

Progress

Joe Slater

A major corporation once used the advertising slogan, "Progress is our most important product." Genuine progress is greatly to be desired! We want our children to progress – to grow and develop. And what employee wants to remain at entry level? No, we want to advance!

We ought to strive for spiritual progress, too. Paul urged Timothy, "*Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all*" (1 Timothy 4:15). The same apostle, though he wanted to depart and be with Christ, said, "*I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith*" (Philippians 1:25). Each of us should look in the mirror and ask, "Am I progressing? Am I more devout, loving, prayerful, kind, and knowledgeable than I was at this time last year?"

Much of what passes for progress, however, takes us backward. Self-styled "progressives" have convinced those in power to jettison God's standards of morality in the name of "progress." So now we have same-sex "marriage," rampant fornication, dreadful diseases, wholesale slaughter of the unborn, and incompetent parents feeding their children dangerous hormones to prevent them from becoming what God designed them to be. Progress? Certainly not!

The church has not escaped unscathed. Influential voices direly warn that we will fade into oblivion unless we jump onto the "progressive" bandwagon. Tragically, whole congregations have fallen for the siren song. Gender roles, worship, and yes, even morality (marriage/divorce/remarriage, LGBTQ+) are up for grabs.

When one is on the wrong road, progress requires returning to the right road. Apostasy is not progress!

Pay Attention To The Vital

Eastern Airlines Flight 401 lifted off in New York on the evening of December 20, 1972 on its way toward Miami, Florida. It almost made it to its destination, but then when it comes to airplanes you don't want to "almost" make it. The plane went down in the Florida Everglades killing 101 people (75 others survived).

To make matters worse, when investigators began digging through the cause of the crash they determined that as the plane was approaching Miami the co-pilot noticed that the landing gear indicator light was not working. When he was not able to replace the bulb the pilot decided to assist him. While they were focused on a light bulb the plane went down (www.thisdayinaviation.com).

One of the greatest dangers we can fall prey to is to focus on something of relatively minor importance while ignoring the things that are vital. The Pharisees made this mistake every day. Jesus described them as blind, saying that they "strain out a gnat and swallow a camel" (Matthew 23:24).

It is crucial that we be able to discern between the trivial and the vital. Make the best use of your time and talents. Invest in the vital, focusing on anything less may lead to disaster.

--David Bragg (via *Bulletin Gold*)

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If you want something so much that you are not happy without it, you will not be happy with it!

--Bill Boyd (via Facebook)

Joy Unspeakable

Have you ever had a joy so heartfelt that you burst into song? A joy so deep that you felt there was no way you could express your thanksgiving to God except to sing? Paul and Silas did.

"But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns unto God..." Where were Paul and Silas? Acts 16:23 tells us they were in prison. Not only were they in prison with their feet held fast in stocks, but the magistrates had torn their garments off them and had beaten them with many stripes.

Can you imagine sitting in a cold and dank Roman prison with your feet in stocks and blood sliding down your back? The pain in your back would be bad enough to make you sick to your stomach. Your body might be in shock. What would you be doing if you had just been beaten and thrown into prison?

Paul and Silas were praying and singing praises to God loudly enough that the other prisoners could hear them. Might this cause them to receive a worse punishment? That didn't frighten them because their trust was in God, and God rescued them. An earthquake shook the prison, the stocks holding them loosened, and the prison doors were opened.

Paul and Silas had a joy buried so deeply in their hearts that they rejoiced no matter the circumstances that beset them. That joy was based on their faith in Jesus Christ, their obedience to Him, and the promises He had given them.

Like Paul and Silas, may we have such great joy in the spiritual blessings that we have in Christ that we have to tell others. Our reason is the joy unspeakable we feel because of our belief in Christ.

--Donna Wittlif (Denver, CO)

Whom not having seen ye love; on whom, though how ye see him not, ye rejoice greatly with joy inexpressible and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8)