

# 12 steps to a GOOD YEAR



Part 2 of a Six Part Series : Steps 3 and 4

My theme for this year's *Teaching Letter of Derek Prince* is taken from the radio series, which presents in consecutive order, the twelve "let us" statements presented in the letter to the Hebrews. The special purpose of this series is to equip you with an attitude and an outlook that will enable you to appropriate the fullness of God's provision and blessing in the year that still lies ahead. You see, so much depends on these two things—your attitude and your outlook—as you move ahead into all that God has planned for you.

This series is based on the epistle to the Hebrews. Twelve times in this epistle the writer says "Let us." These words indicate a resolution—a decision. But it is one that we need to make together with our fellow believers. Taken together, these "let us" initiatives constitute twelve scriptural New Year resolutions.

Briefly, the first two steps covered in our previous letter are as follows. The first step is "Let us fear" HEBREWS 4:1. This is a surprising first step, but I believe it is appropriate because of the spiritual condition of the Hebrew believers to whom it is addressed. I added that, in many

cases, professing Christians today are in the same kind of spiritual condition and we desperately need that first resolution: "Let us fear."

The second step is "Let us, therefore, be diligent" HEBREWS 4:11. I believe that the right kind of fear (step one) will lead to this second resolution: to be diligent. I pointed out that the opposite of diligence is laziness, a sin which is tolerated in many Christian circles today. Although in many ways, it is much more deadly than drunkenness, laziness is tolerated while drunkenness is frowned upon. Believe me, the end of laziness is disaster.

### STEP 3: LET US HOLD FAST OUR CONFESSION

The third “Let us” of Hebrews is also found in the fourth chapter. Interestingly, the first four steps are all found in Hebrews 4.

*Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.*

HEBREWS 4:14 NASB

We need to understand what is meant by the word **confession**. It is derived from a word in the original Greek of the New Testament which means “to say the same as.” That is the basic meaning of **confession**. In its scriptural context, it means that we say the same as God says—that we make the words of our mouth agree with God’s Word.

There is a further implication to the word **confession**. It means that we “say it out boldly”—that we are not intimidated.

The word **confession** has a considerable history in the Christian church. There have been certain confessions or statements of faith that have been very significant in history. Many times it has taken boldness and courage on the part of those who made them to take that stand. But the Bible says, “Let us hold fast our confession.”

Then the passage points out, particularly, that it is our confession that relates us to Jesus as our High Priest. I think many Christians lack a clear picture of Jesus as our High Priest. However, it is one of His most important ongoing ministries on our behalf. He is our representative in the presence of God the Father, standing good for us. Every time we make the right confession—speaking out a positive declaration with our mouths—Jesus has obligated Himself to ensure that our confession is made good in our experience. Notice what the writer of Hebrews says just a little earlier on in chapter 3:

*Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession.*

HEBREWS 3:1 NASB

Those last five words tell us that our confession enlists Jesus as our High Priest. But the opposite, unfortunately, is also true. If we make no confession, we have no High Priest. Not that Jesus has ceased to be our High Priest, but that we have not given Him the opportunity to minister as our High Priest. He is the High Priest of **our confession**. If we make the

right professions in faith, with our mouths, according to Scripture, then Jesus has eternally obligated Himself to see that we will never be put to shame—that we will always come into the experience of what we confess. But if we do not say the right thing then, alas, we silence the lips of our High Priest. We give Him nothing to say on our behalf in heaven.

Jesus is also called our advocate. The word **advocate** is similar to the modern word **attorney**. Jesus is the legal expert who is there to plead our case in heaven, and He has never lost a case. But if we fail to make the right confession, He has no case to plead, so the case goes against us by default.

*“If You Confess . . .”*

You can see how important confession is and, therefore, it is so important that we give heed to this third step of Hebrews: “Let us hold fast our confession.” This principle of right confession—saying the right thing with our mouth—has a central place in the gospel and in our experience of salvation. In fact, there is no salvation without right confession. Listen to what Paul says in Romans 10 where he explains as clearly as anywhere in the New Testament what is required for salvation. He begins this way:

*“The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart”—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved . . .*

ROMANS 10:8–9 NASB

The basis for salvation is the Word—it must be appropriated by faith. There are two actions we have to take: one with the heart and one with the mouth. We have to believe with the heart, but we have to confess, or say it out loud, with the mouth. Paul goes on in the next verse:

*for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.*

VERSE 10 NASB

No confession, no salvation. It is good to believe in your heart, but that is not sufficient. You not only have to believe in your heart; you must also say it out boldly with your mouth, making the words of your mouth agree with the Word of God. Our initial confession relates us to Jesus as High Priest, but His ongoing ministry

on our behalf as High Priest depends on our ongoing confession. You see, the whole Bible shows that our words determine our destiny. Let me just give you some very penetrating Scriptures on that point.

*Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.*

PROVERBS 18:21 NASB

The tongue is either going to produce death in our lives if we make a wrong confession—or life, if we make a right confession. Whatever we say with our tongue—we will eat the fruit of it.

In the words of Jesus:

*“But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”*

MATTHEW 12:36–37 NASB

I have often heard Christians say silly things they did not mean—words that were not honoring to God. Then they excused themselves by saying, “Well, I didn’t really mean it.” But Jesus said, “Every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment.” That excuse that you didn’t mean it simply will not work. You must hold fast your confession.

