

The Fourth Step: Perseverance



Progress to Perfection (Part 7)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again today. Our theme for last week and this week also has been "Progress to Perfection." We've been looking together at the seven successive steps that lead us upward from our initial faith in Christ to our goal of full spiritual development. These steps are clearly set out for us in 2 Peter 1:5–7.

> "For this very reason, 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."

In our previous studies we've looked together at the first three upward steps, bearing in mind that faith is the only starting point. The first step upward, goodness or excellence, a life that reflects excellence in every area. The next step after excellence, knowledge, spiritual knowledge. The knowledge of God's will obtained primarily from God's word, the scriptures. After knowledge, self-control. And, I took as the example of self-control the same example that's used in Scripture, the example of an athlete. Paul points out that every athlete who's going to succeed has to go into strict training. He has to control various areas of his life. And he says that we are like athletes only the prize that we are aiming at is eternal and not a temporary prize. He says that we have to go into training, we have to learn self control just as much as an athlete whose prize is a gold medal or something like that.

Today we're going to move on to the fourth upward step of faith which is perseverance. An alternative translation, perhaps a better one, is endurance. Now, the third and fourth steps in this upward progress—that is self control and perseverance or endurance—are the least attractive or interesting. People don't really like to listen very much about either self control or endurance. A lot of people would like to pass over these rather quickly and get on to something really spiritual like godliness. But God's word rules this out. It isn't possible to advance and skip one of those steps. You've got to go step by step. Peter is very specific about this.

So, here we are confronted with these steps, self control and perseverance or endurance. It's important to see that they are interrelated in a very practical way. Without self control we cannot achieve perseverance or endurance because it will work out like this: Every time we get into a difficult situation where we are under pressure and we need endurance, Satan will see to it that the pressure is directed to some area where we haven't achieved self control. Maybe our thought life, it may be our physical appetites, it may be our words. But, every time we're just about to make it through the test we break down in that particular area where we haven't achieved self discipline and self control. Consequently, we're never able to achieve perseverance. I want to emphasize that self control and perseverance go hand in hand. You will never achieve perseverance until you've achieved self control. You'll always fail at your point of weakness because the devil will be very careful to see that he pressure is directed against that area where he knows you don't have full control. As I've said, it may be your thoughts, it may be your physical appetites, it may be your words, but somehow one way or another, under the pressure you'll fail.

Let's look at what Paul says in Romans 5:1–5.

> "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us."

Paul puts there two kinds of rejoicing. The first is easy to understand, the second not so easy. First of all, he says "we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." Everybody says Amen, Hallelujah, praise the Lord, but Paul doesn't stop there. He goes on to say, "but we also rejoice in our sufferings." And very few people ever say amen or hallelujah or praise the Lord when they hear that.

But Paul says there's a reason. The reason is suffering is needed to produce something indispensable. What is it? Perseverance or endurance. Then he says, "Endurance produces character." Proven character, one version says. And character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us. God wants us to live in a continual state of anticipation of all the good that he has for us. That's hope. But this hope has got to be built on a foundation of character. It's not something wishy washy. It's not wishful thinking. It's the serene, steady confidence of the goodness of God. And it can only be built on a foundation of proven character. And proven character comes out of perseverance or endurance. And suffering produces perseverance. So, Paul's order of development is really very similar to that of Peter. And in each of them there is one essential step which we cannot bypass, which is perseverance or endurance. You see, there are certain things we cannot bypass in the Christian life if we're going to achieve God's objective for us. They are suffering --that will come to all of us in some way or another—self-control, perseverance or endurance. Don't set yourself high ambitions and ideals in the Christian life if you're not going to be realistic about the steps that it takes to achieve those ambitions and ideals. God has laid the steps down very clearly, if we are willing to follow the goal is attainable. But we cannot take some short cut, miss out those parts that we don't enjoy and arrive at the goal.

Now I'm going to turn to the words of James in his epistle, chapter 1, verses 2-4 where he brings out truths that are parallel to those of Paul in Romans 5.

> "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance."

And it's the same word that's translated perseverance elsewhere.

> "And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

Notice again the goal is really very simple when you see it. The goal is that we may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. Jesus said, "Be perfect." Paul said, "I'm following on to be perfect." James says, "If you go through the discipline you will be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. It's really necessary to keep the goal in view because it supplies the motivation for the things that are not so easy.

