

Philippians 9 – Press Toward the Mark

Dr. John Carmichael

[Phi 3:13-14 NASB95] 13 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of [it] yet; but one thing [I do:] forgetting what [lies] behind and reaching forward to what [lies] ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

- **A runner doesn't win by looking backwards. Eyes forward, chest out, pressing through the finish line. That's how the race is finished!**
- **Paul writes to the Philippians from prison, yet his spirit is surging forward. He refuses to settle. He's pressing for more of Jesus and the purpose God has for him.**
- **Many believers today feel stuck: spiritually stalled by past failures, comfort zones, or fear of the unknown. But the Spirit is saying: Press on!**

What does a Spirit-empowered believer need to know about pressing into God?

Here are three important aspects every Spirit-empowered believer needs to know about pressing into God.

I. Forget What's Behind You

- a. [Phi 3:13 NASB95] 13 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of [it] yet; but one thing [I do:] forgetting what [lies] behind ...
- b. Paul wasn't bound by past failures or successes. The Spirit calls us to let go of yesterday so we can run into tomorrow.
- c. The Spirit gives power to cut loose from the past. Both sin and regret but also comfort and complacency.
- d. [Isa 43:18-19 NASB95] 18 "Do not call to mind the former things, Or ponder things of the past. 19 "Behold, I will do something new, Now it will spring forth; Will you not be aware of it? I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, Rivers in the desert.
- e. [Luk 9:62 NASB95] 62 But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."
- f. Confess and release past failures to God. Refuse to live off past victories alone. Declare daily: "My future is greater than my past!"

II. Reach for What's Ahead

- a. [Phi 3:13 NASB95] ... reaching forward to what [lies] ahead,
- b. Paul lived with holy anticipation. The Spirit ignites vision and expectation for what's next. We're not meant to drift. We're meant to reach forward.
- c. The Spirit plants supernatural dreams and gives the fire to pursue them.
- d. Note: this verse is primarily talking about the revelation of God's Word, however, it serves as a template for accomplishing God's dreams for your life as an individual too. [Hab 2:2-3 NASB95] 2 Then the LORD answered me and said, "Record the vision And inscribe [it] on tablets, That the one who reads it may run. 3 "For the vision is yet for the appointed time; It hastens toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; For it will certainly come, it will not delay.
- e. God gave Abram a vision to believe Him to bring to pass in his life. [Gen 15:5 NASB95] 5 And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."
- f. Write down Spirit-inspired goals. Surround yourself with people who stir up vision. Pray bold prayers for new opportunities.

III. Press Toward the Mark

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- a. [Phi 3:14 NASB95] 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.
 - b. Paul didn't just run, he pressed. This speaks of determined, relentless pursuit. The Spirit empowers us to press through obstacles, opposition, and weariness.
 - c. Spiritual progress requires pressing. The anointing fuels perseverance.
 - d. [1Co 9:24 NASB95] 24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but [only] one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.
 - e. [Heb 12:1-2 NASB95] 1 Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.
 - f. Keep praying even when you feel nothing. Don't quit ministry or mission when it gets tough. Declare: "I wasn't saved to settle. I'm pressing on!"
- **The Spirit-filled life is a forward-moving life; we're called to leave the past behind and press on to our heavenly calling with unstoppable fire.**
 - **Paul's eyes were on the prize: the upward call of God in Christ. This life is a race. The Spirit-filled life is not passive but pressing, not complacent but committed.**
 - **You weren't saved to settle. You were saved to press toward the mark. Let's be a people who never stop moving forward in the Spirit!**