

Are You Progressive?

Introduction. The wise man warned about those who are “given to change” (Proverbs 24:21). These are ones who want change for the sake of change. Sometimes change is good and necessary, but other times it is not. However, change is inherently part of progressivism — the idea that we must continue to move forward and not remain as or where we were. Let’s look at progressivism in religion — what it is and why it is dangerous.

I. What Is “Progressive”?

- A. When we hear people talk about progressivism, it is usually in the realm of politics; yet it also appears in religion. Webster defines progressive as “making use of or interested in new ideas, findings, or opportunities.” The root word is progress. This necessarily suggests change.
- B. There are times when change is necessary and we have to progress. However, for the progressive, we do not just change when necessary because change is always necessary. In fact, a preacher at a local community church, in a lesson on “Progressive Christianity,” said, “To not move forward is to resist God.” Again, sometimes progress is good; yet the Bible also warns that some progress is not.

II. The Need For Progress

- A. Paul told Timothy that his “progress” (advancement) was to be “evident to all” (1 Timothy 4:15). Timothy was to grow and improve in his service to God.
- B. The New Testament mentions certain ways in which we need to strive to progress (or grow and improve):
 - 1. In our knowledge (1 Thessalonians 4:1; 1 Timothy 4:13, 16).
 - 2. In our maturity (John 13:34-35; 15:5-8; 21:15-19).
 - 3. In our practice of prayer (Luke 11:1; Romans 8:26).
 - 4. In our example before others (1 Timothy 4:12, 15).
- C. Christians are to progress in the areas in which progress is commended in the New Testament.

III. Not All Progress Is Good

- A. However, while there is a type of progress that is good and necessary, progressivism promotes changes as necessary and ultimately good that are contrary to God’s revealed word.
- B. Consider some types of progress that Christians must avoid:
 - 1. We must not progress in sin.
 - a) Paul warned Timothy of the progressive nature of sin (2 Timothy 3:13). Therefore, we work to remove sin from our lives (1 John 2:1).
 - b) We strive to “be perfect” (Matthew 5:48) rather than being content to “continue in sin” (Romans 6:1-2) and, therefore, progress in it.
 - 2. We must not progress beyond the doctrine of Christ.
 - a) John spoke of those who “transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ” (2 John 9). We are to “hold fast the form of sound words” (2 Timothy 1:13) rather than progressing beyond God’s revealed will.

- b) We need authority for all that we say and do (Matthew 7:21-23; Colossians 3:17).
- 3. We must not progress in expanding fellowship beyond what God allows.
 - a) Paul rebuked the Corinthians for tolerating and becoming “arrogant” about the fact that they refused to discipline one among them who continued in sin (1 Corinthians 5:1-2).
 - b) It is important that we work to “preserve the unity of the Spirit” (Ephesians 4:3), but that does not mean we tolerate sin and error (1 Corinthians 5:11). John said we must “not receive” a false teacher or “give him a greeting” (2 John 10). Yet many want to progress beyond these fellowship rules.
- 4. We must not progress in becoming more tolerant than God.
 - a) The Lord commended the church in Ephesus because they hated sin (Revelation 2:6). The church in Pergamum was rebuked for allowing those who “hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans” to remain among them (Revelation 2:15-16).
 - b) It is certainly true that all are welcome to come to God, but it must be on His conditions (Acts 10:34-35). Some progress so far in their tolerance that they become more accepting than God. Progressivism in religion either permits or promotes these types of “progress.”

Conclusion. Many people like change. They do not like the fact that the New Testament contains a fixed, unchanging pattern. While we must always seek to grow, we need to remember that progressivism is destructive so that we can guard against it and warn others about it.

Those who promote “progressive Christianity” will embrace religious pluralism and come to believe that we cannot warn against anyone going to Hell. The reason why they cannot teach that anyone is going to Hell is because they falsely equate God’s love with salvation.

We know that God loves everyone (John 3:16), yet not all will be saved (Matthew 7:13-14). Peter made it clear that “there is salvation in no one” other than Christ (Acts 4:12). Those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel will be lost (2 Thessalonians 1:8). Our society may be growing more religiously diverse, but that does not change what the Bible has said.