

Forward Progress

Ready:

"Not that I have already obtained all this or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do, forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

-Philippians 3:12-14

Set

Football season is now over, and it's time to focus on the NFL draft. It's time to see which of our favorite college players will take that step up and make it in the big arena. Now, even if you're not a football fan, you likely know that the goal in the game is to get the football across the goal line to score a touchdown. In order to get there, a team must make forward progress either by passing or running the ball.

This concept also applies to life. The goal is to win, and the way to win is to score against the Enemy. To score against the Enemy, we must make forward progress.

Ways to score against the Enemy:

1. Surrender your life to Christ (salvation).

--John 10:10 says, "The thief comes to steal, kill and destroy, but I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly."

2. Surrender your life to be used by God

--1 Corinthians 15:57-58 says, "But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, for you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."

--Romans 12:1-2 says, "I urge you therefore, to offer up your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God which is your spiritual act of worship. Do not be conformed to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will know what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will."

3. Through God's grace, conquer personal sin.

--Ephesians 4:17-24 (Contemporary English Version) says, "As a follower of the Lord, I order you to stop living like stupid, godless people. Their minds are in the dark, and they are stubborn and ignorant and have missed out on the life that comes from God. They no longer have any feelings about what is right, and they are so greedy that they do all kinds of indecent things. But that isn't what you were taught about Jesus Christ. He is the truth, and you heard about him and learned about him. You were told that your foolish desires will destroy you and that you must give up your old way of life with all its bad habits. Let the Spirit change your way of thinking and make you into a new person. You were created to be like God, and so you must please him and be truly holy."

There are many other ways to make forward progress in the Christian life, but these are a few of the big ones. . . The touchdowns, if you will.

One thing my pastor said on Sunday really hit home with me. He opened his sermon by saying that three steps forward and two steps back is still one step forward. Life is all about forward strides and setbacks. The problem is that so many of us focus on the two steps back and let them paralyze us rather than taking stock and realizing that we made forward progress. It may not have been much, but at least it was in the right direction.

In football, the defense is supposed to tackle the guy with the ball to keep him from going forward. Don't let the Enemy stop your forward progress. He will point to your two steps back and discourage you by saying, "You'll never get this Christian walk thing right. You might as well quit trying." When he does that, point to that step forward and remind him (and yourself) that you are already on the winning team.

Go

1. What things in your life are keeping you from making forward progress?
2. What are some practical things you can do to keep moving forward in your walk with God?
3. When the Enemy points to your backward steps and tries to get you to focus on those, what do you do to refute him?

Workout

Romans 8

Bible Reference:

Philippians 3



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