

The Fifth Step: Godliness



Progress to Perfection (Part 8)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we continue to study our challenging but also inspiring theme for this week, "Progress to Perfection."

In this exciting study on progress to perfection we've been working together through the seven successive upward steps in the Christian life which is set before us in 2 Peter 1:5–7 where Peter says this:

> "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."

There are the seven upward steps from the foundation of faith: goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love.

In our previous studies we've looked together at the first four steps: goodness or excellence, attaining to a life of excellence in every area; knowledge, spiritual knowledge, the knowledge of God's will that comes primarily from the Scriptures, the word of God; self-control, bringing every area of our life under discipline; and perseverance or endurance, holding out under trials and tests and pressures. And I pointed out that we have to follow these steps in God's order. We cannot bypass any step and move on to the next. In a phrase that I used in my talk yesterday, God never promotes you from grade 4 to grade 5 until you've passed in grade 4. And so it is with these steps, we have to go through them before we can move onto the next.

Today we're going to look at the fifth step which is godliness. Godliness is a word that isn't much used in contemporary society. I think one obvious reason why it isn't much used is there aren't many people to whom it could be applied. It's something that's almost become unfashionable. But the fact remains that godliness is something that God himself esteems and values and requires in his people. Perhaps it would be good to attempt to define godliness. I've thought about it and I would suggest that you could describe

godliness in this way. As a life that would be meaningless if there is no God, or a life that is a continual reminder to all of the reality of God. Do you know somebody whose life is like that? You only have to speak to them or be in the same room with them and you're reminded of God. Perhaps you have a godly or a praying mother or father or pastor somewhere. You yourself may be rather a long way from that standard but when I use that word godly there comes into your mind some person whose very presence and life and conduct just reminds you there is a God. And sometimes maybe you weren't too happy to be reminded. You almost wanted to get away from such a person—and yet you couldn't.

I think there's a beautiful description of the kind of life that I'm talking about in 2 Corinthians 2:14 where Paul says this:

> "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him."

I see two things in this verse. The victory of Jesus worked out in our lives and spreading the fragrance of Jesus. Elsewhere in Colossians 2 Paul says that Christ triumphed over all the forces of evil on the cross. But, in this verse, 2 Corinthians 2:14, he says God makes us triumph in Christ. Triumph is a pubic procession demonstrating a victory that's been won. So we are to become part of Christ's public procession demonstrating his victory. We're to show off his victory to all who see us. And out of this life of victory something very, very lovely develops. As we go everywhere we spread the fragrance of the knowledge of Jesus.

Fragrance is a very beautiful but elusive thing. It's a fact, a scientific fact, that a woman may use just a few drops of some beautiful perfume on her skin and walk past you and your nose will pick up something in the air that no scientific instrument can detect. The human nose is so sensitive. And you turn around and you say, "what kind of person was that that passed?" They've left something behind, something beautiful and something that the stimulates the memory. You know, fragrance probably stimulates memory more immediately than almost anything. My wife and I go for a walk in the evening sometimes in the city where we live and we tend to pass a house on a corner somewhere where there's one of those bushes that doesn't give out much fragrance at day but gives out a lot of fragrance at night. And every time we get to that corner at night we say, "There's that bush."

And I was in another part of the world, a totally different continent just recently and I smelt the same fragrance and instantly my mind took me back to that house on the corner in our city where the bush was. You see, fragrance creates association. It stimulates memory. And godliness is spreading the fragrance of Jesus like a perfume everywhere you go that makes people stop and say, "What kind of person was that that went past?" Every time that person comes in contact with the same fragrance it reminds them of where they encountered it last.

So, that's just a little picture of godliness. It's like a fragrance that comes out of a life that's demonstrating the victory of Jesus over all the forces of evil.

I would say there are three practical factors in godliness. First of all, a godly person draws everything from God. There's no self reliance, there's no self confidence, there's no trusting in the flesh; it's all trusting in the grace and the power of God. It's a life that's leaning on God. It says in the Song of Solomon about the bride "who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning on her Beloved?" And then it speaks about the fragrance that accompanies them. Well, fragrance comes when we lean on the Beloved—Jesus. Godliness draws everything from God.

