

Desiring but Not Progressing

by H.J. Vine

The sermon emphasizes the importance of having a purpose of heart and making prayer a priority in order to make progress in our walk with God.

Scripture: Psalm 27:4, Proverbs 13:4, Isaiah 26:3, Philippians 4:6, 2 Timothy 1:9, Hebrews 10:25

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Faith Progression"

Description

H.J. Vine preaches about the unenviable state of soul of one who knows they are saved but lacks desire for prayer or fellowship with other believers, resulting in spiritual stagnation. This individual, despite receiving grace and salvation, neglects communion with God and fellow believers, failing to make progress in their faith. Vine emphasizes the importance of awakening to the neglect of God's love and guidance, redirecting desires towards Christ, and having a purposeful heart focused on seeking the Lord. He highlights the necessity of prayer, overcoming hindrances, valuing spiritual progress, and the joy found in serving the Lord.

Transcript

"When one knows that he is saved and desires to get on; but has very little desire for prayer or the fellowship of saints, and makes no progress, which is a grief to him, what would you say is wrong? What would you advise?"

Such an one as this question describes is in an unenviable state of soul, and his danger is great. There is a wily, watchful enemy going about, seeking to permanently harm such, and what spiritual strength can they have with which to resist him, or what refuge from his malignant wiles?

Here is one who has heard the call of God in the gospel. Grace has led him to accept our Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour. He knows, through the goodness of God, that he is saved. Everlasting woe, which he deserved, shall never be his; heaven, with its peace and joy, shall be his portion instead. Through the work of God in him new desires are his, desires which are not of the flesh. Notwithstanding all this grace bestowed upon him by God, he is prayerless, though not altogether so, it may be hoped; he neglects the gathering together of the saints of God, his brethren in the Lord; and therefore makes no progress in divine things.

Clearly this is a case of grace received but not properly appreciated. How shameful to receive so much, and respond so little. The blessed God, who has made him His at the cost of giving up His beloved Son, is

coldly neglected; His love slighted, and the company of His own forsaken; and forsaken for what?

And all the while the conscience, enlightened by the gospel, cries out in protest, and the renewed nature within craves for what alone can satisfy it. That the cry and the craving are not utterly silenced and dead is of the mercy of God.

To such an one we say, Awake! Awake!! AWAKE!!! But not as though we did not feel for him. He may have unwarily got into such a state and position through wrong instruction by would-be teachers, whose teaching is unscriptural and not of God. Those who have received Christ Jesus the Lord need to be built up in HIM. Grace and peace are multiplied to such through the knowledge of Him. The Holy Spirit leads souls on in that direction. But schools, sects, parties and their claims, are often forced upon Christians, instead of Christ, and thence their souls are damaged. Let such get into the presence of Him who loves them better than the best teacher, and He will surely guide them aright.

Right Desires

All who are born of God have desires which are according to Him, as has the one whose case we are considering. But these desires are to be rightly directed. Self-condemnation and the discovery of sin within accompanies this stage of soul experience. Deliverance is deeply desired. It is a proof of God's work in us, though, in the midst of this struggle, the soul often wonders whether it belongs to God at all. It blames itself for unreality, insincerity, and all sorts of things, till the lesson that there is no good in the flesh is learned. Then the Deliverer, our Lord Jesus Christ, is looked to, the One in whom all good is. He becomes the Object for the heart and mind then, and not self.

"One thing have I desired," said the sweet Singer. It is well when the soul comes to this--"one thing"; then the eye is single. But mark, he does not stop at the desire. He goes on to say, "That will I seek after" (Ps. 27:4). There is purpose of heart. This is what is needed.

Purpose

The Apostle Paul could say to Timothy, "Thou hast fully known my . . . purpose," as well as teaching, conduct, and faith. Our blessed God has a "purpose;" He has called us according to that purpose. He makes all things work in view of it. Now right desires are not enough; there must be purpose, and purposefulness to say, "I will seek after," and not only to say it, but to do it. Not as though we were to seek something which is difficult to find, for all is now revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ. There might be difficulty in the Psalmist's day "to behold the beauty of the Lord," but now it is all seen in its attractive perfection in our blessed Lord; and the Holy Spirit is here to give power to behold the beauty of the Lord. But there must be real purpose of heart.

Prayer

Prayer then becomes a joy, as well as a necessity to us. We shall be found making known our requests "with joy," answering to the word which says, "Rejoice always; pray unceasingly." But many have proved by experience that it is when the heart is purposefully set in this direction that all sorts of stumbling-blocks and hindrances are found in the way. How often when seeking the presence of the Lord is one hindered unless there is purpose. Someone may come just at that moment--perhaps a brother in the Lord, perhaps someone greatly loved--claiming the attention. Under these circumstances, it must ever be remembered that He must be put first. As this is kept steadily in view, obstacles are overcome.

A well-known and much-used preacher used to set aside one night in the week to be alone with God and His Word. Another servant of the Lord called upon him when he was so engaged. He was told that he would see no one. He pressed for an interview, only to receive the quiet but firm answer: "Tell him I am engaged with his Master." That is the whole matter--the Lord must be put first.

Progress

As a matter of consequence, progress will follow; the company and gatherings of those who love and cleave to the Lord will be greatly valued; and our profiting will appear to all. Even in the sluggard's soul there is desire, but he "desireth and has nothing;" on the other hand, the soul of the diligent is made fat. Purpose, prayer, and progress go together; but let the believer only become purposeless and prayerless, then paralysis will soon creep over the spiritual system.

The Holy Spirit, however, is here, and He leads us to behold the glory of the Lord. He delights to show us things concerning our Lord Jesus Christ in all the Scriptures of Truth. As we behold His well-loved features our hearts will long to see him, and hasten forward to the day of His coming. We shall not then forsake "the assembling of ourselves together as the custom of some is; but encouraging one another, and by so much the more as we see the day drawing near" (Heb. 10:25). If the following verses go on to show us the awful danger of "the custom" of forsaking the gatherings, leading to apostasy and "a certain fearful expectation of judgment" on the part of those who are not truly converted, it is that we might be braced up to go forward. "For yet a very little while He that comes will come, and will not delay" (v. 15).

There is no time to waste dallying by the way! Soon the faithful servant shall hear His sweet, "Well done!" The everlasting joy of the Lord shall be his portion! The time of testing and trial will be passed and over! The present privilege of service in suffering gone for ever! Eternity with the Saviour! Like Him, in glory, eternally! For ever with the Lord! We shall see His face! Then may the sincere purpose of our hearts be--"FORWARD!!"

Thus ever on through life we find

To trust, O Lord, is best.

Who serves Thee with a quiet mind

Find in their service rest.

Their outward troubles may not cease,

But this their joy shall be:

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace

Whose mind is stayed on Thee."

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