



Let Us Draw Near to the Most Holy Place



**Twelve Steps to a Good Year
(Part 8)**
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we continue to study together our very practical and timely theme for this week, "Twelve Steps to a Good Year." These twelve steps to a good year are all taken from the epistle to the Hebrews. Twelve times in this epistle the writer says, "Let us." These words indicate a resolution, a decision; and one that we cannot make merely on our own as individuals because the words are always "Let us," a decision or resolution that we need to make together with our fellow believers. Taken together, these twelve "let us" passages in Hebrews constitute twelve scriptural New Year resolutions. So far we've looked together at five of these resolutions: let us fear, let us be diligent, let us hold fast our confession, let us draw near to the throne of grace, let us press on to maturity.

May I suggest that as we go through these twelve steps, you make a point to memorize them in their correct order? Then

at the end of this series of talks you'll have more than just a general impression. You'll have something positive and permanent to take with you into the new year. To help you with this, I'm going to briefly recapitulate those first five steps: Let us fear, let us be diligent, let us hold fast our confession, let us draw near to the throne of grace, let us press on to maturity.

Today we're going to look at the sixth resolution. It's found in Hebrews 10, and we need to read verses 19-22 in order to get the context. It's interesting to me that almost every one of these resolutions that we've been reading together begins with "therefore." In other words, it indicates the logical unfolding of a sequence of thought, and I think each major step in the practical application of this sequence is expressed in one of these "let us" statements. Going back then to Hebrews 10:19-22:

"Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the most holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain [that is, his body] and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience, and having our

bodies washed with pure water.”

I want to contrast with that the fourth resolution that we've already looked at which was, “Let us draw near to the throne of grace.” But this one says, “Let us draw near to God.” And we have to understand it in the context. It's directly related to the statement in verse 19 of Hebrews 10:

“Since we have confidence to enter the most holy place...”

Then it says:

“...let us draw near to God.”

To me it's clear that drawing near to God is equivalent to entering the most holy place. So I'd like to compare these two statements. “Let us draw near to the throne” means that we are to come for the help we need for mercy and grace. But “Let us draw near to the holy place”, to God Himself, I think takes us much further. I believe the suggestion is not merely that we come to the throne for help, but that we're invited to take our place with Christ on the throne. That's entering in to the most holy place.

I certainly don't have time to give a detailed exposition of the tabernacle, but I'm sure you remember that there were three main areas of the tabernacle: the outer court; and then within the tent, inside the first curtain, the holy place; and then at the end, beyond the second curtain, the most holy place. And the language in Hebrews is based on the pattern of the tabernacle. Our destination is the most holy place, beyond the second curtain. And the only furniture in that place as it was designed by God was just the Ark of the Covenant, a box of acacia wood all covered with gold. It was covered over with what was called the mercy seat, or place of propitiation. Inside were the two tables of the Ten Commandments, but these were covered up by the mercy seat, indicating that through Christ's propitiation on our behalf, the broken law, the Ten Commandments that were broken, had been covered by his propitiation. And then on either end of the mercy seat there were two cherubs facing one another, looking towards the center of the mercy seat with their wings stretched out over them and their wing tips touching over the center of the mercy seat.

Now that box, that mercy seat, was God's throne. God sits on a throne of mercy. His mercy covers the broken law. The two cherubs with their faces inward toward one another, their wing tips touching, represent the place of fellowship. So, it's a place of mercy, a place of fellowship; but it's also a throne,

the seat of God as king.

Now in that piece of furniture there was no representation of God Himself, which of course was forbidden for the Israelites. But God did come in there to take His place on that seat. He came in the form of the shekinah glory, the visible, sensible presence of Almighty God. Without that glory, that furthest place, that most holy place, was in total darkness. It had no natural or artificial illumination. But when the shekinah, the presence of God, came in, then it was God taking His place on the throne.

