

Forward and Upward



No Neutrality (Part 5)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we draw near to the close of another week. Today I'll continue and complete the theme that we've been studying this week, "No Neutrality." I trust you've found it helpful and inspiring. If so, please take time to write to me, even if it's only a brief note. Before I finish this talk we'll be giving you a mailing address to which you can write. It means a great deal to me to hear how this radio ministry of mine has been helping you and blessing you. So please, take time to write, even if it's only a brief, personal note. Write today.

Now, back to our theme, "No Neutrality." Yesterday I explained how God sets before us two mutually exclusive sets of alternatives and He requires us to choose. These are the alternatives: life or death, good or evil, blessing or curse. We have to choose and whatever we choose will be altogether in the one category or the other. If we want life then we have to have good and blessing. If we do not want life or good or blessing then we must have death and evil and the curse. Each choice ultimately leads us to a person. This is so important to see. Even in the Old Covenant Moses said to Israel of the Lord, "He is your life, and the length of your days." Ultimately, life is in a person. This issue that's stated in the Old Covenant is made so clear in the New. The choice is between the life giver, Jesus or the life taker, Satan.

Today I'm going to share about the path that we must take if we choose life and good and blessing. Remember first of all, that the Bible consistently reveals that righteousness is a path, not a static condition. There's where so many Christians go astray. They think that they've arrived, they're saved, that's it. Salvation is a process, righteousness is a path. Always there must be development, growth, progress, moving forward. In that best known of all psalms, the Good Shepherd psalm, Psalm 23, David says, "The Lord is my shepherd." And then he goes on to speak the ways in which the Lord ministers to him. And in verse 3 he says:

> "He restores my soul: He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." (NAS)

Notice that righteousness has paths. It's not a place, it's a set of paths, it's a way. And bear in mind this glorious fact, He does it for his name's sake. He doesn't do it because we deserve it, he does it because His glory is at stake in us. He'll

do it if we are willing, He will guide us in the paths of righteousness—but they are paths.

And then in Proverbs 12:28 Solomon says:

> "In the way of righteousness is life. And its pathway there is no death." (NAS)

See, again righteousness is a way, it's a pathway. What a wonderful thought! In that way there is no death, there is just life and life more abundant and eternal life. True, the believer will experience physical death but that's just the gateway to eternal life. There is no real death in the pathway of righteousness—but it's a pathway.

And then in the New Testament, as I've already said, Jesus Himself is revealed as the way and the Father as the destination. It's that famous statement in John 14:6:

> "Jesus said, 'I am the way, the truth, the life: no one comes to the Father but through me.'" (NAS)

Jesus is the way but the Father is the destination. If we stop short simply at Jesus, we've missed the whole purpose of salvation which is to bring us to the Father. And there's a way that leads us to the Father and that way is Jesus.

It's very interesting that we find in the book of Acts the first title given to Christianity was "The Way." In Acts 9:1-2 we read this about Saul while he was still persecuting the church before he became the apostle Paul. It says:

> "Saul asked for letters from the high priest to the synagogues as Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem." (NAS)

What did he call "The Way?" What we call Christianity. You see, even the enemies of the truth appreciated the fact that it was a way.

And then in Acts 19:9, in the ministry of Paul in Ephesus it says:

> "But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude, Paul withdrew from them..." (NAS)

What was "The Way?" The way was what we would call Christianity.

And a little later on in the same chapter of Acts 19:23, concerning events that developed in the city of Ephesus:

> "About that time there arose no small disturbance concerning the Way." (NAS)

And in Acts 22:4 as Paul was giving his personal testimony in court he said:

> "I persecuted this Way to the death..." (NAS)

So that Christianity is a way, it's not a static condition.

About fifty times the New Testament compares the Christian life to the activity of walking. Because it's a way, we walk in it. We don't stand, we don't sit. That may be temporary but our permanent activity is walking. Furthermore, there's only one direction to go and that's forward. And as we go forward the light gets brighter continually. Proverbs 4:18 tells us this:

> "But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, that shines brighter and brighter until the full day." (NAS)

When you first step onto that path it's like dawn after night. But as you progress along the path the light gets brighter and brighter until it's the brightness of the midday sun. You see, it's a way, it's a path. And if you're walking in that way, the light will be getting brighter for you all the day. If the light is not brighter for you today than it was yesterday, you need to check on your spiritual condition.

