

Finding Joy - In Pressing Forward

Anyone ever get stuck in a rut spiritually? Maybe you know you are saved and you are good with that. You come to church, pray when you have to, read scripture when you happen to see it. You love Jesus, but honestly Christianity is kind of blah...it's ok, not bad, but not amazing either...

There is a real spiritual battle going on that you can't see. There REALLY are angels and demons warring in the heavens and some of them are battling over YOU. Some of those demons are coming at you with full force, not even that they have to destroy you...just get you to be comfortable, complacent, satisfied...

One of my favorite books is the Screwtape Letters by CS Lewis. It is a novel that has 31 letters from a demon named Screwtape to his nephew, a young demon named Wormwood. In these letters they often talk about this man who Wormwood was assigned to cause harm. One of the things that hit me the hardest was when Wormwood was basically praised for having the man in a church where he was not challenged, he was comfortable, complacent, satisfied. He said to make sure he stayed there. He preferred that even to the man not going to church all together...

Church, this is a real issue, a real struggle, and it's a big deal...we've got to be pressing forward.

Philippians 3:12-16 (NKJV)

Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

15 Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. 16 Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.

We recently looked at counting all as loss for the sake of knowing Jesus. There is no greater prize in life. There is no higher role to attain than child of God.

And we also looked at the power of His resurrection. The same Spirit that dwells in believers.

Can I tell you today that you have not experienced all there is of God? Do you know that while you may have seen and heard some amazing things...and God may have done miraculous things in and through you...there is so much more!

We talk about having victory in Jesus. We are more than overcomers, more than conquerors in Him. Jesus said He came to give life and life more abundant...that means full...who wants a full life?

Then you have to press forward.

Philippians 3:12 (NKJV)

Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

You have to love this about Paul...he uses his own personal challenges in his letters...he reminds everyone that even though you may struggle with some stuff, so do I...the guy you probably think has it all together and all figured out.

Here Paul shows us that he is not satisfied with his spiritual accomplishments. Paul says there is more to be had. I have not arrived yet, I am not perfect, but I'm pressing forward.

Think about this today...are you satisfied with your spiritual walk? Not where you once were...right now at this moment. Are you satisfied, pleased, happy with it?

See so many get saved and get excited, they see amazing things happening, everything is new a fun, but then...it's not. Stuff happens, life happens...a little difficulty, a little busyness, a little unhappiness...now you're complacent. Just happy to be saved and you are kind of ok with that...

It happens right? The honeymoon has to end sometime.

How do you keep that spark and passion in a marriage? You press forward. You can't just be satisfied knowing you "got em". You have to continue to pursue them, to give them your all, your best effort, your attention, you have to WORK at it to keep it going strong.

You should never just be satisfied with being married. You should want to be the best husband or wife and be one that loves and blesses the socks off your spouse and makes them feel like a king or a queen every single day.

In a similar manner, you should never be satisfied with just being saved...just cool with knowing Jesus and going to church. There is so much more to this faith.

Don't just be satisfied...grab all that you can!

Have you ever seen one of those wind machines where they put money in it and turn it on and the person inside can have all that they can grab in 30-60 seconds? Have you

ever seen someone grab just one or two bills and then stand there and let the rest of the time run out? NO, they grab all that they can like a crazy person...and they don't care about the timer, they may not even know how much time is left...they just grab until the money stops flying around.

Do you know that in knowing Jesus, you have every spiritual blessing, you have victory, you have healing, you have restoration, you have provision, you have no lack...it's because it's like being in that money machine with all of these things of God flying around and He says you can have all that you can grab hold of...

ALL that you can grab hold of. It's all in there, it's all available, it's all around you, reach out and grab hold. Don't worry about the timer, get all that you can NOW.

Paul said: *"Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me."*

I haven't got it all yet. I haven't seized it, caught it...and I'm not perfect, I haven't been made complete...but I PRESS ON!

The Greek word here is dioko (dee-oh-ko) and it was used to describe a sprinter, this is an aggressive, energetic action...pursuing with all you have.

