

THE TEACHING
LEGACY
 OF DEREK PRINCE

Follow Me!

If you were asked to describe the Christian life in two words, how would you respond? Understandably, you might need some time to hone your answer down to just two words. For my part, however, I would have no hesitation answering that question. I would simply say: *Following Jesus*. That is the essence of the Christian life.

This mandate is vividly illustrated in the New Testament story of the conversion of Matthew, the tax collector. “As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ So he arose and followed Him” (Matthew 9:9).

Matthew’s eternal destiny depended on his response. What did he do? He arose and followed Jesus.

Two Essential Preconditions

Like Matthew, our eternal destiny also hangs in the balance of our response to Jesus Christ. If we decide to respond to the Lord as Matthew did, we will quickly discover two essential preconditions we must meet before we can begin

to follow Him. In Matthew 16:24, Jesus lays out these preconditions: “*If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.*” First, we must deny ourselves. Second, we must take up our cross.

What does it mean to deny ourselves? It means to say “No!” We must say “No” to ourselves. We must say “No” to our insistent, demanding, self-assertive ego. We must echo the prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane: “*Father...not My will, but Yours, be done*” (Luke 22:42).

Only after we have denied ourselves can we go on to the second condition—to take up our cross. Someone has defined our cross as the place where God’s will and our will *cross*. It is, in fact, the place of execution.

In Romans 6:6 Paul tells us that *our old man was crucified with Him* (Jesus). The old man is the rebellious, self-pleasing nature which each of us has inherited from our common ancestor, Adam.

God has only one solution for our old man. He does not send him to church or to Sunday school. He does not teach him the golden rule, or direct him to a class on self-improvement. God’s solution is simple and final. It is execution.



The good news of the gospel is that the execution took place when Jesus died on the cross. At that moment in time, our old man was crucified in Him. This is a simple historical fact. It is true whether or not we know it or believe it. But to benefit from it, we must both know it—and believe it.

A Challenging Dream

Many years ago I used to conduct regular evangelistic meetings in London at Speaker's Corner near Marble Arch, a public speaking area in Hyde Park. One night during that period of time, I had a vivid dream in which I saw a man preaching at Speaker's Corner. The man's message was good, but there was something about his appearance I did not like. His body was somehow crooked, and he seemed to have a clubfoot. However, I did not attach any particular importance to my dream.

About a week later I had precisely the same dream. This time I concluded that God was saying something to me. "Lord," I asked, "who is that man? His preaching was good, but there was something I didn't like about his appearance. Who is he?"

The Lord's answer was immediate and direct: "You are the man!" God was clearly requiring some important changes from me, but I did not know exactly what.

This dream had come to me when the Easter season was at hand. I had already been meditating on the crucifixion, and with the dream came a clear mental picture of three crosses on a hill. The central cross was higher than the other two.

"For whom was that central cross made?" the Holy Spirit asked me. But then He cautioned, "Be careful how you answer." I thought it over and then said, "The central cross was made for Barabbas—but at

the last moment Jesus took his place."

"So, Jesus took the place of Barabbas," the Holy Spirit continued. "But you have said that Jesus took your place." "Yes, He did," I responded. "Then you must be Barabbas!"

My True Condition

At that moment I saw my true condition with absolute clarity: I was exactly the criminal for whom the cross was prepared. It was made to my measure. That was where I should have been.

I was compelled to identify with Paul's assessment of himself in Romans 7:18: "*For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells.*" I saw that every area of my personality was permeated by the corruption of sin. There was nothing in me that was pure; nothing in me that was good; nothing in me that could merit God's favor. How was I to respond?

I found the answer in Romans 6:6–13, where Paul sets out four successive steps. I will not include the entire passage here, but will comment on the following verses:

Verse 6: "*Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.*" First of all, I must know that my sinful nature was put to death when Jesus died on the cross. This is the essential first step from which all the rest follows.

