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Subject: PRESSING TOWARD THE MARK  
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## PRESSING TOWARD THE MARK

(Fight the Good Fight ... Hold Your Course)

We need constantly a fresh revelation of Christ, a daily experience that harmonizes with His teachings.

High and holy attainments are within our reach.  
Continual progress in knowledge and virtue is God's purpose for us.

His law is the echo of His own voice, giving to all the invitation,

"Come up higher. Be holy, holier still."  
Every day we may advance in perfection of Christian character.

Those who are engaged in service for the Master need an experience much higher, deeper, broader, than many have yet thought of having. Many who are already members of God's great family know little of what it means to behold His glory and to be changed from glory to glory. Many have a twilight perception of Christ's excellence, and their hearts thrill with joy. They long for a fuller, deeper sense of the Saviour's love. Let these cherish every desire of the soul after God.

The Holy Spirit works with those who will be worked, molds those who will be molded, fashions those who will be fashioned. Give yourselves the culture of spiritual thoughts and holy communings. You have seen but the first rays of the early dawn of His glory. As you follow on to know the Lord, you will know that "the path of the righteous is as the light of dawn, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Proverbs 4:18, R.V.

"These things have I spoken unto you," said Christ, "that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." John 15:11.

Ever before Him, Christ saw the result of His mission.  
His earthly life, so full of toil and self-sacrifice, was cheered by the thought that He would not have all this travail for nought.  
By giving His life for the life of men, He would restore in humanity the image of God.

He would lift us up from the dust,  
reshape the character after the pattern of His own character,  
and make it beautiful with His own glory.

Christ saw of the travail of His soul and was satisfied.  
He viewed the expanse of eternity and saw the happiness of those who through His humiliation should receive pardon and everlasting life.

He was wounded for their transgressions, bruised for their iniquities. The chastisement of their peace was upon Him, and with His stripes they were healed. He heard the shout of the redeemed. He heard the ransomed ones singing the song of Moses and the Lamb. Although the baptism of blood must first be received, although the sins of the world were to weigh upon His innocent soul, although the shadow of an unspeakable woe was upon Him; yet for the joy that was set before Him He chose to endure the cross and despised the shame.

This joy all His followers are to share. However great and glorious hereafter, our reward is not all to be reserved for the time of final deliverance.

Even here we are by faith to enter into the Saviour's joy. Like Moses, we are to endure as seeing the Invisible.

Now the church is militant.

Now we are confronted with a world in darkness, almost wholly given over to idolatry.

But the day is coming when the battle will have been fought, the victory won.

The will of God is to be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

The nations of the saved will know no other law than the law of heaven.

All will be a happy, united family, clothed with the garments of praise and thanksgiving--the robe of Christ's righteousness. All nature, in its surpassing loveliness, will offer to God a tribute of praise and adoration. The world will be bathed in the light of heaven. The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold greater than it is now. The years will move on in gladness. Over the scene the morning stars will sing together, the sons of God will shout for joy, while God and Christ will unite in proclaiming, "There shall be no more sin, neither shall there be any more death."

These visions of future glory, scenes pictured by the hand of God, should be dear to His children.

#### Evaluating the Things of Time and Eternity

Stand on the threshold of eternity and hear the gracious welcome given to those who in this life have co-operated with Christ, regarding it as a privilege and an honor to suffer for His sake. With the angels, they cast their crowns at the feet of the Redeemer, exclaiming, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. . . . Honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." Revelation 5:12, 13.

There the redeemed ones greet those who directed them to the uplifted Saviour. They unite in praising Him who died that human beings might have the life that measures with the life of God. The conflict is over. All tribulation and strife are at an end. Songs of victory fill all heaven, as the redeemed stand around the throne of God. All take up the joyful strain, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain" and hath redeemed us to God.

"I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and

people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." Revelation 7:9, 10.

"These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." "And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Revelation 7:14-17; 21:4.

We need to keep ever before us this vision of things unseen.

It is thus that we shall be able to set a right value on the things of eternity and the things of time.

It is this that will give us power to influence others for the higher life.

#### In the Mount With God

"Come up to Me into the mount," God bids us.

