



# Let Us Be Diligent



**Twelve Steps to a Good Year  
(Part 4)**  
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we continue to study our very timely and practical theme for this week, "Twelve Steps to a Good Year."

These twelve steps are all taken from the epistle to the Hebrews. Twelve times in this epistle the writer says "Let us." These words indicate a resolution, one that we need to make together with our fellow believers. Taken together, they constitute twelve scriptural resolutions for the new year. I pointed out that this epistle to the Hebrews contains more solemn warnings to believers than any other book in the New Testament and that, in many cases, the warnings that were specially appropriate to the Hebrew believers in those days are equally appropriate to the present generation of professing Christians who are, for the most part, not of Jewish origin.

Yesterday I spoke about the first, rather startling resolution found in Hebrews 4:1: "Let us fear..." That's not the kind of

resolution that most of us would make unless we were directed to it by the Word of God. "Let us fear." But I pointed out that it was particularly appropriate because of the spiritual condition of the Hebrew believers, which could be summed up in such words as presumption, carelessness, laziness, a general failure to benefit from all the special spiritual blessings that they had enjoyed. They just seemed to be taking it for granted that they were God's people, probably rather superior to any others, and that they didn't have to do much about it. And so the resolution that was appropriate for them, the first one, was "Let us fear." I've said already, I believe the condition of the Hebrew Christians in those days is paralleled by the condition of many professing Christians, mostly not of Jewish origin, in our day. So let's take that to heart, all of us. "Let us fear."

Today I'm going to speak about the second resolution which occurs later in the same fourth chapter of Hebrews. It is found in verse eleven: "Let us therefore be diligent." So that's the second resolution, "Let us be diligent." It goes on like this:

**"Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall through following the same example of disobedience." (NAS)**

I pointed out that this warning is based on the experience of the Israelites on their journey from Egypt through the wilderness, that many of them didn't make it through to the promised destination, the rest that God had promised them, because of their misconduct and their wrong attitude. And they fell in the wilderness. Scripture says their carcasses fell in the wilderness because of unbelief and disobedience. And through unbelief and disobedience they failed to hear the voice of the Lord. They had the externals, but they did not have the great essential, inner reality of all true religion, hearing the voice of the Lord.

So that was the mistake of Israel, a tragic mistake. And after saying "Let us fear," the writer of Hebrews goes on still on that basis of that example of Israel. He says, "Let us be diligent." I believe that's very natural. I believe if we really take to heart the dangers of that spiritual condition and we do, in that sense, fear, the next thing we will naturally do is become diligent.

Let's consider for a moment what diligence is. Sometimes one way to find out the meaning of a word is to consider what its opposite is. And I suppose you could say that one obvious opposite of diligence is laziness. The Bible doesn't have one good word to say about laziness. It's a theme that doesn't receive enough attention in contemporary Christendom. I want you to compare what the writer of Hebrews says again in chapter 6:11-12:

**"We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised." (NIV)**

So the warning there is that we not only need to be diligent, but we need to be diligent to the very end. We've got to continue to be diligent. And the opposite of diligence is there stated in plain words. It's to become lazy. Not primarily physically lazy, but spiritually lazy. I'd like to compare with that the words of Peter in 2 Peter 1:5-11, where he says this:

**"For this very reason, make every effort [and one of the translations says, 'give all diligence.' The thought is the same] make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love."**

You see, the Christian life is not a static condition. It's a life of adding. It's a life of growth. It's a life of progress. To be static in the Christian life is to backslide. And to do that adding requires diligence. It requires making every effort. Then Peter goes on with an "if."

**"For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins."**

Would you believe that possible? That somebody had been cleansed from his past sins and forgets that it has even happened? But the Scripture indicates that it is possible. Peter really sets before us two alternatives. The one is to be effective and productive in our knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. The other is to be ineffective and unproductive with a condition that he describes as being nearsighted and blind. Those are strong words. In the light of this, Peter continues in the next two verses, verses 10 and 11:

**"Therefore, [I always pause when I read a 'therefore' in the Bible. Perhaps you've heard me say this, 'If you find a 'therefore' in the Bible, you need to find out what it's there for.' This 'therefore' relates to the warning that Peter has given.] Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (NIV)**

So that's good news. There are things that we can do that will guarantee that we never fall and that we have a rich welcome into the kingdom of our Lord.

Basically, as I have said, the condition that we're warned against there is laziness. And I am deeply concerned about the lack of concern in Christian circles about laziness. The majority of Christians view drunkenness with horror. They would reject any person professing to be a Christian who was drunk. Now I agree with that attitude. Drunkenness is a sin and I'm certainly not commanding it; but I want to say that laziness is much more severely condemned in the Scripture than drunkenness. And the problem is that many Christians who would never be found drunken are habitually lazy. So let's take to heed that warning to be diligent.

Let's consider for a few moments a little more of what's involved in diligence. There are two beautiful Scriptures in Proverbs 10 that have long been a kind of guiding light to me in my own experience. Together they sum up the two conditions for true riches or enduring wealth. One condition is on the Lord's side, the other condition is on our side. We have to fulfill both conditions to attain the results. The condition that's on the Lord's side is stated in Proverbs 10:22:

**“It is the blessing of the Lord that makes rich, And He adds no sorrow to it.” (NAS)**

So the great, primary condition for true riches, spiritual and otherwise, is the blessing of the Lord. We cannot count on anything that's really good apart from the blessing of the Lord. But on the other hand, the blessing of the Lord, by itself, is not sufficient. For Proverbs 10:4 says this:

**“Poor is he who works with a negligent hand, But the hand of the diligent makes rich.” (NAS)**

First of all, the blessing of the Lord makes rich, but second, the hand of the diligent makes rich. It takes the Lord's blessing plus our diligence to attain to true wealth. It's not enough to expect the blessing of the Lord or even to receive the blessing of the Lord. It will not accomplish its purpose in your life unless you add to it your own personal diligence. And remember we've said diligence is the opposite of laziness.

I have to say, that's a Scripture that I've proved true in my own experience through nearly forty years of Christian living. I've been in many different situations, in many different forms of ministry, in many different lands, in different continents, and I think I can say, by the grace of God, I've always displayed diligence in small things and in great things. And every situation that I've been in with responsibilities, I have left in a better condition, spiritually, financially, in every obvious way, than it was when I found it. Now, first and foremost, I have to thank the Lord for His blessing, but the blessing of the Lord would never have done that if I hadn't added to it my own diligence. So, let me leave those two words with you, “The blessing of the Lord makes rich, but the hand of the diligent makes rich.” Add those two together and you have true spiritual riches.

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll continue with this theme: “Twelve Steps to a Good Year.” Tomorrow I'll be explaining the third step.

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