

WE PRESS ON, LAYING HOLD OF THE PRIZE STRENGTHENING THE INNER SELF

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Those with a strong faith have weathered the storms and thrived but those with a weaker faith, have found their foundations shaken. It is important for us to have a genuine faith that will stand the test of time and all the world has to throw at us.

*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. 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, **I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize** for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us. Let all who are spiritually mature agree on these things. If you disagree on some point, I believe God will make it plain to you. But we must hold on to the progress we have already made.*

(Philippians 3:12-16, NLT)

Background to Philippians:

Written by Apostle Paul to the church in Philippi, he had planted during his second missionary journey (Acts 16, AD 50). He wrote the letter during his first Roman imprisonment (Acts 28, AD 60~64). The key messages of the letter are that the Christian life is one of joy and rejoicing, which is independent of all circumstances and the key to unity is having the mind of Christ. Christ is seen as our reason for and source of joy, He is our life, our mind, our ultimate goal and He is our strength.

“Press on” – *diōkō* (Greek)

To pursue; to run swiftly in order to catch a person or thing; to run after. To seek after eagerly; earnestly endeavour to acquire.

Paul is urging believers to eagerly pursue eternity with Christ, as he is the only source of hope, joy and strength that is not affected by the circumstances of this world. This is only possible by having a strong genuine relationship with Christ that goes past the surface level and into our inner core.

Therefore we do not give up. Even though our outer person is being destroyed, our inner person is being renewed day by day. (2 Corinthians 4:16, CSB)

I pray that he may grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with power in your inner being through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...
(Ephesians 3:16-17, CSB)

For in my inner self, I delight in God's law. (Romans 7:22, CSB)

What is the Inner Self?

Paul uses the term inner man several times in his epistles. According to scripture, human beings were created by God, with a spirit, soul, and body (Genesis 1:27; 1 Thessalonians 5:23). The "inner self" is a reference to the spiritual aspect of a person associated with things like our mind, heart, soul and spirit. The "outer man," by contrast, is the visible, external aspect of a person. It is largely in the inner man that we commune with God (John 4:24). It is within our spirits that we are born again (John 3:3-6). The "inner man" contains the conscience upon which the Holy Spirit can move and convict of sin (John 16:8; Acts 24:16). Our spirits are the parts of us most like God, with an innate knowledge of right and wrong (Romans 2:14-15, 1 Corinthians 2:11).

Consequences of an unhealthy inner self:

1. The world becomes louder than God's voice. (1 Kings 19:11-13, Matthew 13:18-22, 14:30)
2. Satisfying our own selfish desires.
(Romans 8:5-8, Galatians 5:17-21, Philippians 2:21, 1 John 2:15-17)
3. Circumstances dictate our state of being.
(Matthew 8:24-25, Romans 1:18-32, 2 Timothy 3:1-9, John 14:27)

Results of a strong inner self:

1. Communion with God. (John 4:23-24; 16:13, Philippians 3:3, 2 Corinthians 3:16-18)
2. Doing God's will. (John 14:26, 1 Corinthians 2:13, Galatians 5:18, Romans 8:14, 26-27)
3. Experience peace, joy, strength independent of circumstances
(2 Corinthians 3:17, Philippians 4:7, 1 Samuel 30:6)

How to strengthen the inner self (Philippians 3):

1. Rejoice in the Lord. (Philippians 4:4)
Practical Application: Remind yourself of who God is and what He has done daily.
2. Watch out for false teachers. (Romans 16:17-19, 2 Timothy 4:3)
Practical Application: Limit the voices you listen to.
3. Do not rely on your own strength. (Isaiah 40:29-31)
Practical Application: Seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit and fresh feeling daily.
4. Discard everything else. (Hebrews 12:1-2, Psalm 139:23-24)
Practical Application: Examine your lifestyle and remove aspects that do not glorify God or strengthen your inner self.

Dear brothers and sisters, pattern your lives after mine, and learn from those who follow our example. For I have told you often before, and I say it again with tears in my eyes, that there are many whose conduct shows they are really enemies of the cross of Christ. They are headed for destruction. Their god is their appetite, they brag about shameful things, and they think only about this life here on earth. But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Saviour. (Philippians 3:17-20, NLT)

So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most. (Hebrews 4:14-16, NLT)