To Moses, before he could be God's instrument in delivering Israel, was appointed the forty years of communion with Him in the mountain solitudes. Before bearing God's message to Pharaoh, he spoke with the angel in the burning bush. Before receiving God's law as the representative of His people, he was called into the mount, and beheld His glory. Before executing justice on the idolaters, he was hidden in the cleft of the rock, and the Lord said, "I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee," "merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in loving-kindness and truth; . . . and that will by no means clear the guilty." Exodus 33:19; 34:6, 7, A.R.V. Before he laid down, with his life, his burden for Israel, God called him to the top of Pisgah and spread out before him the glory of the Promised Land.

Before the disciples went forth on their mission, they were called up into the mount with Jesus. Before the power and glory of Pentecost, came the night of communion with the Saviour, the meeting on the mountain in Galilee, the parting scene upon Olivet, with the angel's promise, and the days of prayer and communion in the upper chamber.

Jesus, when preparing for some great trial or some important work, would resort to the solitude of the mountains and spend the night in prayer to His Father. A night of prayer preceded the ordination of the apostles and the Sermon on the Mount, the transfiguration, the agony of the judgment hall and the cross, and the resurrection glory.

#### Communion With God in Prayer

We, too, must have times set apart for meditation and prayer and for receiving spiritual refreshing. We do not value the power and efficacy of prayer as we should.

Prayer and faith will do what no power on earth can accomplish.

We are seldom, in all respects, placed in the same position twice.  
We continually have new scenes and new trials to pass through, where past experience cannot be a sufficient guide.  
We must have the continual light that comes from God.

Christ is ever sending messages to those who listen for His voice.

On the night of the agony in Gethsemane, the sleeping disciples heard not the voice of Jesus. They had a dim sense of the angels' presence, but lost the power and glory of the scene. Because of their drowsiness and stupor they failed of receiving the evidence that would have strengthened their souls for the terrible scenes before them.  
Thus today the very men who most need divine instruction often fail of receiving it, because they do not place themselves in communion with heaven.

The temptations to which we are daily exposed make prayer a necessity.

Dangers beset every path.

Those who are seeking to rescue others from vice and ruin are especially exposed to temptation.

In constant contact with evil, they need a strong hold upon God lest they themselves be corrupted.

Short and decisive are the steps that lead men down from high and holy ground to a low level. In a moment decisions may be made that fix one's condition forever.  
One failure to overcome leaves the soul unguarded. One evil habit, if not firmly resisted, will strengthen into chains of steel, binding the whole man.

The reason why so many are left to themselves in places of temptation is that they do not set the Lord always before them.  
When we permit our communion with God to be broken, our defense is departed from us.

Not all your good purposes and good intentions will enable you to withstand evil.

You must be men and women of prayer.

Your petitions must not be faint, occasional, and fitful, but earnest, persevering, and constant.

It is not always necessary to bow upon your knees in order to pray.

Cultivate the habit of talking with the Saviour when you are alone, when you are walking, and when you are busy with your daily labor.  
Let the heart be continually uplifted in silent petition for help, for light, for strength, for knowledge.

Let every breath be a prayer.

As workers for God we must reach men where they are, surrounded with darkness, sunken in

vice, and stained with corruption. But while we stay our minds upon Him who is our sun and our shield, the evil that surrounds us will not bring one stain upon our garments. As we work to save the souls that are ready to perish we shall not be put to shame if we make God our trust.

Christ in the heart, Christ in the life, this is our safety.

The atmosphere of His presence will fill the soul with abhorrence of all that is evil.

Our spirit may be so identified with His that in thought and aim we shall be one with Him.

It was through faith and prayer that Jacob, from being a man of feebleness and sin, became a prince with God. It is thus that you may become men and women of high and holy purpose, of noble life, men and women who will not for any consideration be swayed from truth, right, and justice. All are pressed with urgent cares, burdens, and duties, but the more difficult your position and the heavier your burdens, the more you need Jesus.

It is a serious mistake to neglect the public worship of God.

The privileges of divine service should not be lightly regarded.

Those who attend upon the sick are often unable to avail themselves of these privileges, but they should be careful not to absent themselves needlessly from the house of worship.

In ministering to the sick, more than in any merely secular business, success depends on the spirit of consecration and self-sacrifice with which the work is done. Those who bear responsibilities need to place themselves where they will be deeply impressed by the Spirit of God. You should have as much greater anxiety than do others for the aid of the Holy Spirit and for a knowledge of God as your position of trust is more responsible than that of others.

