, pride, and self-centeredness. I would say those are the far the commonest problems in the Christian ministry today.

I must be careful not to be negative, but I think there's not a single person in the ministry today, including Derek Prince, and primarily Derek Prince, who does not have to be continually on our guard against those three related things, personal ambition, pride, and self-centeredness. I've come to the conclusion that nobody in the Christian life goes into error except through pride. Pride is the only reason why Satan can bring us into error.

And yet I see countless Christians going into different sorts of error. You see, if you start to consider what was the first sin in the history of the universe? Pride. That's right.

And it didn't take place on earth. It took place in heaven. It took place in the full light of eternity and of God's glory.

That's a frightening thought, isn't it? So if pride could break through there, it must be much more easy for pride to break through here on earth. I was born an only child. I never had brothers or sisters.

I was blessed with a good brain, and I was always successful at school and in college. Basically I expected to be number one. And I made my way up to the age of twenty-five that way.

A brother that has ministered with me quite a lot in the past said one day that I was the most, what did he say, self-reliant person he'd ever met. I don't know whether that's true or not. But all through the first twenty-five years of my life, I relied on myself.

And within limits, I did a good job. Then God revealed Himself to me and started to change me. Let me say He hasn't finished changing me yet, but He did a radical work in one night.

He totally redirected me. I made a U-turn. I've been going in a different direction ever since.

But God, I'd have to say, has a sense of humor, because I had no idea what His plan for my life was, but about four or five years after I was saved, I was married to a Danish lady in Jerusalem who had a children's home. Not only did I get a wife, but I got eight daughters in one day. Now girls were a strange remote race to me.

And so if you could ever think of anybody less qualified by background than me for that position, you'd have to look a long way. And all through this, I've realized for years God has been dealing with my self-reliance. I'm one of those people, every time I'm confronted with a problem, my first reaction is, What am I going to do about it? Thank God I've come to the place where I quickly say, That's not the point.

What is God's answer? But it's taken a long while for me to get there. Let's look for a moment in Philippians chapter 2, verses 3 and 4. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

So that's the exact opposite of self-centeredness, isn't it? Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit. I wonder how much would stop being done in the church if that rule was followed. How much ministry is motivated by selfish ambition? How many ministries are built on somebody's desire to have the biggest something? I don't say this to be critical, but I just state it as it's a problem that I think is corrupting the life of the church.

And it's a problem that's got to be dealt with. And the only way to deal with it is the cross. There is no other way.

You see the alternative is stated just in the previous two verses of Philippians 2. Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, those are beautiful things. They're things we'd all love. But you see, they're incompatible with selfishness and self-centeredness.

Then Paul says, Fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. So there are two opposites. Verses 1 and 2 are what we'd all like, but verses 3 and 4 are what very frequently we experience in ourselves and in others.

And until we come to the cross and accept God's sentence upon me, we will never have a solution to these problems. There is no other solution. There's no other way but the cross.

In 2 Timothy chapter 3, we have a very vivid picture of what human character and human behavior will be like in the last days. There are actually eighteen specific ethical and moral blemishes that Paul lists. As I read them, I invite you to consider how many of them are conspicuous in our contemporary culture.

And having lived over seventy years, I can think back quite a long way. I grew up in Britain between the two world wars. And I'd have to say that Britain, although not by any means a Christian nation, was basically a law-abiding people.

And I find that when I talk to young British people today and tell them what it was like in those days, they can't believe that I'm telling the truth. I also visited the nation of Sweden for the first time in 1947 for ministry. And I'd have to say Sweden was the most God-fearing nation that I'd ever been in.

You could sense the fear of God in the streets, the people lined up in the streets on Sunday morning to get into the churches. And basically you could trust the people to be absolutely honest and true to their commitments. I was in Sweden in 1980, what, three or four? And I was interviewed by a young Christian Swedish journalist.

And he was asking about my background. When I told him what I remembered of Sweden in that time, he could not believe that I was describing his own nation. So rapid and so radical has been the moral and ethical slide in Sweden.

Now I first came to this nation in 1967. And it was a peaceful, harmonious nation. I don't mean that everybody was Christian, but basically it was almost the kind of place you'd like to come to to get away from your problems.

Could that be said today? You see there's something going on all over the world. It's going on with amazing rapidity. We can hardly adjust to the pace of the change.

But it's described here in 2 Timothy chapter 3. One thing I like about the Bible is it tells it as it is. It's never sentimental, never indulges in wishful thinking. Its promises are true, but its warnings are equally true.

So this is what Paul says, but know this. You can be sure of this, that in the last days perilous times will come. In the margin of my version, the alternative translation for perilous times is times of stress.

That's really remarkable because again, forty years ago people didn't talk a lot about stress. Today you can't go to any doctor without him sort of saying, Your problem is stress. And he may well be right.

But it's a significant change that's taken place in the last fifty years. Now let's look at the reason for the perilous times. And let me tell you, it's not nuclear fission.

The reason for the problem is inside human beings. That's where the problems begin. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.

How many of the features in that list are conspicuous in our contemporary culture? And it's not just in one nation. It's in many, many nations around the earth. What I want to point out to you is the root of the problems.

It's in the first statement. Men will be lovers of themselves. It's self-love that gives rise to all these other problems.

And you would say then, well after all these people are not churchgoers, they're not Christians. But that's not what Paul says. He says in the next verse, having a form of godliness.

Now Paul would never use the word godliness of a non-Christian religion. So these were people who have a form of Christianity, but they deny its power. What is the power that they deny? The power that will change selfish people.