What does James say in this connection, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials?" I meet few Christians that have that reaction to trials. Most Christians tend to complain and say, "God, why did you let this happen to me? I don't think I can take this. Isn't there some easier way?" And they miss the benefit of their trials. You see, trials are going to come anyhow. God will see to that and so will the devil. And when both God and the devil are intent on something happening, believe me, it's going to happen. The question is not whether we will go through trials but whether we will so react to our trials that they will do us the good that

God intends and not the harm that the devil intends. You see, God is on one side and the devil is on the other side. And, in a certain sense, we have the casting vote. Our reaction determines whether the result will be good or evil.

James says this, “count it joy when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.” There is no way to endurance except to be tested. “Let endurance have its perfect result.” Don’t give up too soon. Hold on until God has achieved whatever he wants to achieve by that particular test. It may seem to you that the pressures are unbearable but God knows. He says elsewhere that he will not let you be tempted above that you are able to bear. Trust him. Hold on! Don’t give way! Sometimes we are prone to give way just at the moment when victory is just over the horizon. You see, there’s only one route to perfection and that’s the Bible route. If we keep the end always in view we will be willing to endure. Just like the athlete who’s got in his mind’s eye that gold medal he’s working for, he’ll go through anything that’s required of discipline and endurance because he knows that’s the way to the gold medal.

In closing my talk today let me just bring out two parallel principles. The first is that God never subjects us to unnecessary tests. Once we’ve passed the test we don’t have to go through it again. He doesn’t waste a lot of time testing us on something which we’ve passed. But the second principle is that God never promotes us from grade 4 to grade 5 until we’ve passed grade 4. It’s not good saying, “Well, I’ve been in grade 4 for two years, now it’s time to move up to grade 5.” That may happen in the public school system but it doesn’t in God’s school. In God’s school you’ve got to pass every grade before you over on to the next grade. So, we’ve been talking today and yesterday about the grades of self control and endurance or perseverance. Don’t try to get further ahead in God’s school until you’ve passed in both those grades.

Well, our time is up for today but I’ll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I’ll be sharing further with you on this week’s theme, “Progress to Perfection.”

Radio Program

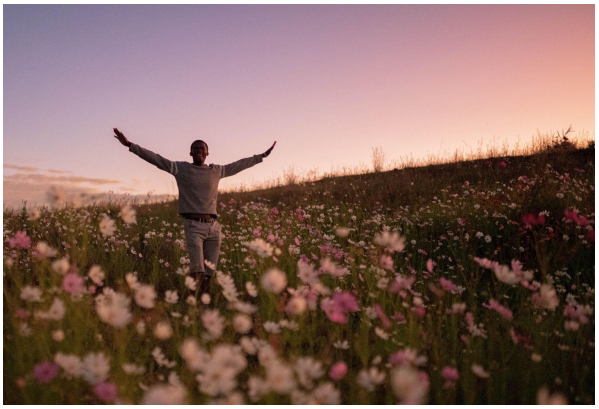
Transcript: TS-R044-102-ENG
Last Updated: 13 Apr 2023
Website: derekprince.com

Bible Teaching Resources



Books

Illuminate and expand your understanding of the Bible with the Derek Prince collection of Christian books.



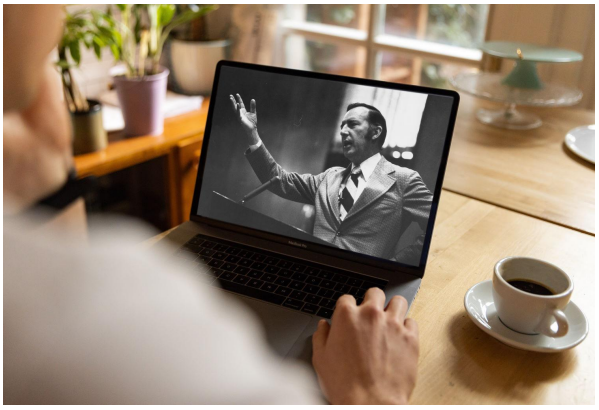
Daily Devotionals

Browse free biblically inspired daily devotionals by Derek Prince for practical teachings to uplift your Christian faith.



Legacy Radio

Listen to inspiring 10-minute messages and connect faith to life with the Derek Prince Legacy Radio podcast.



Sermons

Watch original and digitally remastered sermons by Derek Prince. Includes full message transcripts (free download).



Official App

Available free, download the official Derek Prince Ministries app and equip your faith, anywhere, anytime.



Proclamations

Declare life and experience the transformative power of God's Word with our bible-based Proclamations.

Copyright © Derek Prince Ministries