Let Us Press on Toward Maturity

Introduction

I would like to read a few verses to begin the time, if I could. Let us begin with a familiar portion of Scripture out of Hebrews 6:1 where the writer says, "Let us press on to maturity." The next verse, II Peter 1:13 says, "… to stir you up by way of reminder."

Then let us read three passages out of I Timothy:

I Timothy 1:15: "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all." That is Paul writing.

I Timothy 3:1: "It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do."

I Timothy 4:7b-9: "… Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance."

Then:

II Timothy 2:11-13: "It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him; If we endure, we shall also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us; If we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself."

Lastly:

Titus 3:8 says, "This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men."

Let us have a word of prayer.

Lord, we do want to come now and bow before You as we continue in Your presence. We want to commit this time into Your hands. We want to commit Your Word to You, Lord. Except You anoint it, except You send it forth in power, we are wasting our time. So, we look to You because You are faithful. We ask You, Lord, to grant us that anointing, both to speak and to hear. And we will give You all the glory because You are the only one deserving of it. We just pray in Your name. Amen.

Burden: Press On to Maturity

Well, it is probably kind of obvious from the first verse, if not the verse right after that, what my burden is; it is that we would press on to maturity. This is the day and age in which this is very, very important. The time of the Lord's coming is soon, and we need to be ready. My desire is to stir you up, or I should say, the Lord's desire is to stir you up.

I cannot stir anybody up; I cannot even stir myself up. But the Lord would want to stir you up by reminding you.

I was caught by this when it said, "by way of reminder," because I thought we have been a very blessed, blessed people. We have a very, very rich heritage here. We have heard, I want to say, everything. We have heard the whole counsel of God out of this place here and out of the conferences.

So, all I can do is remind you of some things, and that is basically all I am going to do. I was drawn to these five trustworthy statements because they point out some things that are essential to the Christian life. We are all going to know what these are, so you will have to bear with me. It is interesting because all of these were given by Paul, and four of them were given to Timothy, his son in the faith, and one to Titus. In your versions, if you have a different translation, instead of "trustworthy statement," you may have "faithful saying," "faithful word," or "sure word." That word "statement" there in the Greek is the word "logos." We are all familiar with that, the Word of God.

Message of Mercy

I want to proceed right into the first trustworthy statement that we found in I Timothy, chapter one. And I am going to back up a little to verse twelve and continue to verse seventeen.

Strength and Mercy

I Timothy 1:12. Again, this is Paul speaking in verse 12: "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service."

That is remarkable that he was strengthened because the Lord considered him faithful. Because then again, the Lord is not locked in time like we are. He sees the beginning from the end. I sometimes think, I wish I could, but sometimes I am not sure I want to, if you know what I mean.

But here he is, he says, "Considered me faithful, putting me into service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor." We just went through the book of Acts, chapter 8:3 states how Paul ravaged the church. He ravaged. That is a strong word. And yet here in I Timothy 1:13-14 he says, "I was shown mercy, because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus." Weymouth, if you are familiar with that New Testament says this about that: "The grace of the Lord came to me in overflowing fullness." And I like how he says this: "Conferring faith on me and the love which is in Christ Jesus."

Foremost of Sinners

And then in verse 15, it says, "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am

foremost of all." Paul said, "I am the foremost of all sinners." And he said that because he was. He just ravaged the church. He wanted to destroy the church. And then when the Lord met him on the Damascus Road, he realized how wrong he was. He saw and tasted of the mercy and grace of the Lord, realizing that he probably should have been killed. Here it is very interesting that he says, "I am the foremost of all sinners." Some versions say that he is the chief of sinners. Previously he had said in I Corinthians 15:9 that he was the least of the apostles. And then in Ephesians 3:8, he said that he is the least of all the saints. But here it has progressed to being the chief of sinners, which is the way it is. It is kind of a paradox of the Christian life.