Ultimately, we only have two alternatives in our relationship to Christ and to the Scripture—to confess or to deny. Jesus says again:

*“Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.”*

MATTHEW 10:32–33 NASB

That is His response as our High Priest. There is no third alternative. In spiritual matters, in the long run, there is no neutrality. Jesus said, “He who is not with Me is against Me.” It must either be a right confession to salvation, or a wrong confession which will not produce salvation.

Keep affirming your faith verbally; use the positive to exclude the negative.

### STEP 4: LET US DRAW NEAR TO THE THRONE OF GRACE

This fourth step is also found in the fourth chapter of Hebrews:

*Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

HEBREWS 4:16 NASB

I believe this fourth step is directly related to the first three steps. There is great significance in the sequence. In order to be able to draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, we need to make sure that we have taken the first three steps. The first: let us fear. We must come with an attitude of reverence and an awareness of our need of God’s grace. Then the second is: let us be diligent. This is our response to God’s grace. We are not to be slack, lazy, indifferent, or presumptuous. We see that God’s grace is no excuse for our indifference or presumption; but rather that it provokes us to be diligent. And then the third step was: let us hold fast our confession. We must have the right confession. We must say the right things with our mouth about Jesus and what He has done for us, if we are going to be able to approach the throne of grace with confidence.

In regard to our approaching the throne of grace, we are told to come for two things: mercy and grace. It is my conviction that if God invites us in His word to come to Him for something, and if we meet the conditions which I have briefly outlined, we can count on the result. If God says that there is mercy and grace waiting for us, then I believe we can count on receiving mercy and grace. We need never be disappointed. God would never give us an invitation He would not stand behind. Many of the promises and the invitations in the Bible are conditional. God says, “If you will do this, then I will do that.” I believe God is saying to us here, “If you will approach My throne, having met the conditions, and if you will acknowledge your need of My mercy and My grace, then you can count on it. I will make My mercy and My grace available to you.” We don’t need to be in any doubt about that.

That is why the Scripture says, “Let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace.” If we come as God’s children, we are not coming as beggars; we have been invited. God has no second-class children. He never holds us at a distance if we meet the conditions for approach. It is very important that we come with confidence—



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which is faith in action. That faith will not be denied. It takes God at His Word and believes that God is as good as His Word. It is faith in God's faithfulness. That is how we are to approach the throne—with confidence.

### *Come for Mercy*

We are told to approach God's throne of grace to receive two things: mercy and grace. What is involved in each of these two benefits? The order is significant. I believe we need first of all, mercy, and then grace. Mercy essentially relates to people who have done wrong, who cannot claim their rights—those who are weak or unworthy.

There is an attitude in the world today that makes everybody want to claim their rights. Everybody says, "It's my right," and "It is due to me," and "Why didn't I get that?" and "I ought to have this." With that prevailing attitude, it is often hard for people to see that they need mercy. I thank God personally that since I came to know the Lord, there is one fact I have never been in any doubt about: that I need God's mercy. I am clear about that no matter what situation I'm in. I cannot trust in my "rights." They are not sufficient. I need God's mercy.

I am reminded of a friend of mine who is in full-time Christian ministry now. Once upon a time he was a traveling salesman. He had been driving rather recklessly and had received several tickets for exceeding the speed limit and so on, and he had been summoned to the sheriff's office. He went there with a terrible feeling that he was going to have his license suspended. Of course, that would have been very serious for him, because he would have had no means to carry on with his profession as a salesman. So, he prepared what he was going to say. When he was summoned before the sheriff, he said this: "Sir, I'm not asking for justice. I'm asking for mercy." And the sheriff replied, "No one has ever said that to me before!" The

sheriff was so taken aback that, although he gave him a severe warning, he permitted him to retain his license.

Those words have always stuck with me. I think when we approach the Lord, it would be good for us to come with that attitude: "I'm not asking for justice; I'm asking for mercy." When we come with that attitude, God will never withhold His mercy. The only reason why people do not receive mercy is they fail to see their need of it.

### *Come for Grace*

The second thing we are told to come for is grace. What is grace? Grace is the free unmerited favor of God toward the undeserving and the ill deserving. I like to use this phrase: Grace is "God's Riches At Christ's Expense." It is what God will freely do for us beyond what we deserve. One essential characteristic of grace is—it cannot be deserved. Secondly, the grace of God is supernatural. It goes beyond all the limits of our natural ability. It can never be exhausted.

Hebrews 4:16 says to come "in time of need." That is so important for us to see! Are you in a situation of need? Is your situation desperate? Well, don't let the devil fool you into thinking that it is too desperate, or that it is too late to come, or that there is nothing you can do about it. God specifically invites you to come in time of need.

So if your situation is desperate, let me recommend this to you: that you come to God's throne with confidence for these two benefits. First of all, for mercy. Don't demand your rights. What you really deserve, you would not want. Ask for mercy. Second, come for grace. Don't limit God to what He can do on your behalf. And don't be put off by the fact that your situation is desperate. That is exactly the time to come.

Finally, remember that you are coming to a throne. And on that throne is a king—the king of the universe. All authority and power, in heaven and on earth, is in His hands.

In our next letter, we will be taking a look at the next two steps in this progression: (5) Let us press on to maturity and (6) Let us draw near to the most holy place. ▲

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**This Teaching Letter is Part 2 of a Six Part Series**

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