

# Pressing On Toward the Goal

## Introduction

Good morning, Saints. It is always a delight to be here and to be fellowshiping together. It was truly a delight in the last hour to worship the Lord together. It was a real treat yesterday to be together with so many, looking to the Lord for what He might have for this coming summer conference. As I considered this time before the Lord, I am really excited to be here, although I was not necessarily excited to speak. But we will be obedient to the Lord.

As I considered the time, He really just gave me a few simple thoughts to share and ponder together. So let us start by turning to a few scriptures, beginning in Philippians 3, which is actually a verse I shared yesterday.

Philippians 3:12-14: "Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. 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, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

And then I will also make some references to Genesis. Back home in Houston right now, we are in a study of Genesis, and I will make a reference to part of the story in Genesis chapters 32 to 35. I know a number of you have been looking at the story of Jacob; and I know our brother Isaiah back in November, I believe, read a lot of those verses to you. I will look specifically or focus on some parts in chapters 32 to 35. That is where we see Jacob wrestling with the Lord at Peniel, and that is also where he gets his new name, Israel. Then we see after that he settled for a period in Shechem before he returned to Bethel. You might want to reference those. There is one other verse I want to read before we get started.

Malachi 3:7: "From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you," says the LORD of hosts. "But you say, 'How shall we return?'"

Let us commit this time to the Lord.

*Lord, we do look to You. We know it is Your heart to reveal Yourself to us. And so, Lord, we ask that You speak to us. Anoint the words that You desire us to hear. Anoint our ears to receive that which is on Your heart. Lord, we just surrender and commit ourselves into Your faithful hands, in Jesus' name. Amen.*

## Pressing Onward and Upward into the Fullness of Christ

My burden this morning really is this charge that Paul gave to the Philippians in chapter 3 to press onward and upward into the fullness of Christ. No matter how much we have experienced of the Lord, no matter how much we have seen of the Lord (and

we have seen great things) we realize it is really very small. It is really minuscule compared to how big, how large, and how marvelous our Lord Jesus is. That is why we know there is always more.

There is more that He wants us to enter into, more that He wants us to see, and more that He even wants to recover and remind us of. So, we are not looking to gain more knowledge of Christ in order to try to live the Christian life. We know that is impossible. We really want to know more about who He is so that we may draw near to Him. It is a love and a personal, intimate relationship He desires. And that knowledge really comes from just learning more about who He is, how He wants to shepherd and guide us, and walk with us, and how He wants to conform us to the very likeness of Christ. So, are we those who are cooperating, responding, and hastening His soon return? We know that is what is on His heart. So, there is more. This concept has actually been a theme for our family retreats that we have had at the end of the year. In the last few years we have gathered together as a larger group of personal families.

### **The Vastness of Christ**

We are just reminded again that wherever we are in life, there is more to see and to know of Him and more that He wants to reveal of Himself. God's heart is to have a bride for His Son. We have not arrived at that wedding day yet, so we know there is more. But even when we arrive at that wedding day, praise the Lord, we will be forever with Him, learning more about how fantastic, how marvelous, how great, and how worthy He is. And we are blessed to be a part of that chosen bride, that one body, that one church, all these pictures of the intimacy that He wants with us, that personal relationship, that corporate relationship. So, it is an eternal relationship, looking for that wedding day. Now we see dimly; we see as in a mirror. But that day we will see fully, and we will know fully as we are known fully today. Praise the Lord.

Therefore, we keep looking to Him for what is more, for what is on His heart. How do we press on so that at the end of our lives, like Paul, we can say we have finished the race, we have run the course the Lord has put before us, and reached that which is on His heart, the fullness of all that is on His heart. No matter where we are in our Christian walk, the danger is always of settling or stopping short of the fullness of what is on the Lord's heart and seeing the fullness of all He desires.

Praise the Lord. We know that He who has begun a good work will complete that work, but we have a part in it. We need to respond to His calling; we need to respond to His love, and we need to respond to His glorious eternal purpose that He has brought us into.

### **Outline**

Now, those are not the points that I will talk about this morning, but we do need to be those who are responding as we know. The Lord has put on my heart to share three thoughts this morning, some simple thoughts on how to press upward toward the fullness of Christ.