When you watch someone race, they give it their all, pushing their muscles to their limits. And Paul says to pursue sanctification (becoming more like Christ, laying hold of all He has for you) pursue it with all your might, every spiritual muscle...WIN THAT PRIZE!

Are you pressing on? Mature believers honestly evaluate themselves and strives to do better each day. Don't be satisfied...

Philippians 3:13 (NKJV)

Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead

I haven't arrived yet...but one thing I do...this thing is important...Paul says of all the things you can do, this is the one, this is the priority, this is where your focus should be!

Forget what is behind and reach forward to what is ahead!

"Forget what's behind?" There's some good stuff back there! We don't mind forgetting the bad stuff (if we can). Forgetting is not zapping your memory, it's not focusing on it, no longer caring for it.

Here's the deal...bad things from your past...if you have given your life to Jesus and been born again, it is forgiven and forgotten. You are free from it all. A new creation in Christ Jesus. Condemnation is not for you, guilt and shame for the past is not for you. Receive forgiveness.

Stop looking back, and look forward.

What about the good things in the past? Praise Jesus for what He has already done but can I tell you that He's just getting started?

You know something that annoys me is when I'm watching a ballgame and they show a replay but they don't get it done in time and you miss the next pitch. That next pitch could have been a homerun! Sure it's good to look back at a great play that has already happened but not if it might prevent me from seeing something awesome that is yet to come!

Stop looking back...press forward! You ever seen someone running a race and looking back? No, the goal is not behind...it's ahead!

Philippians 3:14 (NKJV)

I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Goal - Christlikeness here and now

Press toward it. This is like the runner at the end of the race approaching the finish line, leaning into the tape, every muscle in full effort, throwing himself across the line...with that kind of spiritual drive....press toward that prize of Christlikeness here and now!

Remember to use every muscle...

Colossians 1:29 (NKJV)

To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

It's His power working in you MIGHTILY! It's not a weak muscle here...it's the strongest one, rely on it, and work that thing out will you? The more you do, the stronger it becomes in your life!

Why do we press so hard toward this goal of Christlikeness here and now? There is a PRIZE

Prize - Christlikeness in heaven

The completion, the perfection, you have to remember that it's life and life more abundant. That means here and now but also for eternity! What better prize can be had?

Upward Call - Invitation to dwell with Him forever

You are invited to forever with Jesus! Just run the race. Find joy in pressing forward, not looking back. It has a great goal and even greater prize!

Philippians 3:15 (NKJV)

Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.

If you are mature, if you are strong spiritually you should think this way. It should be your focus to press forward.

I think this is a great sign of maturity. "Holy Spirit, what's next? Where do I go? When do you want me to go? How do I get there?"

There should be an excitement about it. God's not done with you yet, He is just getting started!

And if you think otherwise, if you think it's best to constantly look back, to cling to that one thing that happened in the past (good or bad), if that's where your mind goes...God will reveal even this to you!

This means He will uncover it! The Holy Spirit will show you...

John 16:13 (NKJV)

However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

You want to know things to come? They don't come from Miss Cleo or whoever else claims to "see the future", witchcraft is the doctrine of demons. You want to know things to come, press forward and look to the Holy Spirit because He is the Spirit of truth and any other spirit is a liar!

If you are mature, look forward. If you think otherwise, pray that God would uncover this truth to you today! He has great things in store for you!

Philippians 3:16 (NKJV)

Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.

If you are a believer, a follower of Jesus...to the degree you have already attained, what you have already reached...walk by the same rule, be of the same mind.

So how did you get here?

Faith in Jesus. This is what it all comes back to. Don't ever depart from that. Continue in the same rule.

The rule that you have been saved by faith through grace because of Jesus' work on the cross that paid the penalty for your sin.

And that when He rose from the dead He offered new life in Him for now and all of eternity.

He did not just want us to live life as forgiven and then that be the end. He wants us to accept that upward call, to know Him, to be shaped and molded into His image while we are here but then to join Him in heaven apart from all pain and suffering!

Can you press on toward that?

Don't be satisfied with where you have been. Don't be satisfied with where you are at. Press forward. Open your eyes and look up!