

I want to know Christ!

Philippians 3:7-14

Online Sermon: http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567

The beginning of another year is upon us, you know the time when most people review last year's accomplishments and strive to set new goals and dreams. For many their vision of a better future is one in which they obtain more money, fame, or power. And yet for believers I



would like to think that their vision of a successful year would be nothing short of “cultivating a passion for grace, and an intense longing”¹ to become holy as God is holy. While holiness is too lofty a goal for some,² for others by comparing to those less spiritually mature than themselves, “spiritual dwarfs”³ and still babies in Christ, they lower God’s standards⁴ so that in filling with themselves with the “gas of self-esteem” they might boldly but wrongly declare that they have attained holiness. But “self-satisfaction rings the death-knell of (spiritual) progress. There must

be a deep-seated discontent with present attainments, or there will never be a striving after the things which are yet beyond.”⁵ Even though “perfect righteousness of Christ is deposited into every believer”⁶ this does not mean that we have taken the necessary steps of faith to

¹ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Onward!”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 19 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1873), 311.

² C. H. Spurgeon, [“Onward!”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 19 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1873), 311.

³ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Onward!”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 19 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1873), 308.

⁴ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Onward!”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 19 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1873), 306.

⁵ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Onward!”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 19 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1873), 303.

⁶ Anthony T. Evans, [“‘That I Might Know Him’ \(Part 5\),”](#) in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2010), Php 3:7–11.

invite the Holy Spirit to fill our souls with the image of our Lord, Savior and King!⁷ To keep our “form of religion” from pacifying us in a stupor of spiritual complacency or decline, I invite you to prayerfully review Apostle Paul’s vision of running the race in Philippians 3:7-14. This sermon will review three vital questions whose answers are to be the foundation of the believer’s vision while on this earth: are you on the right track, do you have passion to run, are you looking back or are you looking forward and striving to become more like Jesus so that upon His return you might hear the words “good and faithful servant”?

Are you on the Right Track (7-9)?

One simply cannot become holy as God is holy without first having a relationship with His Son! Just because a person goes to church, reads the Bible, and prays does not make them a Christian. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus warned that prophesying, driving out demons and



performing miracles is not sufficient proof that one has been born again (Matthew 7:21-23). Apostle Paul by his own admission flawlessly followed the Old Testament laws and yet on the road to Damascus he got on his hands and knees and realized how desperately he still needed to be saved! Our works no matter how glorious they might be in ours or other people’s eyes are mere filthy rags for without being born again the “self-proclaimed righteousness pacifier”⁸ is of little comfort to those on the broad track that leads to destruction (Matthew 7:13)! While one is alive physically and intellectually⁹ one has not

been placed on God’s racetrack of eternal life with Him until one is called and in faith believes in the atoning sacrifice of the Son (John 3:16).¹⁰ Since flesh and blood cannot enter the kingdom of God (John 3:5-8) one must be born of the Spirit to be adopted as one of God’s children (John 1:12). When this happens, one is freed from the power of sin (Romans 6:1-14) and being born of

⁷ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Onward!”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 19 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1873), 301.

⁸ Anthony T. Evans, [“‘That I Might Know Him’ \(Part 5\),”](#) in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2010), Php 3:7–11.

⁹ James Montgomery Boice, [Philippians: An Expository Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 191.

¹⁰ Douglas J. Moo, [“The Letters and Revelation,”](#) in *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 2135.

the Spirit (John 3:5-6) and a participant of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), is not only capable but expected to be a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1-2) by striving to imitate the holiness of the Son (1 Corinthians 11:1). If your inward soul is not progressing towards the image of the Son,¹¹ that is you can see no change or fruits of the Spirit in your life, then by the grace of God I implore you to examine your spiritual life and if the Spirit testifies to your spirit you indeed are not saved then get on the right track by believing in Jesus and making Him the Lord of your life (Romans 8:9, 16)!

Once one is on God's track, to become more like Jesus this year will require one to stop measuring one's "success" based on earthly accomplishments. "When God chose on the road to



Damascus to reveal His Son"¹² Paul's view of righteousness completely changed. Before meeting Christ Paul felt he was righteous because of his many impressive accomplishments such as: being part of the Israelite nation, being taught under Rabbi Gamaliel I (Acts 22:3) whose interpretations were often cited in the Mishnah and Talmud,¹³ being faultless according to the Mosaic Law,¹⁴ and advancing socially and politically in Judaism far beyond many of his own age (Galatians 1:14; Philippians 3:5-6). The intimate personal relationship with his Savior that Paul so desperately wanted,¹⁵

however, after his encounter with Christ and from a carnal perspective costed him plenty,¹⁶ the

¹¹ James Montgomery Boice, [*Philippians: An Expository Commentary*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 192.