Somehow, we think that when we are believers, we are going to be elevated - but we really go down, don't we? We go down, but the life of the Lord goes up. And here is Paul, at this late stage in his life, saying, "I am the foremost of all sinners." And in verse 16 it says, "And yet for this reason I found mercy." Why? "In order that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience, as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life." I want to say here, if you know somebody—maybe a family member, a friend, or a coworker—and they are very averse to the gospel, they might be downright mean and crude, but there is hope for them. Do not give up praying for them. Do not give up reaching out to them. Paul might have been one of the worst, and yet look what happened to him. He has become one of the greatest saints the Lord has ever had. So that is wonderful.

Attitude of Gratitude

And I like how he ends it in verse 17: "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen." This first trustworthy statement is so fitting that it comes first because that is the way it is in our Christian life, is it not? We come to that point where, by the mercy, grace, and love of God, He reveals Himself to us and saves us out of whatever we have been in. Truly, it says in the Word, "He who is forgiven much, loves much." Paul saw this, and it is true of us, too. We have been forgiven much—very much. We are simply the objects of the mercy of God. As our brother Kenny talked about when he went through Romans, we are the objects of His mercy. None of us deserve it, and thus this ought to create what I think of as an attitude of gratitude. Do you have an attitude of gratitude? You should! And that is why we come to the table every week—to remind us that we should have an attitude of gratitude, because it is very easy to lose that, very easy. We find this becomes a great motivation in our life, in coming to the Lord and going on with the Lord.

Aspiring to Exercise Oversight (I Timothy 3:1)

Let us move on to the second one. Now, the second one here, which is in I Timothy 3:1, reads, "If any man aspires to the office of overseer." Now Darby says this: "If any one aspires to exercise oversight." I like that better. I do not like to hear the word "office." I prefer to hear the word "function." Maybe that is because I worked in a bank for many years, and I may have shared this before, but banks are so big on titles. They love to hand out titles; they do not give anything else with them, but they will give you a title.

They offered me an officer title once. I was glad to take it because I got an extra week of vacation; but outside of that, I did not get anything else. I am not big on titles. I think the natural man is, he likes to appear as something. But this says, "If any man aspires to the office of overseer."

I do not want to spend a lot of time on this statement regarding church government, but I do want to say this to the young brothers in our midst: if you are willing to lay down your life for the Lord and to serve His people, it is a good thing. It is a very good thing. And we have some here who are doing that. I am grateful for that.

Discipline and Growth in Christian Life (I Timothy 4:7-10)

Let us move on to the third one. I am going to camp here for a little while on this third one. There is a lot here, and I am just going to scratch the surface, so bear with me. The third one is in I Timothy 4:7b. Pay attention to this as it is so important to our Christian life.

Discipline Onto Godliness

It begins in this version, "Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness." Discipline yourself unto godliness. Now, some versions use "exercise." "Exercise yourself unto godliness," found in the Darby translation, King James, the American Standard Version, and Young's. There are quite a few. Other versions use "train," not like a train on a track, but train or training. Weymouth, the Amplified, Rotherham, and the NIV uses "train."

And we get the word "gymnasium" from the Greek word here, translated as discipline or exercise. So, it says, "Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness." I like what J.B. Phillips says in his translation. He says, "Take time and trouble to keep yourselves spiritually fit." Take time and trouble to keep yourself spiritually fit. There are many people that do that to keep physically fit. I have known a few people in my life that, boy, they are extreme in what they put their bodies through. But it does say in verse eight, "For bodily discipline is only of little profit." It is of some profit. I believe the Lord would have us doing some kind of exercise.

I remember Brother Kaung used to walk around inside his house. I do not know how much he walked. Plus, he liked going up the stairs. If you have ever been to the house, it is quite a staircase. And he used to like to go up that staircase to stay in shape. So, there is some profit. There is some profit to bodily exercise, but it is little. And we will talk about that in a minute.

But I remember back in the seventies, when I was a teenager trying to advance in tennis, a lot of people at that time were getting into all sorts of activities: running, walking, going to the gym, etc. Many people took up tennis, which I was not very happy about because, in my hometown, we did not have a lot of tennis courts. Suddenly, they were crowded. It went from hardly anybody being there to being packed. But like a lot of trends that come along, it died out in time. So, bodily exercise has a little profit. But the verse says, "But godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the

present life and also for the life to come." Your bodily profit is only good for now. Someday it is going to go back to dust, and that is the end of it. And thank God we will get a new body. I am looking forward to that now that I am getting up there a little bit.

