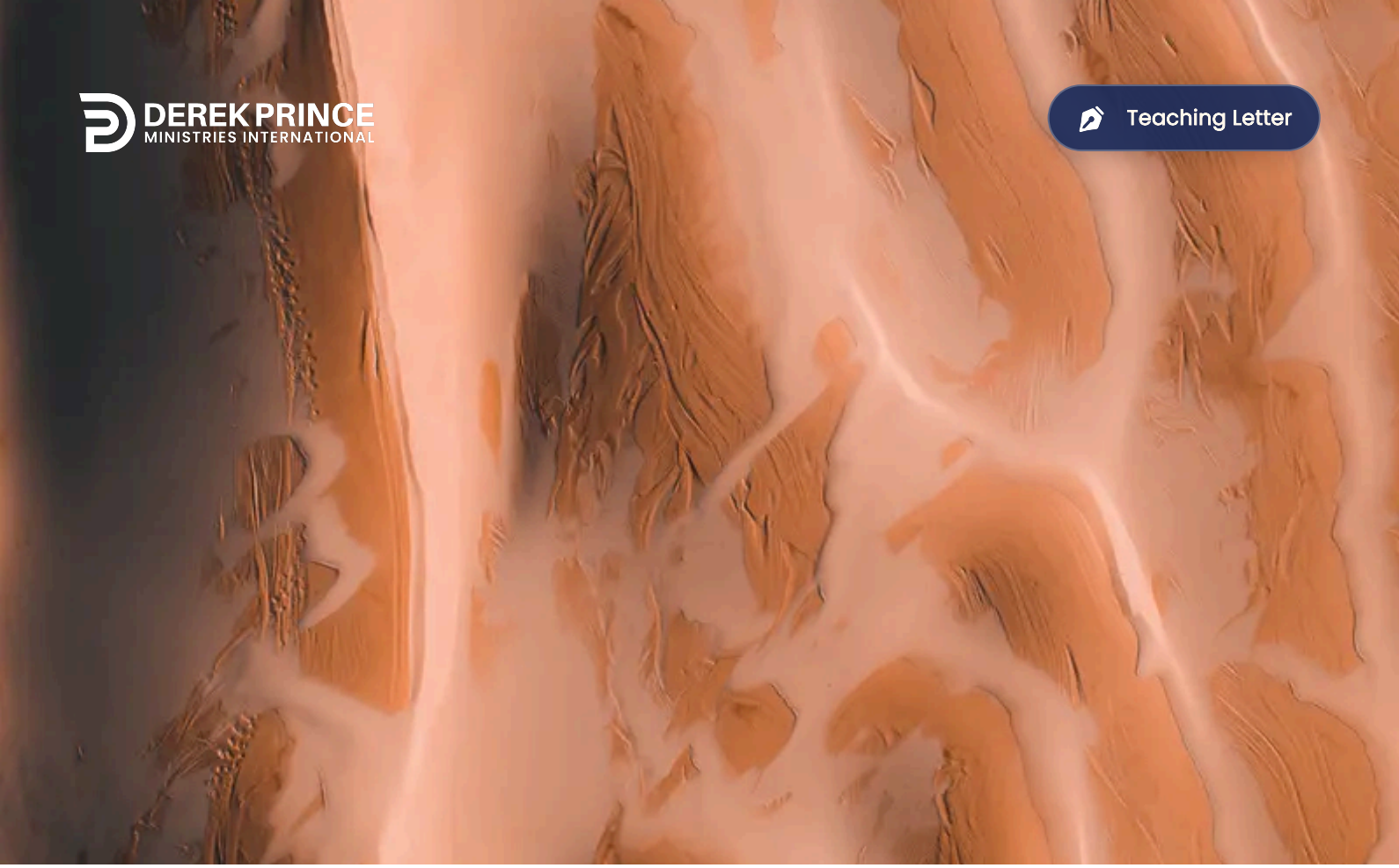


DEREK PRINCE
MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Teaching Letter

Twelve Steps to a Good Year - Steps 11 and 12



Part 6/6

Twelve Steps To A Good Year By Derek Prince

This is the final letter in our series to explore the twelve "Let us" statements from the book of Hebrews. So far, we have already looked at the following:

1. Let us fear.
2. Let us be diligent.
3. Let us hold fast our confession.
4. Let us draw near to the throne of grace.
5. Let us press on to maturity.
6. Let us draw near to the Most Holy Place.
7. Let us hold fast our confession without wavering.
8. Let us consider one another.
9. Let us run with endurance the race set before us.
10. Let us show gratitude.