Not only is the way forward but the way is also upward. Paul says in Philippians 3:14:

> "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (NAS)

Paul was aware that his way was always upward, he was always going higher. He didn't stay on the same spiritual plane like so many Christians today. It was an upward call, something that led him to press forward, something that demanded his single-hearted devotion, commitment.

Again, the book of Proverbs confirms this. Proverbs 15:24:

> "The way of life leads upward for the wise, that he may turn away from hell below." (NKJ)

Notice the way of life is not merely forward, it's upward. And notice the alternative. Oh, the Bible is so clear, so consistent!

The alternative is hell below. Either you're going on the upward way or your destination is hell below. There's no alternative for any of us but to go forward in faith.

Hebrews 10:38B39, the writer tells us this—and it's really the words of God through the writer:

> "But my righteous one shall live by faith: and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him. [And then the writer goes on:] But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul." (NAS)

So, there's no option, we just have to go forward. That's the life of faith. If we shrink back we incur God's disfavor. He withdraws his blessing from our lives. And then there's the choice. You see, even the writer of Hebrews had to make this choice. "We are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul." Notice again there are only the two options, there is no third choice. We either shrink back to destruction or we go forward in faith to preservation.

Finally, let's look at a picture in Revelation 21:8. It's a terrible picture, it's a picture of the damned, of the lost being consigned to their eternal destination. It says this, Revelation 21:8:

> "But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death." (NIV)

Now, many of us could understand that's where murderers will end, sexually immoral people, people who practice magic arts, the occult, idolaters and liars. But I want to point out to you they're not at the head of the line. Who's at the head of the line? Something that would surprise many religious people. The cowardly and the unbelieving head the line that goes to the lake that burns with fire. Those are the first categories: cowardly and unbelieving, followed by the vile, murderers, sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, idolaters and liars.

Let me suggest something very simple to you. I would say you can get to heaven without theology. I question whether you can get there without courage. You cannot be cowardly and timid and make heaven your destination. It's an upward way, it's a way in which you have to press forward, you have to face opposition, you have to face discouragement, you have to face criticism—maybe open persecution. If you turn back, you turn back to perdition. If you go forward, it's to the preservation of your soul.

Let me ask you this and I'm going to close. Are you on the path of righteousness? Is the light getting brighter for you day by day? Are you moving forward and upward? I trust it may be so.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again next week at this same time, Monday through Friday. Next week I'll be sharing with you on another rich and exciting theme from the Word of God.

My special offer this week is my book, Repent and Believe. It describes the first two steps you have to take in order to escape from the snare of neutrality. It will open to you the way to a life of fruitful and effective service. Also, my complete series of talks this week on "No Neutrality" is available in a single, carefully edited cassette. Stay tuned for details.

Radio Program

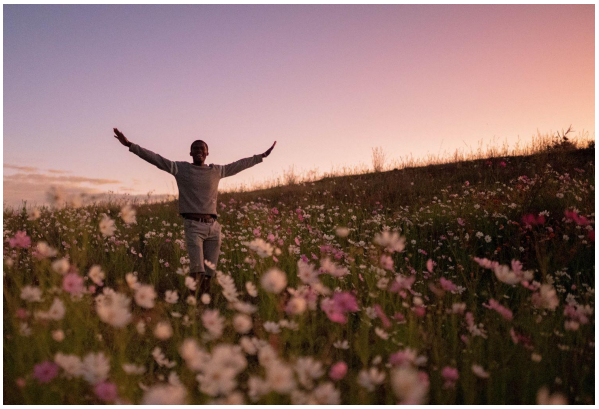
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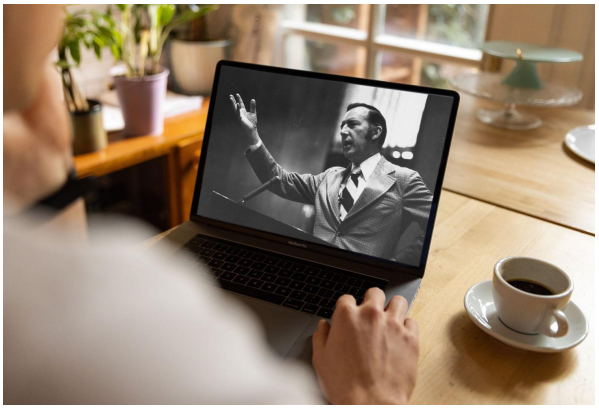
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