So, if you want a roadmap for the time, the first point is really beware of settling down, of that tendency of man to stop or even backslide. The second is to press on and pursue Christ, we need to hold on to this heavenly vision. We need to keep that which has captured us holding us. And third, we need to remain teachable through repentance and returning to the Lord.

### **Awareness of the Tendency to Settle**

So, we will talk about this matter of settling down. In pressing onward, we must always be alert not to settle, not to be comfortable in this world. We see this throughout the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, really. You will remember even when the Lord sent Zerubbabel back to build the temple, it was not long before those who returned started to settle.

And the story goes on over and over where we become comfortable in our settings, we are comfortable in this world. And we forget that we are but pilgrims and sojourners on this journey. This is not our home, but we want to find our home. It is especially true that we live in a country that is very prosperous, and we need to be cognizant of that fact, that this is not where we find our rest in our life.

### **The Life of Jacob**

So, the life of Jacob can teach us much about many things, but it can definitely teach us much about the issue of how to keep pressing on. So just a little bit of background. As you know, his beginning was very, very good. He dwelt in tents with Abraham, his grandfather, who was looking for that city with foundations, who was pressing on to the vision that he had received.

And Jacob seemed to have a listening ear. He longed to have that birthright, and his brother Esau sold it to him for just a cup of soup. But Jacob knew and seemed to have a heart for that, that was important. Then we know that he deceived his father to steal the blessing. This was masterminded by his mother, Rebecca, who had a vision of what the Lord wanted, but she also thought, "Well, maybe I need to help the Lord out a little bit." And that is a tendency we can often get into. What was the result? The result was enmity between Jacob and Esau. So Jacob is then sent back to the homeland to find a wife. He came back with four wives, but he was sent back to find one wife. As he goes back to his homeland and his people, he meets Laban, but he also meets his match. He encounters someone who is much more cunning than he is.

The Lord used twenty years to deal with Jacob, teaching him, and guiding him. Then he gets to this point where he is going to return to the promised land. Jacob returns with four wives and eleven children at that time. As they set out, he was still in fear of man. He was fearful of going back and seeing Esau, knowing that there was enmity between them. He prays to the Lord, but he still has a plan. He is coming up with cunning ways to figure it all out, and then he is alone that night. And that is where the Lord comes and meets him where he is. The Lord wrestles and allows Jacob to wrestle with Him all night. He often allows us to wrestle with Him. He wants us to get to the end of ourselves, to

the point where we give up. There we see the Lord touch the socket of Jacob's hip, but Jacob does not let go, he clings to the Lord.

Instead of trying to wrestle and get his own way, he starts to cling to the Lord, and we see just that. What a marvelous encounter with the Lord! What a marvelous revelation to be captured by! Jacob even says that is when he names the place Peniel. As he does that, he says, "I have seen God face to face, and I have not died." What a wonderful declaration! We have that opportunity to see the Lord face to face daily, to see what is on His heart.

The Lord gives Jacob a new name. He says, "Your name is Israel." However, after that time, in the record of the Bible, we see that the Lord continues to sometimes use the name Jacob and sometimes use the name Israel. Why is that the case? There is still much in Jacob that has to be dealt with and worked out.

As we look, there were several saints in the Bible whose names got changed over time. We see Abraham, but we never see Abraham's name, Abram, used again after he gets his new name. We see this in Paul. When Paul gets his new name, he is now Paul. However, for Simon Peter and Jacob, their names are used depending on various circumstances.

So here was Jacob following this great revelation, and he says, "Esau, I will meet you down in Seir." But then he goes over to Succoth, and Jacob is still doing some planning and thinking. He builds himself a house and several other things. From Succoth, he moves over to Shechem. Now here he seems to have forgotten the vow that he made in chapter 28 of Genesis, where he met the Lord at Bethel and he said, "Lord, if You bring me back to this place." And now he stops thirty miles short of where the Lord really wants him to be, and he was actually there for a number of years. As he is in Shechem, he seems to be losing that alertness and carefulness. As he does, the interaction between the people and Jacob's tribe seems to increase. Ultimately, we see Dinah got raped, and his sons come up with their clever plan of using circumcision to take advantage of and murder the people.

### **The Tendency to Settle**

I think as we are moving along in the Lord, often we have these encounters, but then, step by step, we stop inquiring of the Lord. We do not see Jacob inquiring of the Lord and being told to go to Shechem. We will see later that the Lord does come back and speaks to Jacob, giving him direction.

