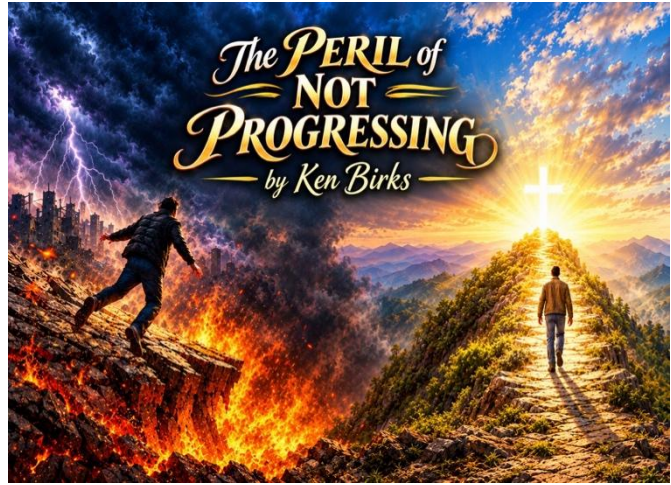


The Peril of Not Progressing

By Ken Birks, Pastor, Teacher, Author

As we look to the future, the hour before us is not merely challenging, it is prophetic in its intensity and divine in its purpose. We are entering a season in which the foundations of every believer will be tested, sifted, and proven.¹ Before the second coming of Jesus, there is a shaking coming that will not be gentle or optional; it will expose what is genuine and reveal what is fragile.



The Spirit of God is sounding an alarm across the Church, calling us out of casual faith and into holy vigilance. This is not a time to assume that past devotion guarantees future endurance. The peril of not progressing—of remaining spiritually stagnant while deception increases—has never been greater. The Scriptures warn that before Christ's return, a great falling away will unfold, and only those deeply rooted in truth, holiness, and the fear of the Lord will stand. We must awaken now, for the days ahead will demand a faith that is anchored, tested, and unwavering.

We are moving into a spiritual climate that will test the foundations of our faith. This hour calls for seriousness, and the dangers before us are real. Hardships will press against the soul, temptations will grow more subtle, and the winds of deception will seek to loosen the grip of many who once stood firmly in Christ. Now is not the time to drift, sleep, or assume that yesterday's devotion will carry us through tomorrow's shaking.

The Scriptures plainly warn that before Christ's return, a great falling away will occur—a sobering departure from the faith by those who heed another voice. Speaking of the coming Day of the Lord, Paul pleads with the Thessalonians, "*Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come **unless the falling away comes first**, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.*" And to Timothy, he gives this

¹ Hebrews 12:26-27

urgent warning: *"Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons."*

We cannot afford to ignore that we are called to understand that in such an hour, a shallow view of God will not be enough. It will take more than a comforting awareness of His goodness to stand when the pressure intensifies; we must also recover a holy understanding of His severity. We need to know the tenderness of His mercy, but we must also tremble before the weight of His holiness. God's goodness draws us near, but His severity teaches us not to play carelessly with sin, compromise, deception, or unbelief. To endure what is coming, the Church must be rooted in the full counsel of God—not merely the promises that comfort us, but the warnings that awaken us.

We must hear Paul's words to the Romans repeatedly with fresh seriousness. He does not present God's goodness as permission to presume, nor God's severity as a reason to despair. Rather, he presents both as a holy summons to continue faithfully in Christ. *"For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. Therefore, consider God's goodness and severity: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off."*²

These are not words meant to crush the sincere believer, but to awaken the complacent, steady the wavering, and call the Church back to reverent endurance. Now is the time to examine our hearts, cling to Christ, and continue in His goodness.

In this hour in the Church's history, we are called to embrace a prophetic, divine understanding of both God's goodness and His severity. For too long, people have proclaimed God's goodness without the necessary weight of His holiness, judgment, and righteous warnings. As a result, many have embraced a message of comfort without conviction, mercy without repentance, and grace without the fear of the Lord. Some have even ceased to believe in the reality of hell and eternal judgment, as though the love of God cancels the justice of God.

However, Scripture does not permit us to divide what God has joined together. His goodness is meant to lead us to repentance, and His severity is meant to awaken us from presumption. In this urgent hour, the Church must again behold God as He has revealed Himself: merciful, holy, patient, righteous, and full of compassion, and yet faithful to judge all that opposes His truth.