That's what Paul's talking about. You see, it's easy for a Christian to be very respectable, to abstain from drugs and alcohol and nicotine and all these obvious sins, and to pay his debts and drive a good car and not infringe the traffic laws, and yet to be a very self-centered person. Is that true? And such a person has a form of godliness, but is denying its power to change people radically.

And until self is dealt with, we have not been changed radically. You know what the word radical means? It's derived from the Latin word radix, a root. A radical is that which goes to the root.

And that's how John the Baptist introduced the Gospel and Jesus. He said, Now the axe is laid to the root of the trees, and every tree that does not bring forth good fruit will be hewn down and cast into the fire. The Gospel is the most radical message that has ever confronted humanity.

It deals with the root. And the root is selfishness. It's the self-life, the self-love.

And the only axe that will cut that root out is the cross. See, I became involved in the ministry of deliverance in the 1960s. And I began to work with the obvious sins, like people who needed deliverance from nicotine, or alcohol, or drugs.

After a while I discovered I was only dealing with small branches that grew on bigger branches. Some of the bigger branches, one of them was frustration. I found every addiction grows out of a frustration.

And if you don't deal with the frustration, you haven't really solved the root of the, solved the problem of the addiction. And then I realized that I was still dealing with branches, but I wasn't getting to the trunk of the tree. And you see, you can cut down a lot of branches, but the tree will go on growing.

And it will grow more branches. And finally, God showed me I had to deal with the root. And the root is self-love, selfishness, self-centeredness.

And until that root has been dealt with, we really cannot have the benefits of the gospel that God intends us to have. Self and the Christ nature are opposites. We have to let self die and the Christ nature move in, and take the place of self.

Now I'm not saying, what I'm trying to say is this, be realistic about yourself. Don't overestimate your spirituality. I'm not bringing anybody under condemnation, because God is gracious, He's merciful, He's patient.

He'll go on dealing with us. But don't deceive yourself that you're beyond where you really are spiritually. Check on how much self still dominates your life, because that will tell you the answer.

Now in Matthew 16, Jesus stated the rules for following Him. You notice I say rules, but because of what I've been preaching about rules, I probably better say the first steps you have to take. Matthew 16, verse 24 and 25.

Jesus said to His disciples, He didn't talk to the crowd, If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life, that the Greek says soul, will lose it. And whoever loses his life or soul for My sake will find it.

So what are the essential first steps if you want to follow Jesus? Not if you want to be born again. You know, being born again has become a kind of label that just exonerates people from the responsibilities of Christianity. I'm born again, so don't tell me that I need to change.

I'm not convinced. Jesus says, If anyone desires to come after Me, what's the first thing he has to do? Deny himself. What does that mean? You know what deny is? It's say no.

So if you want to follow Jesus, the first thing you have to do is to say no to yourself. The second thing you have to do is take up your cross. God doesn't impose the cross on you.

He didn't impose the cross on Jesus. Jesus took up His own cross. What is your cross? There are two definitions out of you.

One is your cross is the place where God's will and your will cross. The other is it's the place where you die. Now, it's your decision.

You don't have to do it. But you can't follow Jesus till you've done it. If you want to come after Him, you have to deny yourself, say no to yourself, and take up your cross, the place where you'll die.

God has a specific cross for each one of us. I've met more than one man who thought his wife was his cross. If you can take your wife up or put her down, maybe.

But your cross is something you don't have to carry. It's your decision. But you can't advance any further without it.

What does it mean to deny yourself? Well, in the Greek it's deny your soul. Generally speaking, Bible commentators say the three functions of the soul are the will, the intellect, and the emotions. The will is what says I want.

The intellect is what says I think. And the emotions are what say I feel. So when you deny yourself, you say it's not what I want, it's God's will.

It's not what I think, it's what God says. It's not what I feel, it's what the Holy Spirit impresses upon me. So there are three areas where you have to deny yourself.

Not what I want, not what I think, and not what I feel. When you've done that, you can begin to follow Jesus. After that, you can begin to say Philippians 4.13, Philippians 4.13, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

The Prince version is I can do all things through the One who empowers me within. But you cannot receive His power within as long as you're operating your self-life. Okay, we must move on.

We've got two more deliverances to consider. The next one is in Galatians 5.24, Galatians 5.24. Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. What's the deliverance from there? I didn't hear you.

They've crucified the what? The flesh. What are you delivered from there? The flesh, that's right. Now we have to define what the flesh is.

The flesh is not your physical body. But it's the nature that you received when you were born in your physical body. And it's essentially the nature of a rebel.

It has all sorts of desires and feelings that are not in line with God's will, and are not subject to God. And God's remedy, crucifixion. You see, as far as God's concerned, the crucifixion, well let me say a little bit more about the nature of the flesh.

Notice that phrase there first of all, Galatians 5.24, those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. That's not a denomination. But those are the people who belong to God.

It's not Baptists or Pentecostals or Presbyterians. It's those who are Christ's. What's the mark? What separates the mark from the others? I didn't hear you.

They have crucified the flesh. If you turn for a moment to 1 Corinthians 15 and verse 23, you'll find the people that Jesus is coming back for. You want to know who they are? It's not the Presbyterians, nor the Baptists, nor the Pentecostals, nor the Catholics.

It says in verse 23 about the resurrection, each one in his own order. Christ, the firstfruits, He's already risen. Afterward, those who are Christ's at His coming.

Who is He coming for? Those who are Christ's. What's the mark of those who are Christ's? Galatians 5.24, they have crucified the flesh. So who is Jesus coming back for? Christians who have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

So now you know how you have to qualify.

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