But I like what the Rotherham version says about this, "Having promise of life, the present and the coming." So, this discipline unto godliness brings a promise of life, and that life there is the word "Zoe." We already have eternal life. But when we go through this process, it is going to become more and more our experience to live out that life and taste that life. So that is a promise, "Having promise of life, the present and the coming." In verse nine it says, "It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance." Then he goes on in verse ten to say, "For it is for this we labor and strive." We labor and strive for this. This is something we need to labor and strive over: this discipline unto godliness.

The Holy Spirit as Our Trainer

Now, we did mention that there is another translation for this word discipline, which is train or training. And I know there are many here who go to the gym. I wonder if when you first went to the gym, did you go there and pick out what you thought you should do? Did you say, "Well, I will lift these weights," or "I will walk on this." It can be very dangerous to do that. Especially for me, at my size. If I went there and tried to lift these big barbells, I am probably going to snap myself in half; unless I have somebody say, "No, take three or four of those off of that bar, start with a children's version."

But, when you go to the gym, you need something; you need a trainer, do you not? You need a trainer because they know exactly what you need to get you to your end goal. Whether it is lifting these weights or doing stair exercises or whatever it is, you need a trainer. And the same is true in spiritual exercise.

We need a trainer. We need someone who can direct us and show us how to do this. And guess who that is? It is the Holy Spirit. He is the trainer. He is the one who knows all that is necessary to bring you to your end goal. So, what is the role of the trainee? The trainee needs to cooperate with the trainer; in other words, the trainee needs to listen to and be obedient to the trainer. In Hebrews, it says three times regarding the Holy Spirit, "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart." It is there three times. In the book of Revelation, it is repeated to all the churches, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." It is very important that we be trained to hear His voice and to acknowledge it.

Now, when it says to "hear" in the Scriptures, it does not mean just to hear only. It also brings in the fact of responding to what you hear. This might be true a lot in the western part of the world, we are pretty good over here about hearing the Word and feeling like because we hear it, we have it. Is that not true? I have been there, I have done that and was proud of it. But knowledge puffs up, but love edifies, and love comes through experience. It comes through responding to that little voice. In James 1:22 it says, "But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude

themselves." Ooh, deluded. When you hear but you do not do, thinking you are there when you are not there.

This makes me think of our sister Dora. She prays a lot. She prays a lot for us to enter into spiritual reality. I do not know if you have noticed that. How important it is to enter into the truth. Not just to have head knowledge of the truth, but to let it get down in our hearts and become reality in our lives.

There is an interesting verse in Revelation 10:10. This is where John was told that this angel was going to give him this little book right out of his hand. So Revelation 10:10 says, "And I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was in my mouth sweet as honey; and when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter." It is an interesting verse, is it not? God's Word certainly should be sweet as eating honey. But do you sometimes find that it is hard to swallow when the reality of a verse hits you? But that is part of the discipline that we have to go through.

Enduring Pain for Growth

So, when you are in the gym—and by the way, I do not go to the gym—I have to admit, I have never liked the gym. Even when I was very avid in tennis, I did not like to train. I only liked to play the game. There was one great player who was like me; his name was John McEnroe. He never practiced, he just played, and got upset a lot. Sometimes when you are in the gym, with the trainer, they are going to ask you to do something that you do not really want to do. Particularly, maybe when you have had an injury and you are going through therapy, they tell you, "You need to move this, and you have to bend that." And it is very painful, and it is hard to do. And we find that because of that suffering and pain, we do not want to endure it. But it is essential that we go through it if we want to reach the goal.