Verse 11: "*Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" I must reckon—consider—myself dead, just as Jesus was when He died on the cross.

Verse 12: "*Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.*" On that basis I must resolutely refuse to let sin continue to dominate me.

Verse 13: “*And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.*” I must present myself to God like someone who has been raised from the dead. I must yield my physical members as instruments—literally, weapons—of righteousness. (The use of the word *weapons* alerted me that I would face opposition from Satan in obeying this command.)

God’s Threefold Provision

To provide us with a complete deliverance from the tyranny of sin required a threefold provision of God. First of all, He had to deal with our *sins*—the sinful acts we have all committed. Because Jesus on the cross has paid the full penalty for our sins, God can forgive us without compromising His own justice. His first provision, therefore, is *forgiveness*.

But then God also had to deal with the corrupt nature within us that caused us to go on committing those sinful acts. His second provision is *execution*—to put that sinful nature to death. The good news for us is that the execution took place more than twenty centuries ago when Jesus died on the cross.

However, that was not the end. God’s purpose was to replace the sinful old man with a new man of His own creating. This third provision is explained in Ephesians 4:22–24:

That you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

We should not assume, however, that the old man will passively accept his sentence of execution. On the contrary, he will at times struggle fiercely to regain his control over what we do and say.

We see a confirmation of the battle we must wage in Paul’s words of warning in Colossians 3:3–5. In verse 3 he says, “*For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*” But then in verse 5 he says, “*Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth.*” We must stand firm in faith that the death of our old man is an accomplished fact. Furthermore, we must actively resist his attempts to regain control over us.

A Personal Spiritual Inventory

Unfortunately, many sincere Christians have never understood or availed themselves of this complete provision of God. They claim—and continue to claim—the forgiveness of their sins. But they do not know that God has also made provision for the old man to be put to death and for a new man to take his place. Consequently their Christian life is a wearisome repetitive cycle: sinning — repenting — being forgiven — and then sinning again. They never experience release from the domination of the old sinful nature.

This analysis of God’s total provision for sin should lead us to make a personal spiritual inventory in which we ask ourselves the following questions:

Am I completely sure that all my sins have been forgiven?

Have I been freed from the domination of my old carnal nature?

Have I put on the new man who is created in righteousness and true holiness?

Am I following Jesus?

A Glimpse of the Future

Let me close with a brief glimpse of the future, taken from Revelation chapters 7 and 14. At the close of this age, God is going to provide for Himself 144,000 Israelite followers of Messiah. He will send them forth into a world that is reeling under the impact of *the great tribulation*, and they will reap a harvest of souls so vast *that no one could number it*.

Revelation 14:1–5 depicts these 144,000 after they have triumphantly completed their task and—in all probability—sealed their testimony with their lifeblood. With the names of the Father and the Son written on their foreheads, they are worshiping God with a song that sounds *like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder* (Revelation 14:2, NIV)—a song that no one else could learn.

What kind of people are they? Their character is clearly delineated: they are sexually pure; in their mouth is no guile; they are without fault. How have they attained to such a faultless character? There is one simple answer: they *follow the Lamb wherever*

He goes. Does that inspire you—as it inspires me—with a longing to follow Jesus more closely?

What About You?

Do you want to follow the Lamb of God wherever He goes? Perhaps you have been trying very hard to do just that. But you have found yourself in the wearisome repetitive cycle of sinning—repenting—being forgiven—and then sinning again.

Let's pray and ask for help from the Holy Spirit as we use the personal inventory questions I listed above. Let's set our faces to follow Jesus more closely than ever before.

Dear Lord Jesus, I sense that by Your Holy Spirit you are calling me to follow You more closely. I long for this with my whole heart, but I am trapped in a cycle of sin. Please help me know with certainty that all my sins are forgiven, to be freed from the domination of my old carnal nature, and to learn how to put on the new man created in righteousness and holiness. Help me to deny myself, to take up my cross, and to follow You. In Your Name I pray, Amen.



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