Once again, I would encourage you to memorize these steps in order. It will be a great blessing and help to you.

Step 11: Let Us Go Out to Him

The eleventh step is found in Hebrews chapter 13:

> "Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate. So, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come." (verses 12–14 NASB)

This passage deals with our attitude and our relationship to this present world. It is telling us that our home is not in this world. We do not have an enduring place in this world.

The world rejected Jesus—it drove Him out of the city and crucified Him outside the gate. The Scriptures always emphasize the crucifixion took place outside the city wall. He was rejected; He was put out of society; the world did not want Him. We know that the way the world treated Jesus—sooner or later, in one way or another—is going to be the way the world will treat you and me as believers. We

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must be willing to go out to Him to the place of crucifixion, the place of rejection and shame, bearing His reproach.

Elsewhere in Hebrews it says the reproach of Christ is greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. His reproach becomes our glory. Then the writer gives this beautiful reason:

> "For here we do not have a lasting city [other people may think this is permanent, but we know it isn't], but we are seeking the city which is to come." (verse 14 NASB)

I like that translation which says, "the city." There is one particular city which is the destination and the home of all true believers. That is where we really belong.

Heroes in the Faith

Two chapters earlier, in Hebrews 11, the writer provided a kind of honor roll of many of the great saints of the Old Testament, emphasizing their faith. He says about them:

> "All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them." (Hebrews 11:13–16 NASB)

I am gripped by the words spoken there—that these forerunners in the faith, who are our examples in so many ways, confessed that they were strangers and exiles in this earth. They did not really belong; the earth was not their home. Then it says they were seeking a country of their own. Those words have a poignant meaning for me.

It so happens that in my life I have had to deal with quite a number of people who were classified "stateless"—people who didn't have a country, who did not own a passport. I thank God that by His grace I was able to help a number of them. So, I know something of the agony of not belonging anywhere. I suppose there are multitudes of refugees in our world today and in the previous generation who went through that agony of not belonging, having no permanent place of their own.

These people in Hebrews 11 were seeking a place of their own, but not in this world. It says that if they had wanted to do so, they could have gone back to the place they came from. Abraham, for instance, could have returned to Ur of the Chaldees, which is where he came from. But he had his mind set forward, not backward. "They desired a better country, that is, a heavenly one."

Then comes that beautiful sentence: "Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God." When we identify ourselves with God, His city and His preparation for us, then He is proud to be our God. It is beautiful to know that He has prepared a city—for them and for us.

Commitment to Jesus requires identification with His cross. We have to go out to Him to the place where He was crucified. This commitment rules out two pursuits: pleasing self, and pleasing the world.

Rule Out Pleasing Yourself

Let's look for a moment at what the New Testament says against pleasing self. Let me quote to you the words of Paul:

> "Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things." (Philippians 3:17–19)

It is clear to me that Paul was speaking about people who profess to be Christians, yet he warned his fellow believers against them. He said, "They claim to be followers of Christ, but they're the enemies of His cross. They're indulging self. Their mind is set on the things of this world. The principle of the cross—of death to self and the things of the flesh—has never been applied in their lives." Paul said, "Be careful. Don't follow their example because their end is

destruction." You see, I think we have today people in the church who profess allegiance to Christ, but reject His cross.

Rule Out Pleasing the World

Our identification with the cross of Jesus also rules out pleasing this world. James writes these stern words to professing believers:

> "You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God." (James 4:4 NIV)

This is very plain language—too plain for some people, I think. Why does James call such people "adulterous"? Because, you see, the spiritual commitment to Jesus Christ required of us qualifies us to become part of His Bride. The Bride is required to have a singlehearted, total commitment and devotion to Jesus. If our commitment and devotion are infiltrated and adulterated by the love of this world, then we are spiritual adulterers—we are not faithful to the Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. To be friendly with the world is to become spiritually adulterous.

Then listen to the words of Jesus in John 15:

> "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you." (John 15:18–19 NIV)

When the world "loves us as its own," that is a pretty dangerous sign that we don't belong to Jesus. That is plain language, and we need to give heed to it.