There used to be a saying: "no pain, no gain." I am still contemplating that one a little bit, but there is certainly some truth to it. So, spiritually speaking, we need to have a mind to suffer, do we not? When I think of these saints in Pakistan, I believe they have a mind to suffer what they go through. We sympathize with them; we feel for them. However, it is probably one of the best things they can experience spiritually: that suffering. We know that when we go through suffering, it is very, very difficult for the flesh. Our flesh would rather spend time and effort on other things that are pleasing to it.

The Word of God and the Cross

But the reality is that disciplining ourselves unto godliness requires the matter of denying ourselves. To me, that is the hardest thing in the Christian life: denying ourselves, especially when you have been a non-Christian for quite a while and have gotten to the point where you are used to gratifying yourself. Then suddenly you come to the Lord, and He is calling you to lay down your life. It feels like you are kind of going backwards a little bit, but it is essential. It is very essential. We need to remember that this matter of denying ourselves, this willingness to do so, comes from the Lord. It comes

from the Lord. Do not try to drum it up yourself; it is not going to happen. It comes from the Lord because Philippians 2:13 says this: "For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure." That brings me a lot of hope— a lot of hope.

Now, the other thing trainers do is use very specific tools to assist in bringing ones to their goal. This is true spiritually too. The Holy Spirit uses two major tools to bring us to godliness. You probably know what those are, do you not? One is the Word of God. The other is the cross. These are the two major tools the Holy Spirit uses in our lives. We can also put it another way: the Holy Spirit gives us revelation through the Word of God, the revelation of the Holy Spirit. The other is the discipline of the Holy Spirit. That is another way of saying the Word of God and the cross.

Now, we will speak to the cross in the next trustworthy statement, but in this one, we will look at the Word of God. I want to read a couple of verses from Hebrews. We are all very familiar with this passage. Hebrews 4:12-13 says, "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart." Often, we get to a place where we do not even really know the intentions of our hearts, do we? We think we do, but sometimes we do not. The Holy Spirit will reveal that to you: that your motivation, your intention, is not pure. It comes like a sharp sword and slices between the spirit and the soul. But it is so liberating to allow the Holy Spirit to do that, to bring you to that place.

And it goes on to say, "Piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight." Keep that in mind. Do not try to play games with the Lord. You are just fooling yourself if you do that. He knows us through and through. But remember, He still loves us even though He knows us through and through. And He is working toward our good. "But all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." The Holy Spirit uses the Word; He uses the rhema—that is the Greek word for that living word—to direct us in this matter of spiritual exercise.

Again, our part is very simple in a way. It is just to cooperate by responding when He gives us light or when He gives us illumination regarding any issue in our lives. A very important piece of this is that it requires having a clear conscience before the Lord. We have to have a clear conscience because if we do not, we are not going to understand, we are not going to hear; there is going to be a blockage there. So, we have to keep ourselves, as it were, on the altar. Constantly, constantly keep us on the altar, and the trainer, the Holy Spirit, will use the Word as a sword to do that dividing, to do that sifting that will bring about that growing unto godliness. You know, James 1:21 says this: "Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls."

The Necessity of Spiritual Exercise

Also, in I Peter, these verses align with the former verse. I Peter 2:1-2, say, "Therefore, putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation." Grow in respect to salvation. How essential the Word is in this training unto godliness. And what does it have as its end? The end is the dealing with the self-life and the forming of the character of Christ in us. Our brother spoke about that last week, and often referred to it. In II Timothy 3:16-17, I bet a lot of you could quote this: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." That is the work of the Word of God, by the Holy Spirit, toward that end.

So, the reality is, apart from spiritual exercise, we cannot grow unto maturity. But remember this: we have a throne of grace to come to, that we may find mercy and grace in time of need. And when is that time of need? It is always, brothers and sisters. It is not just when you think you need it, it is always. Do not let your guard down, we always need the grace of God. And Mac spoke on these verses recently. What wonderful messages those were! It says in Titus 2:11-12, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing…." You can translate the word instructing as "training"—"us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age." The grace of God will enable us to do that. Praise the Lord for that!

The Call to Endurance and Faithfulness in Christ (II Timothy 2:1-13)

Well, let us move on to the fourth trustworthy statement. We will probably camp here a little bit. Do not get scared, though. The last two I am going to move through quickly. So, the fourth one, II Timothy 2: 1-13. I am just going to kind of peruse over this a little bit.

