



Let Us Press On to Maturity



**Twelve Steps to a Good Year
(Part 7)**
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again. This week I'm continuing with the theme that I commenced last week, "Twelve Steps to a Good Year," a theme that's specially designed to give you a good start to the new year. Each of these twelve steps is based on a passage from the epistle to the Hebrews that commences with the words, "Let us." Taken together, these twelve passages constitute twelve scriptural New Year's resolutions. Up to now, we've looked together at the first four of these resolutions. They were: Let us fear; let us be diligent; let us hold fast our confession; let us draw near to the throne of grace. Let me just repeat those once more: Let us fear, let us be diligent, let us hold fast our confession, let us draw near to the throne of grace.

Today we're going to look at the fifth such resolution. It's found in Hebrews 6:1:

"Therefore, leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity."

That's the resolution, let us press on to maturity. It's tremendously important that we see that we have to do this, we're not given any options. I think many Christians have got the impression that somehow in the Christian life you can arrive and settle down and say, "Now I'm there." But that's never true in the Christian life. To remain static in the spiritual life is almost impossible.

I'd like to share with you a single penetrating verse from Proverbs 4:18:

"The path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, that shines brighter and brighter until the full day."

Now that phrase, "the path of the righteous," is absolutely general. It's not speaking about some particular believer or even some group of believers, but it's speaking about every righteous person.

Notice, first of all, that righteousness is a path. A path is something that we move along. A path is never designed to stand still in, much less to sit down in. So righteousness is a path; it implies motion, it implies progress, it implies

development. And then it says this path is like the light of dawn. That's when we first come to know the Lord in His glorious fullness as Savior and Lord. It's like a sun rising after the darkness; it's like the dawn that comes in our hearts.

But that dawn is not the end of God's purposes; it's the beginning. It says that this path is like the light of dawn that shines brighter and brighter until the full day. So when we're walking in the path of righteousness, the light should always be getting brighter on our day. Each step, each day, the light should be brighter than it was before. And it says "until the full day", that's our destination, "the full day," the height of noonday. God is not content that we'd stop at less than that full brightness of the noonday sun. The dawn is our beginning point, the path is the way of progress, the light gets brighter and brighter; but there's no permitted stopping place until we reach the full day.

You see, this was the mistake that had been made by the Hebrews. That's why this particular "let us" is so appropriate to them. As I pointed out last week, but I'll just go over that briefly again this week, the mistake the Hebrews made was that they trusted their special privileges and rested in them, and had become, frankly, lazy. They were just taking things for granted. This is what the writer says to them in Hebrews 5:11-14:

"We have much to say about this but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food. Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil."

What the writer is saying there, and he's saying it pretty bluntly, is, "You're just spiritual infants. But you've no right to be infants at this stage in your spiritual progress. You've had so many opportunities, you've had so many years, you should have advanced to maturity." He also explains the only way to advance to maturity. He says, "solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil." So, advancing to maturity along that path of righteousness in which the light grows brighter day by day, comes in actual practice by constant use, by training ourselves. It's not something we can take for granted, it's not something that happens automatically, but it requires our application. That's why one of the earlier steps was, "Let us be diligent", you remember that. So by constant use we have

to train ourselves to distinguish good from evil.

That's so important. It grieves me so many times when I see large Christian congregations or gatherings who are absolutely unable to distinguish, it appears, from what is truly spiritual and what is truly scriptural from that which is just a fleshly presentation with soulish appeal that has no real lasting effect, and often no real basis in Scripture. And yet, multitudes of Christians apparently can be taken in by that kind of soulishness and they have not learned to distinguish good from evil. The only remedy is to train ourselves by constant use, by practice. And the only alternative is arrested development, spiritual arrested development, remaining in the condition of infancy when we should be mature.

I want to close my talk today by speaking about God's provision for attaining spiritual maturity. God has made a very special provision and we need to know about it. It is stated in Ephesians 4:11-13:

"It was he ['he' is the risen Christ, the ascended Christ] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, some to be pastors and teachers..."

There are five main ministries mentioned there: apostles, prophets, evangelists, prophets and teachers. Verse 12 and following tell us the purpose of these ministries: "To prepare God's people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up."

Notice those two purposes. That God's people may be prepared for works of service. God's people can't automatically do the work that they're expected to do; they have to be prepared, they have to be trained. These ministries are there to do it. Then it says, "so that the body of Christ may be built up." That's the second purpose. Going on in verse 13:

"...until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature..."

You see, these ministries are placed within the body of Christ to bring us into the unity of the faith and to bring us to maturity. And Paul goes on:

"...attaining the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

So to attain maturity, Jesus Christ, as head of the Church has provided these five main ministries. Frankly, I don't believe

that God's people will ever attain maturity without this provision.

And then in the 16th verse of that chapter, speaking about Christ again, Paul says:

“From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work.”

You see, the ultimate is not a lot of separated, isolated individuals, each one doing his own thing; but it's a single body held together by ligaments, by strong bands that hold them together, and building itself up and growing. And part of what's essential is that each part of the body does its work.

Now, that's God's program for coming to maturity. There are two main requirements. First, we must come under the discipline of the God-given ministries that Paul has just listed: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Without that discipline, without that oversight, without that instruction, I don't see how God's people can ever attain to maturity. I don't believe Jesus Christ ever made a provision that wasn't important, and I believe this provision is essential.

Secondly, the second condition. We must be part of a growing body, not just isolated individuals. And then in that same passage Paul states the only, and the very sad, alternative. If we don't follow God's program for maturity, this is the alternative, Ephesians 4:14:

“Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.”

See, if we don't come under these ministries, if we don't become part of a body, if we don't accept this scriptural discipline, Paul says the only alternative is we'll remain infants. We'll be tossed back and forth, blown here and there by every wind of teaching.

I know many, many believers like that. Every year they have a new fad, a new doctrine, and often a new teacher to provide the fad. “And by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming”, we have to come under the discipline of those ministries. We have to be part of the body. That's the only way to maturity.

As I close my talk today, let me ask you a personal question. How about you? Are you under discipline? Are you part of a

body? Are you advancing to maturity?

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be explaining the sixth step to a good year.

Radio Program

Transcript: TS-R049-102-ENG

Last Updated: 12 Apr 2023

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