¹² F. F. Bruce, [*Philippians*](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Peabody, MA: Baker Books, 2011), 114.

¹³ Douglas J. Moo, [*"The Letters and Revelation,"*](#) in *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 2134.

¹⁴ Douglas J. Moo, [*"The Letters and Revelation,"*](#) in *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 2134.

¹⁵ Douglas J. Moo, [*"The Letters and Revelation,"*](#) in *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 2134.

¹⁶ Ralph P. Martin, [*Philippians: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 11, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 154.

chief of which would be the security and his high status in the Jewish community!¹⁷ Paul did not see losing any of these things as a loss because righteousness for him was no longer based on confidence in the flesh to obey the law¹⁸ but in faith in a risen Savior! In his spiritual reassessment after meeting Christ,¹⁹ Paul truly experienced his old life being dead and as such considered all external righteousness not indifferently²⁰ but as mere garbage, human dung,²¹ and a constant liability because they tempted²² him to take his eyes off the track of allegiance to Christ!²³ Like Apostle Paul if we truly want to become more like Christ then our righteousness must surpass that of the Pharisees (Matthew 5:20) by keeping our eye fixed on He who bought us at price and forever secures our place in God's kingdom (1 Corinthians 6:20)!

Do you Have the Passion to Run (10-11)?

With one's eyes fixed on Christ the question is do you have enough passion to run in His kingdom? Looking up at the "mild face of the Redeemer, marked with the thorn-crown of the King of Sorrows,"²⁴ surely, we can gather up "all our strength, to cultivate a passion for grace, an intense longing for holiness!"²⁵ To keep from living a complacent, dare I say average

¹⁷ G. Walter Hansen, [*The Letter to the Philippians*](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 236.

¹⁸ G. Walter Hansen, [*The Letter to the Philippians*](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 236.

¹⁹ Ralph P. Martin, [*Philippians: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 11, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 152.

²⁰ Ralph P. Martin, [*Philippians: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 11, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 153.

²¹ Ralph P. Martin, [*Philippians: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 11, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 154–155.

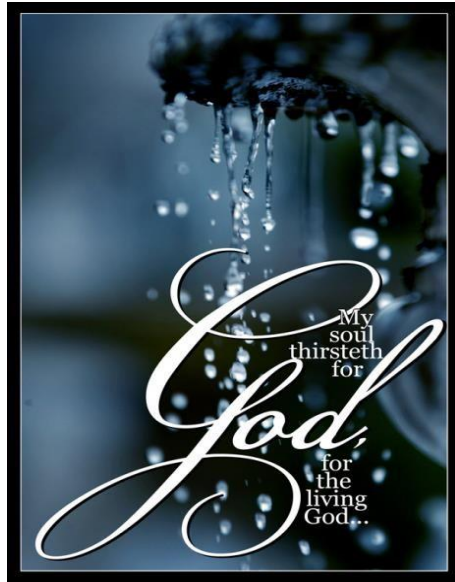
²² Ralph P. Martin, [*Philippians: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 11, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 154.

²³ G. Walter Hansen, [*The Letter to the Philippians*](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 234.

²⁴ C. H. Spurgeon, [*"Onward!"*](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 19 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1873), 312.

²⁵ C. H. Spurgeon, [*"Onward!"*](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 19 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1873), 311.

Christian life²⁶ of never even trying to run towards holiness, surely we can keep our eyes fixed, our bodies leaning forward,²⁷ and our lungs filled with an unquenchable fire to take every



thought, word and deed captive for our Lord, Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5)!²⁸ To be holy as God is holy our passion must deafen the rings of self-satisfaction which is the “death-knell of spiritual progress,”²⁹ and embrace the sweet sound of the hallelujah chorus “onward and upward.”³⁰ If we are to break the chains of complacency to start running in the kingdom of God then we simply must view discipleship not only as costly but exceptionally rewarding. For the dust of the earth to experientially know the power of Christ’s resurrection through rebirth is an honor³¹ that simply must spur one to abandon all carnal passions and embrace any opportunity given to run and be transformed more and more into the image of the Son!³² Without this all-consuming passion to live righteously for He who is the ultimate treasure and pearl in the field,³³ then we are forever doomed to see our old nature rise and our light grow dim in complacency instead of glowing brightly

in His wonder and grace! To even begin running the race there must be passion to relationally know Christ as Lord!³⁴

²⁶ Anthony T. Evans, [“That I Might Know Him’ \(Part 5\),”](#) in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2010), Php 3:7–11.