Nothing is more needed in our work than the practical results of communion with God.

We should show by our daily lives that we have peace and rest in the Saviour.

His peace in the heart will shine forth in the countenance.

It will give to the voice a persuasive power.

Communion with God will ennoble the character and the life.

Men will take knowledge of us, as of the first disciples, that we have been with Jesus. This will impart to the worker a power that nothing else can give. Of this power he must not allow himself to be deprived.

We must live a twofold life -- a life of thought and action, of silent prayer and earnest work. The strength received through communion with God, united with earnest effort in training the mind to thoughtfulness and caretaking, prepares one for daily duties and keeps the spirit in peace under all circumstances, however trying.

## The Divine Counselor

When in trouble, many think they must appeal to some earthly friend, telling him their perplexities, and begging for help. Under trying circumstances unbelief fills their hearts, and the way seems dark. And all the time there stands beside them the mighty Counselor of the ages, inviting them to place their confidence in Him. Jesus, the great Burden Bearer, is saying, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." Shall we turn from Him to uncertain human beings, who are as dependent upon God as we ourselves are?

You may feel the deficiency of your character and the smallness of your ability in comparison with the greatness of the work. But if you had the greatest intellect ever given to man, it would not be sufficient for your work. "Without Me ye can do nothing," says our Lord and Saviour. John 15:5.

The result of all we do rests in the hands of God.

Whatever may betide, lay hold upon Him with steady, persevering confidence.

In your business, in companionship for leisure hours, and in alliance for life, let all the associations you form be entered upon with earnest, humble prayer.

You will thus show that you honor God, and God will honor you.

Pray when you are fainthearted.

When you are desponding, close the lips firmly to men;  
do not shadow the path of others;  
but tell everything to Jesus.

Reach up your hands for help.

In your weakness lay hold of infinite strength.

Ask for humility, wisdom, courage, increase of faith, that you may see light in God's light and rejoice in His love.

## Consecration; Trust

When we are humble and contrite we stand where God can and will manifest Himself to us. He is well pleased when we urge past mercies and blessings as a reason why He should bestow on us greater blessings. He will more than fulfill the expectations of those who trust fully in Him. The Lord Jesus knows just what His children need, how much divine power we will appropriate for the blessing of humanity; and He bestows upon us all that we will employ in blessing others and ennobling our own souls.

We must have less trust in what we ourselves can do, and more trust in what the Lord can do for and through us. You are not engaged in your own work; you are doing the work of God. Surrender your will and way to Him. Make not a single reserve, not a single compromise with self.

Know what it is to be free in Christ.

The mere hearing of sermons Sabbath after Sabbath, the reading of the Bible through and through, or the explanation of it verse by verse, will not benefit us or those who hear us, unless we bring the truths of the Bible into our individual experience. The understanding, the will, the affections, must be yielded to the control of the word of God. Then through the work of the Holy Spirit the precepts of the word will become the principles of the life.

As you ask the Lord to help you, honor your Saviour by believing that you do receive His blessing.

All power, all wisdom, are at our command.

We have only to ask.

Walk continually in the light of God. Meditate day and night upon His character. Then you will see His beauty and rejoice in His goodness. Your heart will glow with a sense of His love. You will be uplifted as if borne by everlasting arms. With the power and light that God imparts, you can comprehend more and accomplish more than you ever before deemed possible.

"Abide in Me."

Christ bids us: "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me. . . . He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing. . . . If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples.

"As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you: continue ye in My love. . . .

"Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain:

that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you." John 15:4-16.

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." Revelation 3:20.

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."

Revelation 2:17.

"He that overcometh, . . . I will give him the Morning Star," "and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God: . . .

and I will write upon him My new name." Verses 26-28; 3:12.

"This One Thing I Do."

He whose trust is in God will with Paul be able to say, "I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me." Philippians 4:13, R.V.

Whatever the mistakes or failures of the past, we may, with the help of God, rise above them.

With the apostle we may say:

"This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,  
I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:13, 14.

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Young and old must know the converting power of God.  
They all need a fresh blessing from the hand of God,--faith to grasp the rich promises of God in order that they may be blessed and be made a blessing unto others.  
Those who will receive and impart to others, shall receive more abundantly.