So why do we have this tendency to settle? What is it that is natural in man to settle? Sometimes we are just looking for rest; we are just tired; we are worn out. Life can be difficult, or we may be using our own strength to try to live the Christian life. And so, we are tired and looking for rest. Or we may just become satisfied. I have been so blessed; I have all I need. And we do not realize we are so far short of really knowing the fullness that is on the Lord's heart. There may be other times when we just lose a sense of urgency. If we know the Lord's heart is to return and He wants a bride, there should

be that constant sense of urgency for the Lord to come and get all He desires. But sometimes we get comfortable and lose that sense of urgency.

### **The Search for Rest**

I want to take a few minutes to talk about this search for rest. There seems to be a quest for settling. This often happens when we are looking for rest. As we pursue the Lord, the Lord has actually promised in Exodus 33:14: “My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest.” We see rest as a very important concept in the Bible. It appears over five hundred times and probably many more times in different references. Naturally, we do not think of pressing on with the Lord and rest as being equivalent. But the fact is, we are only at rest when we are running the race that the Lord has set before us; when we are in His presence, walking step by step with Him.

Rest is not a physical state. Part of our problem is that we have definitions we cling to, and we think of rest as, “I am going to go back, sit in my lounge chair, and kick my feet up and do nothing,” or, “I am just going to spend some time to myself.” But that is not rest. As we see it in the Bible, rest is not a vegetative state, nor is it a self-indulgent state. Rest can be very, very active. Rest, as a matter of fact, is when the Lord is being satisfied, when His will is being done. We see that God, after creation, rested. Well, He did not just kick back and sit in the lazy boy. What was God doing? He was enjoying His creation. He was walking and fellowshiping with man in the cool of the day; His rest was being together. And our rest is truly in the presence of the Lord.

Matthew 11:28-30: “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

### **The Lord Was with Joseph**

I love this contrast between Jacob and his son Joseph. We see in Joseph, the son of Jacob, that there seems to be an entering into this rest of faith, even in the most trying circumstances. From the world's perspective, Joseph's life was very challenging and difficult. He was wrongly enslaved, wrongly accused, and imprisoned. Even when he was elevated to second in command of all Egypt, that was not a restful time. That was not a place to be at rest from the world's perspective.

But we have the wonderful record in the Bible where the Lord says, “The Lord was with Joseph, and the Lord prospered Joseph.” It was an amazing thing. As Joseph really walked with the Lord, he was often confused. He did not necessarily know what was going on, but he seemed to have that walk and trust that the Lord will care for me, the Lord will keep me. The Lord has a plan that is beyond even what I can see.

And we see that when he has his second son, Ephraim, he names him, saying, “I name him Ephraim because God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.” He sees that God is receiving glory and many are blessed through Joseph in that place. We

need to come to the Lord; we need to be yoked with Him and learn of Him. We want to be like Paul, claiming that we are not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

So, when the Lord gives us that vision, when He gives of Himself so magnificently, we need to be very cautious not to settle, not to pull up short of what the Lord's heart and desire is.

### **Holding Fast to the Heavenly Vision**

This really brings me to the second point of pursuing Christ, and that is we have to hold fast to the heavenly vision. Paul, before King Agrippa, says, "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision."

In Hebrews 12:1-2: "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, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

As we said, Jacob had received this great vision, an encounter with the Lord at Bethel originally. And then he had that declaration at Peniel: "I have seen God face to face." And yet that was no guarantee of an abiding daily faithfulness. We need to see how wretched we are in the light of Christ. How wretched we are, but how wonderful a place that He has put us in Christ, what a provision He has made for us. And when we see that, we need to enter in and live in the good of it. And that is where we find Jacob in Shechem, not quite living in this new name that he had received. We need to see that in Christ we are His own possession. He has made us a royal priesthood. He is making us into a bride ready for His return. What a wonderful place to be! And we can depend upon Him.

I think as we continue to pursue Christ we always need to come back. And it is not one heavenly vision, as we said. It is one heavenly vision in the fact that it is Christ. But Christ is so magnificent in what He wants to bring us into; it is really a dependent life. I think one of the biggest challenges is that we are taught from the earliest age to be independent, and we need to be those who are totally dependent.

### **The Shepherd and His Sheep**

The Lord gives us another beautiful picture of the intimate relationship He desires in the Bible with this whole relationship of sheep and shepherd. The Lord desires to be our Shepherd King. This is certainly a relationship that Jacob knew, as being a shepherd was his profession.