Secondly, godliness refers everything to God. A godly person never makes his own decisions in his own will or strength. Before he commits himself to anything he waits upon God. He says, "God, is this your will? If it's your will I want it. If it's not your will no matter how attractive or appealing or exciting it may be, it's not for me."

And thirdly, a godly person sees God in everything. No matter what apparent reversals or trials may come, they do not begin to complain and say, "oh, how could that happen? Everything's gone wrong. Things aren't working out the way I expected." "No," they say, "I may not understand it, but God is in this. He's my Father. He's working it out for the best."

Let me just summarize those three factors. A godly person draws everything from God, refers everything to God and sees God in everything.

I've been painting you a picture of godliness. Let's look for a moment at the opposite, at ungodliness. The Scripture makes it clear that ungodliness will be one of the outstanding features of human character in society at the close of this present age. And I think we see many evidences of that already taking place. I'll read you what's written in the epistle of Jude, verses 14–16.

> "Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge every one, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly acts they have done in their ungodly way, and of all the harsh

> ungodly words sinners have spoken against him. These men are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage."

You'll notice there that at the very center of that description of human life and character and nature at the close of this age, the word ungodly occurs four times in the one verse. Ungodly men, ungodly acts, ungodly words and ungodly way of life. That's one of the facts that we're confronted with in contemporary society—ungodliness is rampant.

It's interesting that it finds one primary expression which is very significant. Speaking of these ungodly men Jude says, "these men are grumblers." Grumbling is a sure mark of ungodliness just as persistent praise is an evidence of godliness.

What's the positive alternative? Jude states it a little later in verses 20–21.

> "But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life."

So, there are three things that are necessary as we are confronted by this tremendous upsurge of godliness that's assailing our senses and our very lives. The three things are that we build up ourselves in our faith. Secondly, that we pray in the Holy Spirit. And thirdly, that we keep ourselves in the love of God. This is something that's essential. These I would say are the basic activities of godliness. To build up our faith, to be praying always in the Holy Spirit, and to keep ourselves in the love of God. Let nothing cause us to cease being loving and gracious and kind.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be sharing further with you on this theme, "Progress to Perfection."

Radio Program

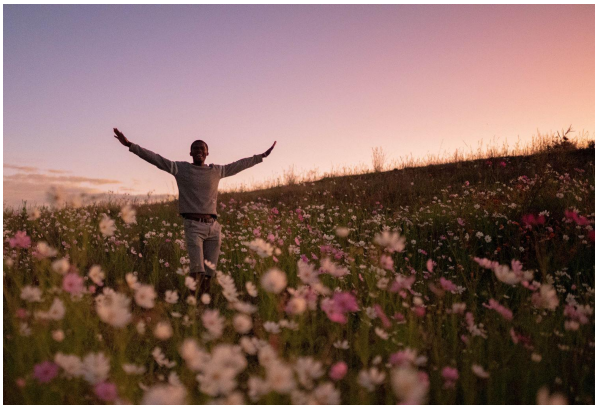
Transcript: TS-R044-103-ENG
Last Updated: 13 Apr 2023
Website: derekprince.com

Bible Teaching Resources



Books

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



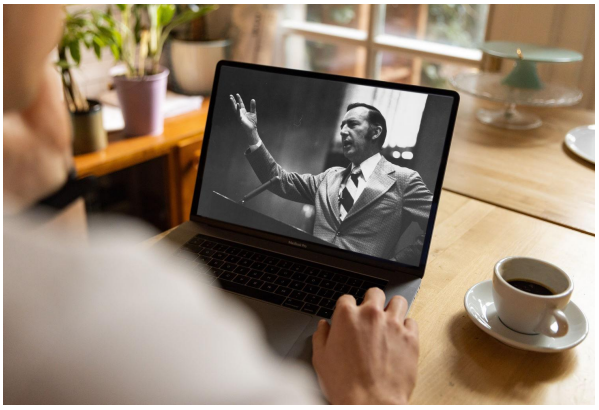
Daily Devotionals

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