The Call to Suffer and Strength in Grace

It begins with this: Paul, speaking to his son in the faith, says, "You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." I like how Weymouth has a footnote for this. He says, "Be ever gaining fresh strength from the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Paul continues in verse two, "And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also." Do you sense Paul's urgency here? This is II Timothy. Paul does not have a lot of time left, and he knows it. He wants to pass that torch on to those who are faithful to the Lord. That is what he wants to do here. So, he is speaking to his son in the faith. He is counting on him, Timothy, to carry this out, and of course, Titus.

So, he says in verse three, "Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus." We mentioned in the previous trustworthy statement how you have to have a mind to suffer. He says, "Suffer hardship with me." And then in verse four, "No soldier in

active service entangles himself." That word "entangles" means to entwine, like in a spider web, to become mutually involved. "No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life," because he does not want to be bogged down, "so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier."

The Life of a Soldier

A major characteristic of a soldier is that his life—now, I was not in the military, but I learned this from my dad, who was in the army—the soldier realizes his life is not his own. It is not his own. He becomes the property of the military. We find this interesting verse in I Corinthians 6:19-20, "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you." Is that not wonderful? The Holy Spirit is in you. "Whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body." So that is the reality for us as Christians. We have been bought. We are not our own. We do not belong to ourselves anymore. We are His property.

But another interesting thing about soldiers is that everything in the soldier's life and circumstances is arranged and ordered for him. They are arranged and ordered for him. Who his superior officer is, who his fellow soldiers are, his base camp, and the tasks that he is to carry out are all arranged for him. And that is what the Holy Spirit is doing in the life of believers. He is arranging our circumstances, exactly fitted for you personally. My circumstances are not your circumstances and vice versa. The Lord knows us so well. He knows the circumstances He needs to put us through so that we can be brought to maturity. And He is arranging your circumstances; that is the work of the cross in the life of the believer.

Go on to verse five. It says, "And also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules." There are stories of runners who have tried to use shortcuts in races and found themselves disqualified because they did so. I read about that recently in the Mexico City Marathon, if any of you are familiar with it. I am not, but I just happened to come across this article. They said that there have been as many as 11,000 runners that have been disqualified from that marathon. Can you imagine? Now that is over a decade, but 11,000 have taken shortcuts to try to win that race.

I could tell a story about this boy who lived near us years ago. He was friends with our boys, and he was so competitive, this kid, that he would do anything to try to win. I remember he was playing in a golf tournament with one of my sons. If you know much about golf, they were on the green getting ready to putt. I was watching my son, but I also looked over at this boy. And while one of the boys was putting, this boy I am talking about was over to the side, and he is looking all around to see if anyone is watching, and he uses his foot to move his ball a little bit toward the hole. And I looked at that, and I wanted to say, "you are cheating." I knew this boy, I had played with him once, and he cheated. We were not competing, not playing for money, and he was not even half my

age, but he was cheating. If you do not play according to the rules, you can be disqualified.

The Danger of Becoming an Enemy of the Cross

There are no shortcuts to be used in this matter of spiritual exercise. That is what I want to emphasize. We must run the race according to the way God has designed for us. I want to look at a couple of verses in Philippians to point this out a little more. In Philippians 3:14-18. This is Paul speaking. What a heart our brother had! He says, "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as are perfect."—really, that word means mature—"Have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; however, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained. 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."

And Paul is talking here about believers. He is not talking about unbelievers here, and he is weeping over these ones. Why? Because it says. "That they are enemies of the cross of Christ." It is very possible for us as believers to become enemies of the cross. How often we have tried to sidestep the cross. I know I have. There have been things that have come into my life, and I just want to push them away. I want to get away from them. I have had bosses that made me want to quit my job. It was so hard being under them. But that is part of enduring; that is part of that discipline unto godliness. When you are willing to remain under something difficult, which the Lord brings into your life, and you do not try to run away from it. It brings about endurance; it brings about patience in your life if you endure through it by the grace of God.