Sheep, interestingly enough, unlike any other animals, are completely helpless. They really do not have any instincts. They need the shepherd for safety, for food, and for every aspect of their lives. Another interesting aspect to me is that over time, sheep are not made smarter. As sheep, we are not trying to learn how to live the Christian life. Instead, what sheep are learning is who their shepherd is, where their safety is, and

understanding that they need to walk moment by moment, recognizing how wonderful their shepherd is.

Sheep do not just come and say, "It is wintertime, now it is time to move over to this field over here." Or "Well, this is the same thing we do every time, every year, and now it is time to do it." That is not where the sheep finds itself. He is constantly just looking and walking where the shepherd is, except when he wanders away. And faithfully, the shepherd goes back to bring him in. We need to know our shepherd, and we need to be constantly allowing Him to protect us, to keep us from settling, and to keep us from going astray in any way. Often we take something the Lord has done for us, and then we want to use it to interpret what His will for us is going forward. But the real question is, all we need to do is ask Him. He is the one who knows what His will is. He is the one who knows every step of the way. The sheep's life is simply to stay close to the shepherd. When you are staying close to the shepherd, the Lord makes this reference. The Lord Jesus Himself, in John 10:27-28, says, "'My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.'

What a tremendous promise we have from our Lord Jesus. Jacob met the Lord face to face, and he received this great revelation, yet he was still struggling with a certain fear of man. He was still struggling to wholly trust and depend upon the Lord. But praise the Lord, He is constantly working, He is constantly speaking to us, and He is constantly calling us to come back to Him. He is the living Word, and the Word is active; the Word is very powerful. Jesus is the Word. We need to be those who are constantly coming and looking to His Word, listening for His Word, and being very cautious to measure everything against His Word.

The question is, do we spend that time meditating and hearing from Him? In today's world, there are a lot of words. Technology has really sped up things. We get bombarded constantly. We have pop-ups, we have news feeds, and we have constant instant messaging.

### **Discerning Truth in a Distracted World**

All of these things are just really assaulting us and trying to steal away our attention. We have AI which is this whole constant tracking of everything that we look at so that more things can be fed to distract and draw our attention. And the question is, we need to be conscious of that. We cannot escape some of these things in the world, but how do they captivate us? Are we captivated by the Lord, and His protecting us?

So, one of the things that always amazed me is that as a young boy, I was a paperboy. Now there are probably a few in this room who are on the younger side and do not even know what a paperboy is! So, I used to have a bike, and I had the bags on both sides. 365 days a year I had to drive around and throw newspapers. That was the only way we got the news, and you had one hour of news on TV, and then you had the newspaper where people could get the sports stories and the international stories and

everything that was going on. And it is a great profession, by the way, but that is for another day. I always thought, okay, I am bringing people information; I am educating people. But the phenomenon I noticed was that as people would read a story in the newspaper, and if there was something in that story they knew about, such as their profession or about a topic that they were very up to speed on, they would say, "Well, this is not right, and this is not true; half of the story is false. And they would be able to discern between that which was true and that which was false. Then they would read nine other stories in the same newspaper. What I noticed was that when they read the nine other stories that they did not know anything about or very little about, it would form their opinion. They would take this as the truth because they knew nothing else.

And it is like, if the story you knew something about, you understood the reporter had limited information and was half untrue, how could the other nine not be untrue? But yet those things impact us. Today we have the issue of where we get these sensational headlines. Then we say, "Wow, really?" If you read the story, it is like, well, wait a minute, that headline had nothing to do with that story.

But yet if we did not read the story, with that headline, we may go tell several other people, "Did you know what happened here?" And we are spreading untruth. It is very, very critical in this day that we come back and always remember the Word of God is truth. Jesus is the Word, and we need to measure and track everything against that Word. We will get a lot of information, but we only spread the truth, which is the Lord. I think as we press on for more, we always want to remember we are not trying to eat more of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. We are trying to eat more of the tree of life. We are trying to spend more time in His presence, and He will guide and protect us.

### **More About Jesus Would I Know**

As I think about that whole aspect, it reminds me of a hymn, "More About Jesus Would I Know."

"More about Jesus would I know, More of His grace to others show; More of His saving fulness see, More of His love who died for me."