So we are invited in this scripture into the most holy place. We are invited to draw near to God. We are, in fact, invited to take our place with Christ on the throne. And that passage also tells us that we're to come by a new and living way. What's the new and living way? The new and living way is Jesus. We're to come exactly the same way that he came.

Speaking about our entrance into the most holy place, our approaching the mercy seat and the throne, the writer of Hebrews says there are four requirements. First, a sincere heart; second, a full assurance of faith; third, our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience; fourth, our bodies washed with pure water. Let's look very briefly at each of those requirements.

First, a sincere heart. We approach God with our heart, not with our head. God is not the answer to an intellectual riddle, but He does meet a longing heart. But it has to be also a sincere heart. We have to come without any pretensions, without any hypocrisy; we have to expose ourselves to God just as we are and not try to cover up anything or pretend to be different than we are. We've got to be open and honest with God.

The second condition, full assurance of faith. The next chapter of Hebrews, the scripture says in Hebrews 11:6:

“Without faith, it is impossible to please him. He that cometh to God must believe.”

So we've got to come with our faith in God's faithfulness, not on our own ability or righteousness; but with absolute faith in God's faithfulness.

Thirdly, we are to have a heart sprinkled from an evil conscience. An evil conscience comes from wrong and sinful deeds that we have committed in the past, but through the blood of Jesus we can receive assurance that all those evil deeds in the past have been forgiven and that our hearts are pure from sin. So we can have our hearts sprinkled from an

evil conscience with the blood of Jesus.

The fourth condition is our bodies washed with pure water. In the first epistle of John, John tells us that Jesus came by water and by blood. There we see both elements: the blood that sprinkles from an evil conscience, the water that washes our bodies. I believe myself that water is Christian baptism. Christian baptism, in every place where it's explained in the New Testament, is sharing in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. So "the new and living way" is Jesus. It's coming and partaking of His death, His burial and His resurrection. We are to be identified with everything that Jesus went through after He died for our sins.

Listen to what Paul says in Ephesians 2:4-6:

"That because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ when we were dead in transgression and raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus."

Notice the three stages of identification with Jesus. First, "made alive"; second, "raised up" or "resurrected"; and third, "seated with Him." Where is Jesus seated? On the throne. So what does it mean to be seated with Him? It means to be enthroned, to share the throne with Him.

You see, once we see our identification with Jesus, we're invited to follow him all the way. He is the new and living way. We can be made alive with Him, we can be resurrected with Him, but we don't need to stop there. We can be enthroned with Him.

You see, in the pattern of the tabernacle, the first curtain, I believe, represents what we enter into through sharing in the resurrection of Jesus. But the second curtain that leads to the holy place represents what we enter into through sharing in the ascension of Jesus. Jesus was not merely resurrected, but subsequently He was raised up to heaven to the throne. And that's where God wants us. God doesn't want us to stop short in this new and living way till we've reached the throne and we're sharing the throne with Jesus, seated with Him in heavenly places. That's our destination.

Let's make it our resolution this year that we'll not stop short of the place where God wants us to come.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be explaining the seventh step to a good year.

Radio Program

Transcript: TS-R049-103-ENG

Last Updated: 13 Apr 2023

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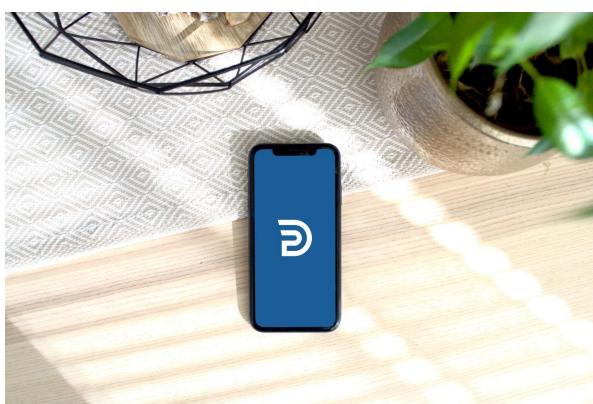
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