And the sad thing too is when we try to sidestep the cross, it becomes a spiritual loss to the Lord. It is a spiritual loss to the Lord and obviously to us too, if we are not willing to lay down our lives. Again, the cross is absolutely necessary. Why? Because it is needed to deal with the old man in the flesh. Our Lord said in Luke 14:27, "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple." Those are strong, serious words, but very true.

The Salvation of the Soul

There is some good news here, not that any of the prior is not, but this takes a little pressure off. II Timthy 2:6 says, "The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops." I remember when Jim shared recently, he talked about gardening and what he had to do to care for those plants. I thought of that when I read this verse and how it requires such hard work, diligence, and patience to get the fruit of the crop. Thus, in this pursuit of godliness, we find from this verse that the overcomer will receive his share of the prize according to the measure of fruit produced. That is wonderful. That is good news! When you go through something and allow yourself to

take up the cross and persevere, there will be fruit that comes out of that, and there will be a prize for it one day.

Let me go on to verse seven. He says, “Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.” All of the examples here that we spoke of require commitment, diligence, labor; they require striving, endurance and patience, do they not? Thus, why the mercy and grace of God is so essential. Paul continues in verse eight, “Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel, for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned.” Listen to what he says: “For this reason I endure all things.” Things for my sake? No, he says, “For the sake of those who are chosen, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory.” That is wonderful. For the sake of those who are chosen that they may obtain salvation.

Now the question is, what? What salvation is he talking about here? He is not talking about initial salvation; he is not talking about coming to the Lord for the first time and being born again. What he is talking about is this: Hebrews 10:39 says, “But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.” He is talking about the salvation of the soul here. That is one of the things Paul is striving and laboring for, so that his fellow believers can obtain the salvation of the soul.

I would like to read I Peter 1:3-9 but I am not going to; we do not have time. However, I will point out that in verse nine, Peter says, “Obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.” And that equates to Hebrews 2:10, which says, “For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory.” To bring many sons to glory because that is what he said up there, is it not? He said that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory.

The Seriousness of the Warnings in the Book of Hebrews

Now I want to hop into Hebrews a little bit, but I am not going to. We are really out of time. I was going to point out the fact that the whole letter speaks about great salvation. That great salvation, in the context of that verse, as well as that whole epistle, has to do with the salvation of the soul. That letter is a very relevant and important message to the believer about gaining that glory, gaining that salvation of the soul. That is all I want to say about that, because we are about out of time.

But I will say this, the salvation of the soul is so important to the Lord. How do we know that? It is because in that epistle to the Hebrews, there are five major warnings. You are only going to make a major warning to someone about something that is very important because there is something that could be potentially lost. This bringing about of the salvation of the soul is very important because it will qualify the believer to be able to co-reign with Christ in the kingdom. That is why it is so important. In Revelation 3:21, the Lord speaking, He says: “'He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down

with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne." That is what the Lord wants for us. He wants us to sit down on that throne with Him in the age to come and to reign and rule with Him. He is working toward that. He does not want to sit on that throne alone. He wants a companion. He wants that bride to be with Him.

Now we come to II Timothy 2:11, where it talks about the trustworthy statement. These next few verses come alongside what we just talked about. In verse eleven, it says, "It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him." That is such a paradox of the Christian life. We have to die to get life. And we know that death is speaking about death to the self life, right? That is what it is speaking about there. Then it says in verse twelve, "If we endure," or continue, "we shall also reign with Him." We see the type of this in Adam and Eve. When God created Adam, He wanted to give Adam dominion over this earth. But He did not want Adam to reign or have dominion alone, so He created Eve out of the side of Adam so they could reign together. That is such a perfect picture of Christ and the Church. The Church came out of His side. Why? For the purpose that they could reign with Him. That is the major purpose of man: to become that helpmeet with the Lord Jesus. And that is going to continue through the ages of ages, too, but in particular the coming age of the millennium.