"More about Jesus let me learn, More of His holy will discern; Spirit of God my teacher be, Showing the things of Christ to me."

"More about Jesus; in His Word, Holding communion with my Lord; Hearing His voice in every line, Making each faithful saying mine."

"More about Jesus; on His throne, Riches in glory all His own; More of His kingdom's sure increase; More of His coming, Prince of Peace."

By God's grace, we need to really cut off things that stumble us and again look to Him to guide, protect, and shepherd us, even in the midst of the challenges of this life.

That is really first love: fixing our eyes on Him and inquiring about everything. When we are in first love, we do not do anything without conversing or having that

conversation. Often we get into these challenges: "It is my time or my schedule." The fact is, if we have died with Christ and the life I live is now Christ in me, it is not my time; it is not my schedule. So, Lord, what do You want to do with Your time? What do You want to do with Your schedule? Even if we have to make a schedule, Lord, how do You want to adjust it as I go through this day. As a simple example, as I get older and older I am reminded that we need to constantly be those in prayer. That is our interfacing communion with the Lord.

### **The Importance of Prayer**

And as we are in prayer again, we know that His presence is with us. I will give you a very simple example. My wife spends a lot of time when I get ready to do a job around the house reminding me, "Did you pray?" Or as we go along, she asks, "Have you prayed?" This constant practice of just praying.

A number of years back, my uncle and I, two godly men, were going to change the pipes in the attic because we were getting pin leaks in these old pipes. We knew what we were doing, so we went about our business. As we worked, about halfway through, I slipped off one of the rafters, and my foot went through the ceiling. Now I am dangling, looking down at this pile of sheetrock and insulation on the master bed. And there was my wife standing, looking up. And the reminder was that we did not pray. Now, what I want to caution you on is that I am not saying if you pray, these things do not happen. But if you pray, you know that the Lord is with you and that you are in the will of the Lord. There is rest as you walk through what are going to be challenges in life.

When we do not pray, we see the consequences that even Jacob had there at Shechem. Our choices impact not only us, but everyone around us, and they can be quite devastating. As opposed to that, we can be in affliction and difficulty, and if we have prayed and stayed in communion with the Lord, there can be much blessing. It is a perspective of the Lord's viewpoint versus ours.

Unfortunately, too often we are like Jacob, where it is not until we get into big trouble that we call upon the Lord, and we turn back to Him. First thing in the morning, we have the opportunity to draw near to Him and to stay in that place of constant communion again. It is not our time; it is His time.

### **Repent and Return**

Ultimately, we see Jacob (and our brother Jim even at the table made reference to it) in Genesis 48:15, when Jacob is old, there he is, blessing Joseph's sons. And he says, "God has been my shepherd all my life, and He has redeemed me from all evil." Praise the Lord. He is doing that work, and He will do that work.

But the point is, are we those who are responding? Are we those who are remaining near to His presence? This really brings me to the last point I want to fellowship about, which is remaining teachable. How do we remain teachable? Well, there is a call that the Lord gives us to repent and return.

God knows the tendency of His sheep is to wander. We wander away from the flock; we wander away from Him. But He has made a way for us to return. He says, "Repent and return." One of the first verses we have our children memorize is I John 1:9. What a glorious promise from the Lord! The question is, are we living in the good of that?

So, by God's grace, we have these marvelous visions and revelations of who He is and what He wants. We meet the Lord face to face, and we are forever changed. But do we continue in that place, in that grace, or do we begin to walk by our own thoughts, allowing the old man to govern and falling short of what the Lord desires?

Shechem was really a crisis in Jacob's life, but God did not leave him alone. Whom He loves He does discipline. He continues to work, and when we respond, we see there is a glorious end and a glorious purpose. So may we continue to have this heart of repentance and returning.

### **Call to Repent and Return**

In Genesis 35:1-3, we see that the Lord begins to speak again to Jacob after Shechem. "Then God said to Jacob: Arise, go up to Bethel and live there, and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau."

So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods which are among you, and purify yourselves and change your garments; and let us arise and go up to Bethel, and I will make an altar there to God."

And Jacob returned to the house of God, to where the Lord had told him to be. In the Lord's loving kindness and faithfulness, He is always drawing us back to where He is. Since the fall of man, He has been working toward this recovery. We see at the end of Malachi, the verses we read at the very beginning, the Lord's call to repent and return.

