

JOY – Press ON: The Upward Call of God. Philippians 3:12-21

MPS Christ-followers press on in life by faith to pursue the upward call of knowing Jesus Christ as Lord.

OBJ Every Christian can press on to pursue more Jesus because of Three Reasons.

INTRO

READ Philippians 3:12-21

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. ¹⁶Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

*¹⁷Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. ¹⁸For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. ²⁰But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. **Philippians 3:12-21***

Paul concludes the previous section with a strong desire for a complete knowledge of God. He makes a clarifying statement that syncs the eternal truth of verses 8-11 with the practicality of daily life. He does not think he already has or knows the full measure of God's resurrection power. He is not claiming that he has experienced the perfection of it in his life. He is not claiming that he has a full knowledge of God now. Just the opposite. But what he IS saying is this; that because of what he knows about God, he knows that all of what he has said is true and will be true. Therefore, he presses on to pursue this **upward call from God**, a 'more complete knowledge of' and moving closer in his 'daily walk with' what He knows to be true of his eternal promise from God. **Paul presses on to pursue more Jesus.**

How can a person be so sure of what they knowingly do not know about all that they know? How can a person be so sure to say that what they know of God they know is not all there is to know of God? But – that even of all they do know of God they know they have not even experienced yet, but one day they will perfectly and completely know?

The Upward Call of God in Jesus Christ is this: Because of Jesus Christ, I know that I know God. But I also know that all that I DO know is not all that there is to know. And I know that I have not experienced (knowledge perfected) all that there is to experience of all that I do know, let alone what I do not yet know. So, I press on for more Jesus. **What we know to be true of God is the reason we can be sure and confident to press on!**

Christ-followers press on in life by faith to pursue the upward call of knowing Jesus Christ as Lord.

OBJ Three Reasons Christians press on to pursue the upward call of God for more Jesus.

TRANS The reason Paul knows is our first reason that we know to press on. Christians press on because of...

A Compelling Motivation: *because Christ has made us His own.* .12

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

Paul begins by acknowledging that he has not experienced all that he knows of God, that he has not obtained all there is to be had, and he is not perfect. But instead of allowing that to cause him to question God, it fuels his whole being, heart, mind, and soul, to run harder after God for this one reason; Jesus has made Paul His own. **Paul's whole life is lived to pursue more Jesus in his life because of what Jesus has done for him in giving him new life, salvation.**



ILLUS A Parent Yanking up a child Back in *the day* when I was growing up, a child's arm was considered an expendable appendage because parents would "take hold" and "yank you up" for anything. It usually occurred when you were in trouble. I was pulled out of church more times by someone else's mother than I care to count. I had one friend whose mother would skip the arm and go straight for the ear lobe. (Friends, in that instant when the lobe is seized and twisted, the entirety of the physical stature is completely at attention.) Once I was on my grandparents back porch with my cousins. My youngest cousin, who was 2 or 3 at the time, began to choke on an ice cube. None of us knew what to do, so we stared at him in shock. Within only a few seconds my aunt walked out the door, not knowing what was happening. Immediately she reached down and performed a one-hand ankle grab, lifted and flipped him upside down, shook two or three hard times. The ice cube fell out. She stood him up, released him and walked on. What we witnessed that day we have never since spoken of in our family among the cousins, nor did we ever cross my aunt after that. We all lived in awe of having witnessed, "the Event".

The grip of Jesus on Paul compelled him to press on until he experienced all that he knew to be true of Jesus. The more he came to know of Jesus the more he knew there was to know about Him, and to experience from Him. THIS is the glory of knowing God in Jesus Christ, and the glory that compels us to press on! Of ALL that we know, the one thing we know most is that we do not know it all, but we want more. And this motivates us to press on in pursuing more Jesus.

For the Christian, the glorious knowledge of all that is ours in Jesus Christ is not full reality now. But that does not mean that it is in any way unsure or uncertain. And so, because of the hold He has on our life, we press on to take hold of Him! If Jesus doesn't have enough of you to command all your attention, He doesn't have all He wants and all that He is worthy of! Today, Jesus wants to take hold of you to make you His own. And He calls you to take hold to make Him your own. **Are you pressing on to take hold and make Him your own?** Christian, this is your compelling motivation to press on to your upward call of God, Jesus took hold of you and made you His own.

TRANS As we've discussed in our Philippians study, Paul acknowledges that pursuing more Jesus is a process. But not one in which we passively sit by and wait on. Christians press on because of...

A Clear Mindset: Jesus sets us free to pursue our upward call. .13-16

Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. ¹⁶Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

Paul states that there is one thing he does to press on; "*forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*" Paul's "one thing" is comprised of a three-part pattern, forget and strain to pursue. This pattern provides a helpful and functional definition of repentance, the only way to pursue the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. But the real potency is not in what we do, but what Christ has done and provides for us. **Jesus sets us free and provides a clear mindset, way of thinking, to focus on pursuing Him.**

First, Paul says he "forgets what lies behind". What is it that Paul is forgetting? Anything that prevents, deters or hinders his focus on Jesus. This begins with every stain of sin he carried because he had not been forgiven and cleansed.

