

Press Toward the Mark



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The apostle said *Philippians 3:14* “*I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;*” because we strive to stay on the path that leads to God’s kingdom. Heaven is the prize that is given to every believer who continues to trust on the Blood of Christ to the end of their life. It is God’s divine promise and our living hope; *2 Timothy 2:12* “*If we endure, We shall also reign with Him.*”

Three things are needed to reach that goal—**1** *Philippians 2:5* “*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.*” That is the goal concerning our spiritual condition or mental attitude—learning each day to walk humbly that day as Jesus did with the same faithful trust on God. *1 John 2:6* “*He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.*”

2 knowing God personally—it is allowing God to remove self’s control in our heart, and replacing it with the Spirit’s control. We are to know that God is much superior—more loving, merciful, and powerful than any human being—*John 17:3* “*This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*”

3 conducting our life in full obedience to New Testament teaching—1, conformed to the attitude of Christ; 2, knowing God personally; 3, being obedient to His Word by the power of the Spirit. If our inward attitude is not chang-

ing to what God wants it to be, our outward religious appearance is of no value whatever.

To just begin the Christian life, but with no application of Scripture, is like providing one meal for a child, but giving no further nourishment. God wants us to *grow* spiritually by staying connected to the source of growth—Jesus Christ. *John 15:4* “*Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.*”

God is patient and He will work with us until our faith in Him is perfected—if we want it perfected. *Matthew 5:48* “*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*” Perfection of our faith in God means we have not divided our faith between something else and God. Self must be taken out of our heart so that the Spirit can live in our heart.

Each day we trust God for good health, and not depend on special foods, exercise, climate, or anything else. Sensible eating and normal exercise are for a well person—not to make a sick person well. We are healed through repentance, faith, and trust on the power of God through the Blood of Christ. Walking by faith each day is not difficult, because God is by our side to supply everything we need. *Ephesians 4:1-2* “*I beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love.*”

If we are committed to follow New Testament teaching, we will be going in the right direction. Remaining on that path of trust in God, keeps us heading toward the goal, and bearing spiritual fruit. *John 15:8* “*Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.*”

Our goal is to have God work in our heart, and allow Him to bring change in our attitudes.

If we are willing to believe, then we are promised to receive the gift—the gift of His Spirit Who enables us to obey New Testament teaching. This change begins when we give our heart to God.

Religion is worthless unless there is a real conversion of heart. When the true gospel of Christ is heard, and a real commitment to Him is made, that begins our journey toward the goal. *Matthew 18:3* “*Unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.*”

The believer in Christ learns to trust God in faith for finances—as well as depending on Him for health, healing, protection, and everything else. Financial trials are not pleasant, but much can be learned from them. Self and pride are the basis of money problems. If a person has a guaranteed income, self always depends on that income. It is human nature to depend on human sources—but it is the divine nature to depend on divine sources—daily.

If finances are lacking, insufficient, uncertain, or short, the carnal mind worries and plans how to get more. Lacking money injures pride, but a money problem met right, eliminates pride right. At this point, our faith, dependence, and trust is to be on God alone.

As we continue to trust God, He will use the financial trial to strengthen and perfect our faith in Him. It will give us the opportunity to follow God’s Word on finances, and to prove that God is always faithful to His Word—*Philippians 4:19* “*My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*”

If we have a family to feed, but there is nothing in the house to feed them—that is a financial test and crisis. Nevertheless, God does not allow deliberate debt—we are not permitted to go into debt for food, clothing, or anything

else; nor are we permitted to buy anything on credit, or with a time-payment plan. *That is the world's way—not God's way.* Romans 13:8 “*Owe no man anything, but to love one another.*”

Satan tempts with a desire for expensive things, or to accumulate many possessions, but that is not what God says. Philippians 2:5 “*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.*” The apostle wrote 1 Timothy 6:8 “*If we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.*”

A low-paying job is a spiritually-valuable position, because *in* that position, we have the valuable opportunity to *trust God* in “*Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have.*”

Our goal is to respond scripturally to insults, injustices, and favoritism. If our life is truly committed to God, and someone says something that offends us, we are to follow the example of Jesus. He said nothing in reply and placed the matter in the Father's hands.

There are only two ways to response to insults—the carnal and the divine. Jesus said, Matthew 5:44-45 “*Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.*”

To pray for people who harm us, is totally opposite from the world—but we are to be conformed to that mind-set. We are *in* the world—not *of* the world. We do not seek revenge, but to forgive and forget instead. Romans 12:20-21 “*If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*”

We are to forgive from the heart and forget in our mind. The incident must *not affect* our relationship with that person—that is vastly dif-

ferent from the world. Christ *in* our heart enables us to *stay* apart from the world, and to pray for those who insult us.

The Scriptures do not permit us to resent anything. By the power of the Spirit, we are to forget what happened and forgive from the heart. Luke 6:36-37 “*Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.*” *That is the attitude we must have.*

Jesus would not have given us those commands, if they were not important. There is no merit in following them, but by doing them we give credible evidence that we are connected to the Vine of spiritual nourishment. John 10:27 “*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.*”

Our one goal is to remain in union with Christ, and to meet the circumstances *of* life in the Scriptural way—as He said we *must* do—1 Peter 2:21 “*To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps*”—not the world's steps; *His* steps.

Our goal is to know the *will of God* by reading the *Word of God*. We are told 1 Peter 2:1 “*Rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.*” This is much different from our former attitude. It is a new life with a different goal. Philippians 2:5 “*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.*”

Jesus was a peacemaker—we are to be also, because 1 Peter 2:21 “*To this you were called.*” We are to *stop* arguments, not *start* them—but only with God's help. We are to do everything possible to bring about peace. Hebrews 12:14 “*Persistently strive for peace with all men, and for that growth in holiness apart from which no one will see the Lord.*”

Resentment will *defile* our conscience—it is a serious sin. Hebrews 12:15 “*See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.*” We are to do anything possible to bring peace between others. We should look for the *good* in people and *compliment* them—not criticize them or slander their character.

Instead of seeing the worst in them, we are to be praying for them; seeing the positive side; and asking God to bring change if that is needed. Satan makes it easy to use *words that wound* and our *tongue to offend*—without even being aware of it at times.

God's Word gives valuable advice—that no matter what has happened—whether it be an insult; an offense; an accusation, or a lie told about us—if we will meet it in a scriptural way, it will bring us nearer to the goal of every believer—1 being conformed to the image of Christ Philippians 2:5; 2 having a real knowledge of God John 17:3; 3 living in full obedience to the New Testament 1 John 2:6.

John 3:16 “*For God did so love the world, that His Son—the only begotten—He gave, that everyone who is believing in him may not perish, but may have [everlasting] life.*” To reach the finish line of our spiritual journey, we must every day, and with every situation, temptation, trial, and trouble—keep our eyes focused on Jesus Hebrews 12:2 “*The author and finisher of our faith.*”



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