²⁷ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Onward!,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 19 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1873), 310.

²⁸ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Onward!,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 19 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1873), 311.

²⁹ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Onward!,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 19 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1873), 303.

³⁰ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Onward!,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 19 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1873), 301.

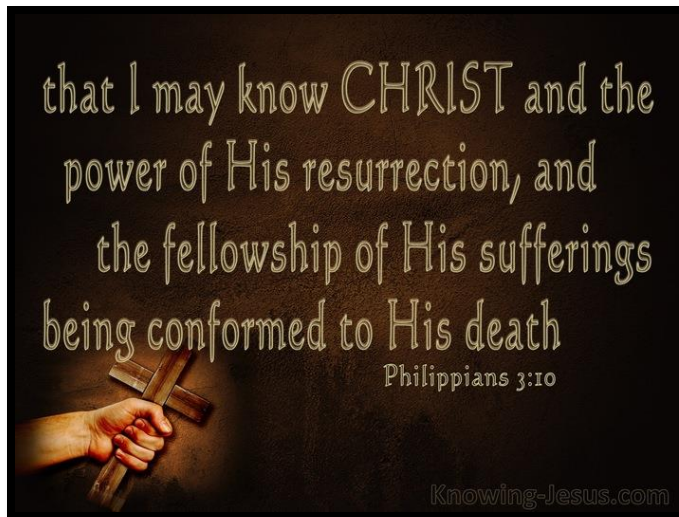
³¹ Homer A. Kent Jr., [“Philippians,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 141.

³² Ben Witherington III, [Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Company, 2011), 206.

³³ Ben Witherington III, [Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Company, 2011), 203.

³⁴ Ben Witherington III, [Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Company, 2011), 203.

Passion to effectively run on God's track though must be strong enough to endure suffering for His name's sake! Most Christians are "exceedingly good tempered" and willing to run the race but only when it is easy and costs them nothing.³⁵ To truly become intimate with a



holy God the "fellowship of suffering"³⁶ must be embraced! The closer we get the Refiners Fire³⁷ the more one faces the possibility of God's discipline to remove ongoing impurities of our old nature and death to our former way of living (Romans 6:4-11).³⁸ Also, to get on the track by identifying oneself with Christ invites a "measure of Christ's afflictions (Colossians 1:24).³⁹ "Remember Jesus never experienced Easter Sunday until He went through Bad Friday!"⁴⁰ Apostle Paul is not saying we are "to beg for the chance to suffer"⁴¹ as a masochist that enjoys

pain,⁴² but are to count it pure joy when we go through trials, temptations and even persecution for His name's sake so that we might become spiritually mature (James 1:2-4) and as co-heirs with Christ we might share in His glory (Romans 8:17)!⁴³ When one no longer desires a "long

³⁵ C. H. Spurgeon, "[Onward!](#)" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 19 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1873), 308.

³⁶ Anthony T. Evans, "[That I Might Know Him' \(Part 5\)](#)," in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2010), Php 3:7-11.

³⁷ Anthony T. Evans, "[That I Might Know Him' \(Part 5\)](#)," in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2010), Php 3:7-11.

³⁸ Homer A. Kent Jr., "[Philippians](#)," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 141.

³⁹ Homer A. Kent Jr., "[Philippians](#)," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 141.

⁴⁰ Anthony T. Evans, "[That I Might Know Him' \(Part 5\)](#)," in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2010), Php 3:7-11.

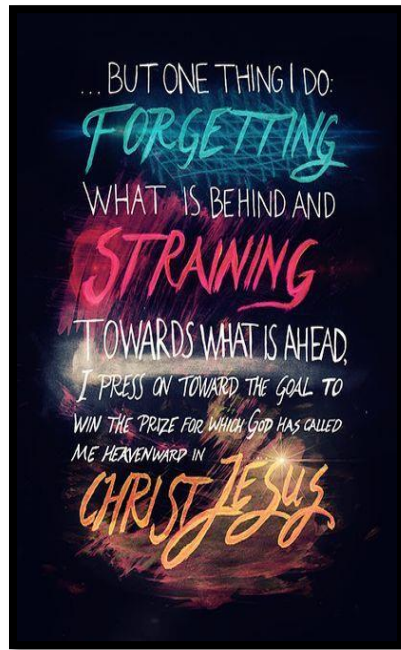
⁴¹ Anthony T. Evans, "[That I Might Know Him' \(Part 5\)](#)," in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2010), Php 3:7-11.