So, verse twelve goes on to say, "If we deny," or we could say refuse, "If we deny Him, He also will deny us." Deny us of what? Salvation? No, it is not salvation. He will deny us the opportunity to reign with Him if we deny Him. If we do not follow Him, we will miss that opportunity to reign with Him. It is very serious to the Lord. These are serious words. Paul Bilheimer's book called "Destined for the Throne," I strongly recommend you read that if you have not. He said, "now is the preparatory training ground for the coming age, and the ages to come." We are in the school of Christ. We are in training now, and I will leave it at that. In verse thirteen, Paul says, "If we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself." He remains faithful. That brings such comfort to my soul to know He remains faithful to the end. Hudson Taylor said this: "It is not by trying to be faithful, but by looking to the faithful One that we win the victory." Big difference, is it not? Big difference.

According to His Mercy and the Hope of Eternal Life (Titus 3:3-8)

Well, let us go to the last one in Titus 3: 3-8. This is going to remind you of the first trustworthy statement that Paul gave in I Timothy 1:13. But here he is speaking about all of us. He is bringing us into that same picture that he painted for himself. He says, "For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy." Here it is again: love, mercy. "By the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

This is a trustworthy statement, and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men."

So here we come. We come full circle back to the mercy and grace of God, which flow out of His love for us. Here we find Paul wants to point out again the proper response to the love, mercy, and grace of God. It ought to stir us up to be engaged in good deeds. What good deeds? The good deeds that were prepared beforehand for us. That is Ephesians 2:10. And these are simply byproducts of your spiritual exercise. That is all that is. And we see the result of this, we already talked about it, we will become co-heirs with Christ. Romans 8:16-17; our brother went through this when he was in chapter 8, says, "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him." That is speaking about being an heir of Christ there, that latter part of that. If indeed we suffer with Him, if indeed we go on in this matter of discipline or exercise unto godliness, we will become that companion of His that it speaks of in the Scriptures.

Conclusion

Well, I would like to end with this one word from Watchman Nee. I get the Watchman Nee daily devotional from CFP, and this one came within the last few days. I am just going to read a little bit of it. It is actually a big paragraph, so I chopped it up because I did not want to read the whole thing. But he said this: "May we be runners who run the race to the end, even if during the running we may be wounded, having from the hands of men suffered opposition, misunderstanding, and rejection. We must stir up our spirit and keep on running." Why? For the sake of the Lord Jesus. For the sake of the Lord Jesus.

Lord, we commit this word back to You, to do with it what You want. Lord, we know that apart from You, we can do nothing. But we look to You because You are the Faithful One. And we know that we can come to that throne of grace to receive mercy and grace in time of need, Lord. And we know it is more Your desire than ours, that we would cross the finish line; that we would be brought to that place where Your character is formed in us, Lord, that we could be vessels fit and useful for You. So, we commit ourselves back to You, Lord, and thank You for Your great love, Your mercy, and Your grace toward us. And we pray in Your precious name. Amen.

Let Us Press on Toward Maturity 1

Introduction 1
Burden: Press On to Maturity 1

Message of Mercy 2
Strength and Mercy 2
Foremost of Sinners 2
Attitude of Gratitude 3

Aspiring to Exercise Oversight (I Timothy 3:1) 3

Discipline and Growth in Christian Life (I Timothy 4:7-10) 4
Discipline Onto Godliness 4
The Holy Spirit as Our Trainer 5
Enduring Pain for Growth 6
The Word of God and the Cross 6
The Necessity of Spiritual Exercise 8

The Call to Endurance and Faithfulness in Christ (II Timothy 2:1-13) 8
The Call to Suffer and Strength in Grace 8
The Life of a Soldier 9
The Danger of Becoming an Enemy of the Cross 10
The Salvation of the Soul 10
The Seriousness of the Warnings in the Book of Hebrews 11

According to His Mercy and the Hope of Eternal Life (Titus 3:3-8) 12

Conclusion 13

Speaker	Sheridan, Steve
Venue	Richmond, Virginia, US
Date	November 30th, 2025
Link	https://christiantestimonyministry.com/item/let-us-press-on-toward-maturity
Bible	NASB77