The writer of Hebrews states, "*let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely.*"^{Heb12:1} Sin is weight on our whole being that entangles to drag us down from where God is calling us up. And sin's weight is most prevalent in guilt and shame that heavies our heart and darkens our mind.^{Rom1:21;Eph4:18} There is no pursuing Jesus with this weight and darkness within. Forgetting also includes any claim of self-righteousness that reduces or diminished one's need for Christ. And, forgetting includes personal successes that threaten to steal God's glory. Forgetting what is behind means we refuse to let sinful failure, self-righteousness, or even genuine success to prevent us from pursuing more Jesus. **Pursuing the upward call of God begins by trusting Jesus' work on the cross FOR your life by believing in Him and repenting to receive His forgiveness and cleansing of sin., which clears your mindset for pursuing more Jesus.**

APPL You may ask, because we all must learn, "But I have repented. **How do I forget?**" The verb form for "forget" is in the present tense, meaning that it is an always ongoing action we must constantly practice. Christians do not make light of our



sin to try and forget it. We apply the atoning work of Christ to have it removed. And once He removes it, we refuse to let it stick again. [Forgetting what lies behind is a continual practice to clear one's mind and heart to pursue more Jesus.](#)

Forgetting sets us free to strain forward. The glory of what lies ahead with Jesus is the power of the gospel that turns us to strain forward to what lies ahead. Ultimately, all our forgetting becomes more a reality of His purging from the past because He is re-writing the future by His redeeming power. And so, we are set free to press on to our goal and prize. [Jesus sets free from every hindrance and entanglement to press on after Him.](#)

Press On IS the consuming focus for a Christ-follower every day. This is not simply a direction we go in life, but “direction coupled with a desire”. Press On means that we run after Jesus with our whole being, a passion-fueled pursuit. We all express passion and desire in different ways, that is no doubt. But a real Christ-follower refuses to pursue Christ without passion. Any lack of desire in the Christian life, whether in deep recognition of our need for Him or driving conviction, is an immediate “red flag” warning that we refuse to ignore. When we feel as though we cannot press on, it is because we have competing priorities. We forsake the “one thing” for other things that clouds the mind to make us numb, cold or indifferent to Jesus. A numb, cold or indifferent heart should strike us with absolute fear. Christ-followers press on by a clean heart and clear mindset for the new joy of today! Yesterday’s failures do not define me, and yesterday’s successes may help or aid me, but they cannot sustain me. Yesterday’s sorrows are with me, and may be shaping me as God works through them, but they will not stop me. And yesterday’s joys, as sweet as they were and as lasting as their memory will remain, only serve to remind me of today’s new morning mercies the Lord has for me. Keeping your mind focused on the upward call of God is essential to stay grounded in your faith. If your mind gets consumed with the grounded matters, your faith will lose the glory of the upward call. **ILLUS** The world and sin tells you to “walk this way. Talk this way.” Philippians says, “The mature think this way.” [This is how those who are mature in the faith think: Jesus cleans the heart and clears the mind to set us free to pursue His upward call on our life.](#)

TRANS Paul concludes with a gospel invitation to the Philippians that reminds us, Christians press on because of...

A Commissioned Invitation: Christians follow Jesus with others while we await His return. .17-21

Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. ¹⁸For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. ²⁰But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Paul issues an invitation to the Philippians to join in imitating him. He does not want them to become like him, but like Christ. The heart of our command to love God and love others is performed principally through our commission to make disciples. This commissioned invitation that we both live under, join in together, and extend to all others is the impulse of all disciple-making for the Christ-follower. [The invitation call of the gospel to know God through Jesus Christ is the SAME CALL to pursue Jesus together with, and invite others to join, for our whole life.](#)

And remember: Paul was not inviting them to walk with him because he was with them. He invited them to walk with him as he pressed on after Christ because this is our commission as Christ-followers. This reminds us of two critical remembrances: we walk together with other Christians because our Lord Jesus has commissioned us, and who we walk with over the course of our life will change because of this commission. Some will be sent out from us, like Paul himself. But others go out and end up walking as enemies of the cross of Christ. There is an endless myriad of reasons for their going out, but none of them are healthy or godly. A vital part of growing up is learning who to watch, and who to stop focusing on. This is only learned through experience, which often brings challenge, difficulty, and often heartache and grief. But in all of this Paul’s words remind us that following Jesus is always with others, is never ultimately about who you are walking with, but always who you are walking after. There will be people all along the way that walk away. That is not ours to adjudicate. The longer you walk with others to follow Jesus, the more you will see people drift away, fall away or just plain walk away. And it often brings you to tears. But what it doesn’t, and should never, do, is cause you to follow suit. Ours is to invite others to join us as we walk after Jesus. [Christ-followers stay faithful to pursue Jesus with others, always inviting others to join in for more Jesus.](#)



Who are you walking with to follow Jesus? Who are you inviting to join you in following Jesus? This is our commissioned invitation to pursue our upward call of God in Jesus Christ.

Christ-followers press on in life by faith to pursue the upward call of knowing Jesus Christ as Lord.