² Romans 11:22

Let us remember that the truth about eternal judgment is not a peripheral doctrine; it is an elementary truth that must be firmly established in our lives if we are to mature and progress in the Lord. We cannot move on to spiritual maturity while neglecting the foundations God Himself has laid. The writer of Hebrews speaks with sobering clarity when he says, *"Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame."*³

In this passage, the warning is not casual, and the foundation is not optional. Eternal judgment must be restored to its rightful place in the Church's conscience, not to produce fear without hope, but to awaken holy reverence, sober endurance, and a deeper clinging to Christ.

In light of Hebrews six, the writer of the book of Hebrews makes it even more clear when he says in a later chapter, *"For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries."*⁴ The writer of Hebrews meant that it is terrifying to come under God's direct judgment after knowingly rejecting His truth and despising Christ's sacrifice. The warning is not aimed at honest believers who struggle, repent, and cling to Jesus; it is aimed at willful, hardened believers who reject Christ after receiving and walking in the knowledge of the truth.

When the writer of Hebrews declares, *"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,"*⁵ he is not offering poetic drama—he is sounding an alarm that shakes the soul. In an age where the doctrine of eternal security is often reduced to a casual slogan, we must recover the gravity of what Scripture actually teaches. The warning is not aimed at sincere believers who stumble, battle sinful habits, or experience seasons of weakness. It is aimed at something far more sobering: a person who has genuinely tasted salvation, encountered the power of the Holy

³ Hebrews 6:1-6

⁴ Hebrews 10:26-27

⁵ Hebrews 10:30-31

Spirit, walked in the reality of Christ—and then willfully turns away. This is not the story of a struggling Christian. It is the tragedy of one who slowly drifts, then deliberately rejects, and ultimately disowns the very Lord who redeemed them. It is the chilling moment when a heart once warmed by grace is hardened under deception—so hardened that the resurrected Christ is no longer believed, cherished, or confessed.

I have often told my Bible students that I genuinely fear backsliding—not out of superstition, but because I know what happens to a heart that drifts from Christ. If I were to turn away, I would open myself to the lies, treachery, and seduction of Satan in a way that could harden me beyond recognition. I could become so deceived, so spiritually numb, so blinded by darkness, that I might eventually deny—or even disown—the very Christ who saved me. That is no exaggeration; it is Scripture's sober warning. When a person rejects truth long enough, deception does not merely whisper—it takes over. And that reality keeps me trembling before God with a holy fear that guards my soul.

Scripture does not soften this reality. It confronts us with it. To disown Christ is not merely to fall into sin; it is to trample the Son of God underfoot, to treat His blood as common, to insult and blaspheme the Holy Spirit of grace, for which there is no forgiveness.⁶ The sobering truth is this: Jesus will not disown us until we disown Him first. He remains faithful—until we reject Him with finality.

The Scriptures Speak with Terrifying Clarity:

Matthew 10:33 *But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.*

2 Timothy 2:12 (NIV) *If we endure, we will also reign with Him. If we disown Him, He will also disown us.*

Hebrews 10:26–27 *If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.*

Hebrews 10:29–31 *Of how much worse punishment... will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant... a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? ... 'The LORD will judge His people.' It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

⁶ Mark 3:28-29

These are not idle threats. They are divine warnings meant to awaken us from spiritual complacency. They remind us that salvation is not a casual accessory—it is a covenant sealed in blood. And covenants can be honored or betrayed.

The hour's urgency demands that we examine ourselves with trembling humility. Are we drifting? Are we entertaining deception? Are we treating grace lightly? The living God is not passive. He is holy. He is just. He calls His people to remain faithful, steadfast, and anchored in Christ with a devotion that cannot be shaken. This season is not for casual Christianity. It is a time for holy sobriety, unyielding loyalty, and Spirit-empowered perseverance.

When the writer of Hebrews says, *"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,"*⁷ he is not describing the reverent fear of a faithful child running into the arms of the Father; he is describing the terror of the unrepentant soul who has rejected the only sacrifice that can save. To fall into God's hands apart from Christ is to face His holiness without mercy, His justice without covering, and His judgment without excuse. The living God is not silent, powerless, or indifferent. He is holy, righteous, and faithful to judge sin. Therefore, this warning is meant to awaken us from spiritual carelessness and drive us deeper into Christ, where mercy is found, forgiveness is offered, and condemnation is removed, unless we become so deceived that we disown Christ after all He has done for us. In Peter's second epistle, he describes a person who has disowned Christ quite aptly. He says, *"it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness."*

2 Peter 2:20-21 *"For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it and turn from the holy commandment delivered to them."*

Now that we understand the peril of not progressing, let's look at what Jesus said about the foundational truth of "Eternal Judgment and Hell." Jesus Himself said more about Hell and Eternal Judgment than anyone. He warned plainly about hell, reminding us that rejecting God's mercy leaves a person facing God's justice. It helps to know what Scripture really says about hell.