The Right Attitude

What then should be our attitude in the light of these plain facts and statements of Scripture? It is expressed in the words of Paul:

> "But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." (Galatians 6:14 NKJV)

Those words make a deep impression on me. Let me never boast; let me never place confidence in anything, ultimately, but the cross of the Lord. Let me not boast in my education, my religion, my denomination—none of these things. My only safe boast is in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, where Jesus won a total, permanent, irreversible victory over all the forces of evil. Through that cross, the world is crucified to me, and I to the world.

The cross is an absolute mark of separation between the people of God and the people of the world. When we accept the principle of the cross in our lives, we no longer belong to this world.

Jesus gives us this beautiful promise of victory in John 16:33:

> "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (NIV)

That is good news, isn't it? The world is not our friend. It's our enemy. We are going to have trouble—but Jesus has overcome the world! Through Him, we too can overcome the world—if we are willing to go out to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach.

Step 12: Let Us Offer Up a Sacrifice of Praise

Now we are going to look at the twelfth and final resolution found in the book of Hebrews:

> "Through Him [Jesus] then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name." (Hebrews 13:15 NASB)

To me, this final resolution is very appropriate and very beautiful: "Let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God." The final resolution is that which we are to go on doing. Are you going to go on doing that? Will you continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God? It will make all the difference in what each year holds for you.

Gratitude Leads to Praise

This final step of offering up a sacrifice of praise to God is related in a direct and practical way with the two previous steps, which were, "Let us show gratitude" and "Let us go out to Him outside the gate." You see, gratitude naturally leads to praise. There are so many passages in the Bible where it relates thanksgiving with praise. One of the most beautiful is Psalm 100:4:

> "[We] enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise." (NKJV)

The first step in access to God is thanksgiving. The second step is praise. Thanksgiving leads to praise. It finds expression in praise. It flows out in praise.

The step just before this one, "Let us go out to Him outside the camp," means for us to be identified with the cross of Jesus. To follow Jesus, we must accept the reproach of His cross. This brings us release from the two slaveries of pleasing self and pleasing the world.

This step is directly related to offering the sacrifice of praise. You might not see it at first, but there are two hindrances to spontaneous, free flowing praise in our lives. They are: love of self and love of the world. As long as our affections are centered in ourselves or in the world, we are not really free to praise God. But the cross removes these two hindrances and sets us free to praise God.

Set free in this way, we are no longer affected by what happens to us. We are not affected by our moods, by our problems, by apparent adversity. We are no longer affected by what goes on in the world around us. You know, sometimes when we listen to the news, we think, "Well, the situation's pretty bad—problems, disasters, crime, immorality..." But you see, we are not living in this world. The world doesn't dominate us. It doesn't dominate our thinking. We are in the world but not of the world.

When we are released from that slavery to the world—when the world doesn't control our thinking and our motivation, when we have been liberated by the cross in that inner attitude toward the world—then there is nothing left to hinder our praise. We don't praise God just when things are going right in the world. We don't praise God just when things are going right with ourselves. Rather, we praise God because He is worthy to be praised. Our liberated spirit isn't entangled with self-love and the love of the world.

Are You Liberated?

There is a tremendous mystery of the liberty that comes through being identified with the cross of Jesus. Praise is a very significant aspect. You can find out a lot about a person when you study how much praising they do. You find out what kind of life they are living. Are they still a slave of the old man, or have they entered into the resurrected life of the new man?

The old man is a grumbler. When you hear a person grumbling, you know that is the old man speaking. But the new man is a praiser. So which are you? Is it the old man who speaks, or the new man who praises? The old man says, "I can't take this any longer. Things are getting too bad. Nobody treats me right. I don't know what's wrong with the world." The new man says, "Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! I'm free. I'm a child of God. Heaven is my home. God loves me." Which is your attitude?

Earlier in this series, I quoted a sentence from Proverbs 18:21:

> "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit." (NASB)

There are two results that come out of the tongue: death and life. If you grumble, if you are negative or self-centered, your tongue will bring forth death. If you are liberated from all that, walking in the praise and worship of God, your tongue will bring forth life. Whatever your tongue brings forth—whatever fruit it brings forth, whether sweet or bitter—you are going to eat that fruit.

Praise—A Sacrifice

I want to go back for a moment to that verse in Hebrews 13:15 and just bring out one more important point. The writer says:

> "Through Him [Jesus] then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God."

One very significant word there is the word sacrifice. Praise is a sacrifice. A sacrifice, according to the principles of Scripture, requires a death. Nothing was ever offered to God that hadn't passed through death. So we see that the sacrifice of praise requires the death of the old man.

