

☛ Reaching the Goal

A very successful lawyer parked his brand-new Lexus in front of the office, ready to show it off to his colleagues. As he opened the door, a truck came along, and completely tore off the driver's door! The attorney immediately grabbed his cell phone, hit speed dial for 911, and had a policeman there in 3 minutes. Before the cop had a chance to ask any questions, the lawyer started screaming hysterically. He had just picked up the Lexus the day before, and now it would never be the same, no matter how good a job the body shop does. After the lawyer finally wound down from his rant, the cop shook his head in disgust and disbelief. "I can't believe how materialistic you lawyers are," he said. "You are so focused on your possessions that you don't notice anything else." "How can you say such a thing?" he responded indignantly. The cop replied, "You didn't even notice that your left arm is missing from the elbow down! It must have been torn off when the truck hit you." "OH, NO!" screamed the lawyer in shock. "Where is my Rolex?!?"

What are your priorities? Looking ahead to this New Year, we need to have our priorities straight. God has a high calling for us. How can we reach that goal?

☛ Philippians 3:1-14

Whatever happens, my dear brothers and sisters,* rejoice in the Lord. I never get tired of telling you these things, and I do it to safeguard your faith. **2** Watch out for those dogs, those people who do evil, those mutilators who say you must be circumcised to be saved. **3** For we who worship by the Spirit of God* are the ones who are truly circumcised. We rely on what Christ Jesus has done for us. We put no confidence in human effort, **4** though I could have confidence in my own effort if anyone could. Indeed, if others have reason for confidence in their own efforts, I have even more! **5** I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin—a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law. **6** I was so zealous that I harshly persecuted the church. And as for righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault. **7** I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. **8** Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ **9** and become one with him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ.* For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith. **10** I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, **11** so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead! **12** I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection

for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. **13** No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it,* but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, **14** I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.

☞ **1. Know who you are**

☞ **I rely on Christ** v. 3. The idea here is to depend on Jesus instead of anything or anyone else. He's the one who's actually done amazing things, not you or me. Human tendency is to work hard on the outside, hoping for an inner change. But God is the opposite. He works on the inside, affecting the outside to bring our actions into line. Also, *I worship by the Spirit*. We need to be filled with the Spirit and then keep on being filled.

v. 3. *I put no confidence in human efforts*. Our flesh may fail, but my God never will. We put our hope and trust in the Lord. You can never be good enough in your own strength. You can never do everything exactly right. Instead, we must focus on a heart that goes after God... Our confidence comes from him, not from anything we have done. So, know who you are in Christ...

☞ **I am accepted...**

I am God's child ~ John 1:12

I am a friend of Jesus Christ ~ John 15:15

I am a member of Christ's body ~ 1 Corinthians 12:27

I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins ~ Colossians 1:13-14

I have direct access to the throne of grace through Jesus Christ ~ Hebrews 4:14-16

☞ **I am secure...**

I am free from condemnation ~ Romans 8:1-2

I am confident that God will complete the good work He started in me ~ Philippians 1:6

I am a citizen of Heaven ~ Philippians 3:20

I have the spirit of power, love, and a sound mind ~ 2 Timothy 1:7

I am born of God, and the evil one cannot touch me ~ 1 John 5:18

☞ **I am significant...**

I am God's temple ~ 1 Corinthians 3:16

I am a minister of reconciliation for God ~ 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

I am seated with Jesus Christ in the heavenly realm ~ Ephesians 2:6

I am God's workmanship ~ Ephesians 2:10

I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me ~ Philippians 4:13

☞ 2. Know Christ more and more

v. 8. This is the ultimate need for people. We need to know Jesus more; not just to know *about* him, but to actually know him personally. Everything else is worthless. All of our earthly qualifications are worthless when it comes to spiritual matters.

☞ **Everything else is garbage in comparison** v. 8. There are a lot of good, enjoyable things in this life, but they are like stepping in dog poop compared to knowing Christ. We need a better understanding of this contrast. Jesus isn't just a good thing in our lives, he is "the ultimate, supreme, far-better-than-all-others," thing in our lives.

☞ **Luke 9:23-25**

Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must **deny himself** and take up his cross daily and follow me. 24 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. 25 What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?"

☞ **I want to really know Christ** v. 10. This is taking the idea to its fullest; to know Christ in a personal, even intimate way. Let's not be satisfied with simple knowledge about Jesus; let's have a deep, personal friendship with him.

☞ **Psalms 27:4**

One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.

v. 10. Really knowing him includes knowing the power of his resurrection. His resurrection demonstrates his absolute power and it inspires hope for our resurrection to eternal life.

v. 10. Really knowing him includes suffering with Jesus. This one is hard to grasp. I think there are several layers here. Jesus suffered, so if we really want to identify with him, we will be willing to suffer. Also, Paul is contrasting the spirit and the flesh. If we really want to walk by the Spirit, then our flesh will undergo some form of suffering. The flesh is selfish and weak, but the Spirit is selfless and willing.

v. 10. Really knowing him includes sharing in his death. This is about overcoming that sinful nature that we all deal with. Christ died once to conquer all sin. We die daily to follow Christ.

☞ **Romans 8:13-15**

For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, 14 because those who are **led by the Spirit** of God are sons of God.

☞ **3. Keep pressing on**

v. 12. Since everything we really need is in Christ, we must go wholeheartedly after him. The idea here is to never give up. That's a tough one, because we all feel like giving up from time to time.

☞ **Forget the past** v. 13. The enemy loves to hold our past over our heads, thus creating a limiting ceiling for us. But God is calling us upward and there is no ceiling as we pursue him. We have to let go of the past. You can't live in the past, you can only live in the present as you move toward the future.

Luke 9:62

Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

Sometimes we have to let go of the past in order to enjoy the present, and be able to dream of the future.

Stop beating yourself up for the past.

☞ **Look forward to what is ahead** v. 13. There are better days ahead! There is a heavenly prize. All our efforts need to be moving in that direction. Some translations say "straining," which indicates a hardy effort. This calling is not for wimps.

2 Corinthians 4:18

we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

☞ **Press on to the end** v. 14. We have the goal in mind. In this life, we want to be more like Jesus as we look forward to eternity in heaven. Again, this indicates strenuous effort. If you want to win the race, you can't lollygag around; you have to go for it. And remember, this is a marathon, not a sprint.

☞ **Hebrews 12:1**

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us **throw off everything that hinders** and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

☞ v. 14. To win the prize. **It will be worth it all!** The end goal is inspirational!

1 Corinthians 9:24

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.

How to reach that goal?

☞ **Know who you are**
Know Christ more and more
Keep pressing on

☞ **Worth it All - video**

Open altar for recommitment.