

# Press toward the Prize!



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The apostle told us to 1 Corinthians 11:1 “*Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ;*” and that he had not learned everything God wanted him to know, Philippians 3:13 “*But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*”

We should want lessons from God on how to trust Him for things in this life. Even though we have learned many lessons and received many blessings from God, every day is another opportunity to trust Him for everything—from the beginning to the end of our Christian life.

All of our learning is to come from God alone—our spiritual light and strength; our physical health and protection; our financial needs; the peace and harmony of our home, at work, and every other necessity every day. We must say: *All my help is from Thee, O God.*

The apostle Paul said Philippians 3:7 “*What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things.*”

Nothing else had any value or importance to him except having a true knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. His one goal was to eliminate all working in the flesh and to live by faith in God. His only desire was to totally depend on the

divine power of God for everything pertaining to this life.

The apostle faced many serious trials, tests, troubles, and tribulations—to the point that he saw no light at the end of the tunnel. 2 Corinthians 1:8 “*For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, inasmuch that we despaired even of life: 9 But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead.*”

All this happened so that they would not trust in themselves, but learn to trust in God alone. The apostle wanted us to know this because all the trouble in our life—past, present, and future—results from depending on some thing, some plan, or some person or power besides God. Because of this human dependence tendency—we often forget the inheritance believers have through faith in Christ.

There is only one door by which we can walk through and collect our inheritance—it is through depending on the living God alone for everything in this life—and based on the value of the Blood He shed for us. The apostle wanted to Philippians 3:10 “*Know [Christ], and the power of his resurrection.*”

Every pathway marked out in the New Testament, leaves human power totally out of the picture—there is no room for anything but the divine power of God. The object of all teaching in Scripture is to separate us from human dependence and plans and to unite us to divine dependence and plans. Every command and example given has that same object in view.

The moment we obey the Word and meet things according to New Testament teaching, self is shut out—and it is the only way it can be shut out. When we try to fight our own battles in human strength; get back at our enemies; correct

injustices; use some worldly plan to obtain money; depend on drugs for healing; attempt to have peace in our home by some human way; or bring our loved ones to repentance—when we do that, we are rebelling against God and leaving Him out.

When we follow New Testament teaching, self is rejected. There is no room for self—only room for God. The teaching of the Word takes us over the Red Sea and into a huge wilderness concerning human help, where we have only God to depend on. Such an absence of human help makes us depend on God for divine help—to where we decide to depend on Him—just as the Israelites had to.

God was compelled to force them to depend on Him, because they would not have even thought of trusting Him, if they were not compelled to trust Him. Their spiritual condition hindered them from trusting God. They would rather have begged, borrowed, or even stolen what they needed, before they would depend on God in faith.

God revealed to the Israelites how He would supply their every need every day—and through that example—He showed the world that He is able to supply any need for anyone—even where there is no food, no water, or no human help anywhere. God showed His power and glory in revealing what He was to His people. For everyone’s benefit ever after, He led them into a wilderness where they were forced to trust in Him only—there was no alternate plan; no other option.

We have that same privilege today—the priceless privilege of trusting only on God by choice! That is the most marvelous privilege we will ever have, and the most important choice we will ever make. To trust God alone we first must have a clean heart through a real repentance—then we can trust God in faith.

All resentment, rebellion, and idolatry must be cleaned out of our heart before we can go to God in faith and trust Him for healing, protection, finances, or anything else. We do not have to wait forty years or forty days, as God forgives in a *moment*, if we will *repent*, and choose to trust on the precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. When we are forgiven, we are in a position to *trust* God in faith—not before.

All doubt and unbelief must be *out* of our heart, so that the spirit of love, power, and wisdom can take their place. 2 Timothy 1:7 “*For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.*” God is always ready to *cleanse* our heart—so we must be ready to *repent* before Him.

God *wants* to give us His gift of righteousness and have all doubt and fear removed. He *wants* to give us the ability to obey His Word. Romans 5:17 “*For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.*”

Everyone is born with an *idolatrous* and *rebellious* heart—without one speck of faith in God for anything—*that* is why there has to be a total conversion—we *then* are given a submissive spirit. God is waiting to *forgive* our sins when we are willing to let Him do it.

Ezekiel 36:25-26 “*I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. 26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.*”

After we admit to and confess our terrible spiritual condition, God's Holy Spirit begins to work in revealing the different *idols* in our heart and removing them. We will then be

in a position to trust on *God*—as Israel in the desert trusted Him.

This total trust on God as we press toward the prize is *not* a task but a *privilege*—although it may not *seem* to be at first. The easiest thing in the world is when we have someone *else* take care of a *task* for us—someone to do the entire job.

Likewise God is to take care of all the wrongs done to us; it is a command to *obey*, and a promise to *enjoy*. Romans 12:19-21 “*Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*”

This *Avenge not yourselves* is truly heart searching. If someone has harmed us; lied about us; ruined our reputation; slandered our name; insulted a loved one; or did a mean thing to us—doing *evil* to us for the *good* we did them—*that* will search our heart. We are very much tempted to get back; to complain; to start an argument; or decide to have *nothing* to do with them ever again.

Any *change* in our attitude toward anyone who has harmed us, is *wrong* in the sight of God, because that *coolness* is really *resentment*, and shows we have *not* forgiven them—whether we want to admit that or not. God does not allow us to treat the offending person any differently—no matter who that person may be.

Every command of the New Testament puts *self out of business*. We are *not* permitted to resent any *thing* or any *injury* from any *one*. No matter *what* they have said or done to us, we are to act toward them as if the offense *never* took place—and even if *their* attitude toward us is *still* unkind, rude, and offensive.

If our employer is unreasonable, fault-finding, or reduces our salary, we are *not* allowed to

resent that and must treat them as if they were always *considerate*. Romans 12:19 “*Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves,*” totally shuts *self* out—no human plan is allowed. God's assignment to us: *Leave these matters to Me!*

When we are wronged, offended, insulted, or slighted, the devil wants us to say—*I am just waiting when they get what is coming to them*—but that is *not* what Jesus tells us to do—He says to Luke 6:28 “*Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.*” We get out of the way and let *God* handle the situation because “*Vengeance is mine; I will repay,*” God says Romans 12:19.

No matter *what* the *offense*; *who* did the wrong; or *how unjust* the treatment—we must place the *wrong* in the hands of the *Righteous Judge*. *That* is what it means to *trust only on God*; *That* is pressing toward the prize of the high calling of God. *This* is how we *finish* the race and *keep* the faith; 2 Timothy 4:8 “*Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day.*”

We must get rid of all *human* plans and power to change attitudes that people have toward us. When we reject all plans and ways and attitudes of self; when we stop using *words* to get back at people; when our last bridge back to the world is *burned*; and a final stand to trust on God alone is taken, He will begin to work and will exalt us in His time—like He took Joseph from a *prison* to a *palace!* Pressing toward the prize and winning it!



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