The old man cannot really praise God as He deserves to be praised. There has to be a death. Then too, a sacrifice costs something, and praise is costly. Let me put it this way: We need to praise God most when we least feel like it. Praise cannot depend on our feelings. It is a sacrifice of our spirit.

David's Example

In closing, I want to give you the example of David from Psalm 34. The introduction says, "A psalm of David when he feigned madness before Abimelech, who drove him away and he departed."

At this time, David was a fugitive from his own country. King Saul was trying to kill him. David had to leave his own country and familiar surroundings, so he went to the court of a Gentile king for refuge. But Abimelech the king suspected him of being an enemy. In order to save his own life, David had to feign madness. It says in the historical book that he scratched on the door and he slobbered on his beard. That was his situation. What was David's reaction? Let's read the first three verses of this psalm:

> "I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul will make its boast in the LORD; the humble will hear it and rejoice. O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together." (Psalm 34:1–3 NASB)

Isn't that marvelous? Right there, in such a terrible situation, with his life hanging in the balance and with the shame of having to feign madness, David said, "I will bless the LORD at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth." That, my friend, is the sacrifice of praise. David desired to go on boasting in the Lord. There may be nothing else to boast in, but we can boast in the Lord.

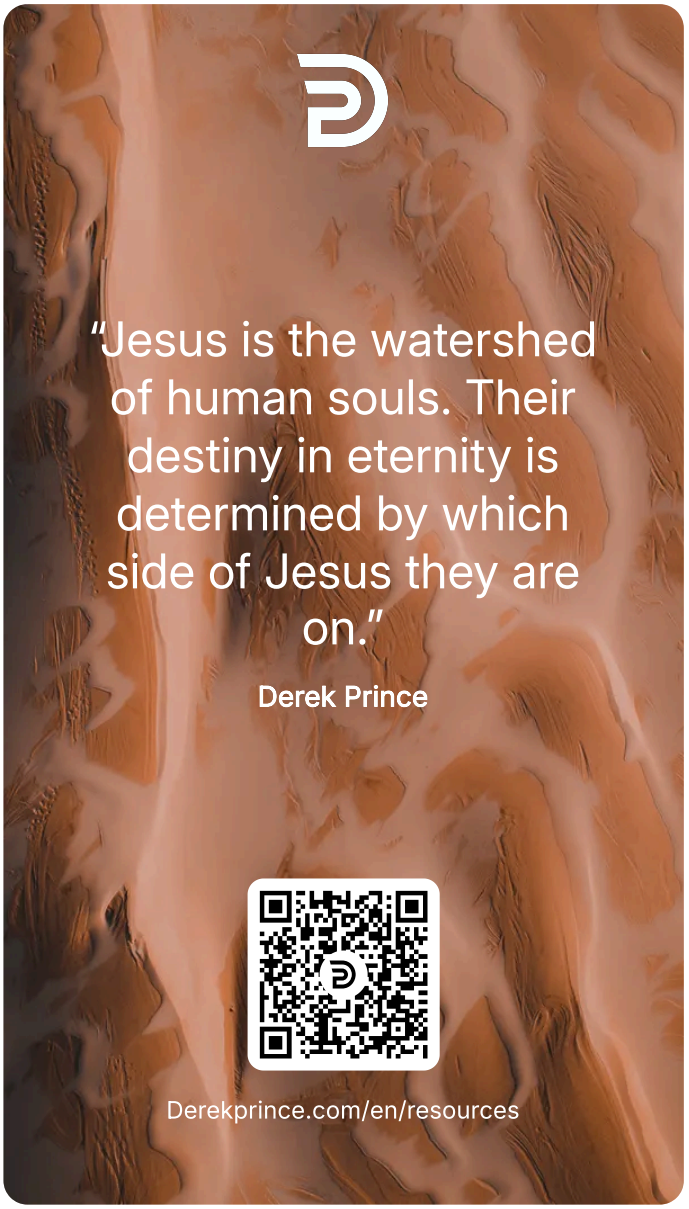
It also says, "The humble will hear it and rejoice," and then, "Let us exalt His name together."

Praise is infectious. But grumbling is infectious, too. If you grumble, you will get fellow grumblers. But when we learn to praise God this way, others will join us. So let us learn to offer that sacrifice of praise to God continually.

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