Jesus referred to hell as a real place when He said, *"Don't fear those who kill the body, rather fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell."*⁸ In numerous

⁷ Hebrews 10:31

⁸ Matthew 10:28, 5:29-30, 23:15, 33, Luke 10:15, 16:23

parables, Jesus clearly and emphatically taught of a final judgment and the separation of the righteous from the unrighteous. The unrighteous will be condemned to a place of blazing fire and utter darkness, where they will weep and gnash their teeth.⁹ Jesus called this place "the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels."¹⁰ Hell is not a place where people are tormented by the devil; it is where those who reject God will suffer the same fate as the devil and his demons. It is the place of final judgment.

Jesus also spoke of hell as "eternal fire" and "eternal punishment."¹¹ In Matthew 25:46, the same word—eternal—describes both the righteous one's eternal life and the unrighteous one's eternal punishment in hell. According to Jesus, hell will be eternal.

Hell is more terrible than we can imagine. The images of fire, darkness, the weeping and gnashing of teeth, and being cut into pieces speak of the horror of hell.¹²

Are these vivid images of hell Jesus' literal or figurative? If they are meant to be figurative, the imagery points beyond what human language can convey. In other words, hell—if not a literal fire and literal darkness—is immeasurably worse than those images and inexpressibly worse than we can even imagine or describe. As heaven is more wonderful than our finite minds can comprehend, hell is more horrible than we can comprehend.

In light of these sobering truths, the call before us is unmistakable: we must continue in Christ with holy resolve. Scripture's warnings are not meant to crush the sincere believer but to rescue the drifting, steady the wavering, and awaken the complacent. God's goodness invites us near, but His severity keeps us from treating His grace lightly. Eternal judgment is not a doctrine to fearfully avoid—it is a foundation upon which mature faith is built. Ignoring it weakens the very structure of our spiritual endurance.

The peril of not progressing is real, but so is the promise of preservation for those who cling to Christ with reverent perseverance. Now is the time to strengthen what remains,¹³ deepen our roots, cast off every weight, and run the race set before us with endurance. The shaking will come—but those who remain in His goodness will

⁹ Matthew. 13:24-30, 36-43, 47-50; 22:1-14; 25:14-46

¹⁰ Matthew 25:4

¹¹ Matthew 25:4, Matthew 25:46

¹² Matthew 25:41, Matthew 8:12, 22:13, 26:30, Matthew 8:12, 13:42, 50, 22:13, 24:51, 25:30, Luke 13:28

¹³ Revelation 3:2

stand unshaken. Let us therefore return to the fear of the Lord, embrace the full counsel of God, and press forward with urgency, sobriety, and unwavering devotion until the Day of Christ dawns.

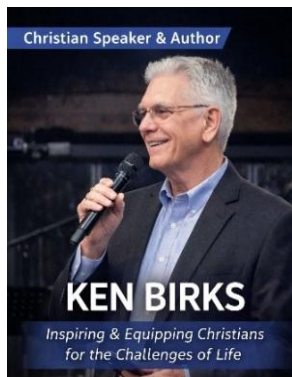
2 Corinthians 7:1 *Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

Call to Action

Examine your spiritual foundation daily and intentionally deepen your devotion to Christ by asking God to reveal where you drift, compromise, or presume.

About Ken Birks

Ken Birks has walked with God through seasons of quiet wonder, deep refining, and unexpected grace—journeys that have shaped both his faith and voice. From early moments of sensing God's nearness to years of learning to listen more closely, Ken has discovered that the Lord often speaks in whispers, rhythms, and poetic impressions.



Out of those sacred encounters came a desire to write — not to impress, but to invite. To invite others into the same stillness, clarity, and holy encouragement that have carried them through life's valleys and mountaintops. His devotional poetry and other writings flow from a heart that has wrestled, worshiped, and been transformed by God's presence.

Today, Ken writes to help fellow believers pause, breathe, and rediscover the treasures God longs to place within them. Ken's hope is simple: that every reader will feel the Father's nearness, hear His voice more clearly, and walk with renewed courage into the calling He has lovingly prepared.

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