They will not hide their light under a bed or under a bushel, and will not stop short of pressing toward the mark for the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus.

They will not lose the fervor of their first love, and grow cold and selfish, self-loving, self-indulgent, and fail to lift the cross and follow where Christ leads the way. Those who halt in the Christian life, and make no advance beyond the first stages of religion, do not realize the necessity of becoming partakers of the divine nature, to push the triumphs of the cross. The Lord is willing to heal their backsliding, and to quicken them anew; for he is of great mercy and tender compassion. He has a heaven full of blessing to bestow upon them.

There is no failure on the part of Christ; he is able and willing to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him.

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Those who are pressing toward the mark for the prize of our high calling in Jesus, are giving to the world an example of faith and obedience.

They are directing attention to the world to come, and impressing upon souls the worth of eternal life. You cannot do this great work without taking the Saviour with you; but you may have his presence, and rejoice in associating with the Prince of peace. You may communicate with Jesus by the way. You may speak with him as with a friend. You may know that he is at your side as an ever-present helper. You may ask him to give you strength to resist every temptation of the evil one. You may have confidence that he bears your prayers, understands your perplexities, weighs your burdens, and pities your weakness. He was tempted in all points like as we are; he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and can and will succor those who come unto him in hours of distress and temptation.

Let him abide in your heart, that you may honor God and be a vessel filled with the blessing of heaven; then you will be a gatherer with Christ, and will bear fruit unto eternal life.

## A Spirit-Filled Church

After Christ's ascension, the disciples were gathered together in one place to make humble supplication to God. And after ten days of heart searching and self-examination, the way was prepared for the Holy Spirit to enter the cleansed, consecrated soul temples. Every heart was filled with the Spirit, as though God desired to show his people that it was his prerogative to bless them with the choicest of heaven's blessings. What was the result?--Thousands were converted in a day. The sword of the Spirit flashed right and left. Newly edged with power, it pierced even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow. The idolatry that had been mingled with the worship of the people was overthrown. New territory was added to the kingdom of God. Places that had been barren and desolate sounded forth his praises. Believers, reconverted, born again, were a living power for God. A new song was put in their mouths, even praise to the Most High.

Controlled by the Spirit, they saw Christ in their brethren.

One interest prevailed.

One subject of emulation swallowed up all others,--to be like Christ, to do the works of Christ. The earnest zeal felt was expressed by loving helpfulness, by kindly words and unselfish deeds. All strove to see who could do the most for the enlargement of Christ's kingdom.

"The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul."

In the twelve disciples the leaven of truth was hidden by the Great Teacher.

These disciples were to be the instruments in God's hands for revealing truth to the world.

Divine power was given them; for a risen Saviour breathed on them, saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." Imbued with this Spirit, they went forth to witness for the truth. And so God desires his servants to go forth today with the message he has given them. But till they receive the Holy Spirit, they cannot bear this message with power. Till they receive the Spirit, they cannot realize what God can do through them.

The mighty power of the Holy Spirit works an entire transformation in the character of the human agent, making him a new creature in Christ Jesus. When a man is filled with the Spirit, the more severely he is tested and tried, the more clearly he proves that he is a representative of Christ. The peace that dwells in the soul is seen on the countenance. The words and actions express the love of the Saviour.

There is no striving for the highest place.

Self is renounced.

The name of Jesus is written on all that is said and done.

We may talk of the blessings of the Holy Spirit, but unless we prepare ourselves for its reception, of what avail are our works?

Are we striving with all our power to attain to the stature of men and women in Christ?

Are we seeking for his fullness, ever pressing toward the mark set before us, --- the perfection of his character?

When the Lord's people reach this mark, they will be sealed in their foreheads.

Filled with the Spirit, they will be complete in Christ, and the recording angel will declare,

"It is finished."

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:  
Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day:  
and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. 2 Timothy 4:7-8

#### SOURCE:

HDL Help In Daily Living (1964)  
Chapter 4 --Pressing Toward the Mark

YI The Youth's Instructor  
June 29, 1893 Words to the Young.

RH The Review and Herald  
June 12, 1888 The Renewing of the Mind  
June 10, 1902 The Promise of the Spirit