⁴² Anthony T. Evans, "[That I Might Know Him' \(Part 5\)](#)," in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2010), Php 3:7-11.

⁴³ Douglas J. Moo, "[The Letters and Revelation](#)," in *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 2135.

distance relationship with God”⁴⁴ but instead seeks to crucify self with Christ on the cross (Galatians 2:19-20), suffering for His name’s sake is no longer avoided at all costs but embraced as the fuel to fill one’s lungs with grace and faith and run in His kingdom!

Are you Looking Back or Forward (12-14)?



To effectively run on God’s racetrack we are not to look back or make comparisons between ourselves and other runners! How sad it is to see a born-again believer look back at their sins, drop to their knees in defeat and never run again! Instead of “resurrecting old corruptions by erecting a trophy over their graves,”⁴⁵ Paul recommends to “forget what is behind” and to continue to run in full recognition that one has not yet reached perfection.⁴⁶ This does not mean that one forgets the memory of past sins and in doing so risks repeating them⁴⁷ but only that confessed sins have by the grace of God been forgiven and as such are to not be used as an excuse to be complacent but merely incentive to keep a person humble!⁴⁸ Equally problematic is sitting on God’s race track because one has made faulty comparisons. When one looks back and compares oneself to “dwarfs one tends to think oneself a giant”⁴⁹ and when one looks forward and compares oneself to spiritual giants one tends to see oneself as a mere babe and give up in defeat! “Self-esteem is a moth which frets the garments of virtue,”⁵⁰ while self-deprecation diminishes the Spirit’s power of

⁴⁴ Anthony T. Evans, [“That I Might Know Him’ \(Part 5\),”](#) in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2010), Php 3:7–11.

⁴⁵ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Onward!,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 19 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1873), 309.

⁴⁶ Ralph P. Martin, [Philippians: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 11, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 159.

⁴⁷ Homer A. Kent Jr., [“Philippians,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 142–143.

⁴⁸ Roger Ellsworth, [Opening up Philippians](#), Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2004), 66.

⁴⁹ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Onward!,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 19 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1873), 308.

⁵⁰ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Onward!,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 19 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1873), 309.

sanctification. How successful one is in running the race is not determined by comparison with the other runner's positions on the track comparative to that of one's own⁵¹ but on how close one is conforming to the image of the Son!⁵² "We never see the beauty of Christ without at the same time perceiving our own deformity,"⁵³ but at the same time we never to dismiss the grace and power of the Potter to never stop molding the clay (Isaiah 64:8)!

The beginning of another year is upon us and we stand at the crossroads of what will be our vision for the coming year. We could choose to continue to live a "cluttered, distracted and fragmented life"⁵⁴ of no vision or choose to be like the world and chase after money, fame and



power that are here today and gone tomorrow. Surely as born-again believers through the power of the Spirit we can throw off the shackles of spiritual complacency by keeping our eyes fixed on Christ, our bodies learning forward, and our lungs filled with the unquenchable fire to take every thought, word, and deed captive for our Lord Jesus Christ! With rejoicing in our hearts may our vision be to draw nearer to the Refiners Fire so that our impurities might be cleansed, and we might get the privilege of participating in Christ's persecution and suffering! Refusing to

see ourselves as either spiritual dwarfs or giants may we throw off our righteous pacifiers of religion and embrace His sanctifying grace⁵⁵ to never inviting Christ to keep on molding and shaping us into His image! And while we run the race may our cries of "woe is me, for I am a person of unclean lips" not instill within our hearts a sense of defeat but instead rejoicing that a

⁵¹ C. H. Spurgeon, "[Onward!](#)," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 19 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1873), 310.

⁵² F. F. Bruce, [Philippians](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Peabody, MA: Baker Books, 2011), 121.

⁵³ C. H. Spurgeon, "[Onward!](#)," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 19 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1873), 305.

⁵⁴ Roger Ellsworth, [Opening up Philippians](#), Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2004), 67.

⁵⁵ Ralph P. Martin, [Philippians: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 11, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 159.

“humble, timid, fearful, watchful, self-depreciating Christian”⁵⁶ can with confession glow righteously as a masterpiece of His grace! So, may we stand and run-on God’s racetrack of life with an unwavering and unquenchable desire to at the end of our journey be summoned by the great Judge Jesus Christ and hear the words good and faithful servant! Until that glorious day may our mission forever be onward and upward!

⁵⁶ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Onward!”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 19 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1873), 305–306.