And then we see when the Lord does come the first time to begin the New Testament, that call is, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." And then we get to Revelation, and what is the Lord still saying to His church? He is saying, "Repent and return. Come back to your first love. Repent of where you have strayed." Sometimes it may just be an attitude; it may be a thought, but we have this glorious opportunity to repent of that, to return, and to be walking with Him.

In Revelation 2:4-5 the Lord tells the church at Ephesus: "But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 'Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first;'"

In Revelation 3:19, the Lord tells the church at Laodicea: "Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent."

During our time, even during our family retreat at the end of the year, we were actually looking at the Book of Malachi together with this thought: this wonderful gift of repentance. My wife had stories for the young children every day that really focused on

this aspect of repentance. It was amazing just to sit and reflect upon this gift the Lord has given us.

We often think of repentance as, "I have to repent because I have done something bad." But the fact is, it is a great and marvelous gift. The longer we walk with the Lord, which I know many of you understand, the more we see that we need to repent multiple times a day. And it is not because we are sinning more and more, but because we see our wretched selves in the light of Christ. And we want to repent because we also see His marvelous provision for us in Christ. And so we fall into this place of, may we be those who are quick to repent, quick to be restored. The Lord has so much that He needs to work in us, and it is so much easier His way. Jacob learned some of these lessons the very hard way, and too often we do.

But we remember that we have the opportunity to repent and return. Remember the opportunity to constantly be restoring that relationship with the Lord. When He does that work, as He did in Joseph's life, there is rest, there is glory to God, and there is purpose in what He is doing. He is tenderly shaping us, molding us, and working in exactly what He desires.

### **Iron and Fire**

As we get towards the end of the time, I would like to read something concerning this whole aspect of remaining teachable and moldable that our brother Evan Hopkins wrote. It is a little bit long, but this is what our brother wrote:

"If a piece of iron could speak, what would it say? What would it say about itself? I am dark, I am cold, I am hard, I am stiff. But if you put that piece of iron in the fire, there is a change that takes place. Now the iron is still iron, but the iron and the fire seem to have come into a different state. The iron has now ceased to be dark, cold, and brittle, and it starts to be moldable; it starts to glow. And the iron would not glory in itself; it is the work of the fire that keeps it glowing and bright."

Our brother goes on to say: "It is true of believers; in ourselves, we are cold and carnal. If left to ourselves, we inevitably fall into the law of captivity of sin, which is in our members. But it is our privilege to enter into fellowship with Christ and abide in Him. In Him is life, purity, and power. In Christ, whose Spirit can penetrate into every part of our being, the believer is no longer carnal but spiritual. We are no longer overcome by sin and brought into captivity; instead, we are set free from the law of sin and death and preserved in a condition of deliverance."

As believers, we cannot glory in ourselves. We cannot glory in a state of purity that we have obtained or even in the great vision that we have seen. Our existence is in Christ Jesus alone. We are like that piece of iron; the moment we are withdrawn from the furnace, the coldness and hardness begin to return. But as long as we are near to that fire, we do not return to our natural state. But the influence of the fire counteracts that tendency to return back to who we are naturally.

## Conclusion

Jesus has won this victory. And so, pressing on is not a challenge. Pressing on is staying in, allowing His life that He has put in us to come forth to do all that He desires to bring us into the victory that is His life.

So may we be those who are asking the Lord, “Lord, give us a vision of the beauty of Christ. Give us that vision of You upon Your throne. Give us that vision of our lives as royal priests and give us vision of Your longing for a bride. Give us that vision of the glory of the Lord.” And may that vision keep us; may it cause us to press on until the reality of the vision is fulfilled, until the fullness of what is on the Lord’s heart is gained and He is satisfied. Because when He is satisfied, we truly are satisfied. And as we walk on this earth, may we be very watchful not to settle or come up short of this vision, to come up short of all that He has provided for us.

And when we stray, or when we depart even for a moment, maybe we have a thought that departs. May we be quick to repent and return to take hold of the wonderful promises the Lord has given us. Because in His presence, not only is there rest, but there is also always more to come into, more to see, and more to enjoy. It is a glorious destination, and we want to press on until He is fully satisfied.

Let us pray.

*Lord, we do want to be those who allow You to gain all of Your heart's desire, to be like Jacob, who said, “Lord, You have been our shepherd; You have guided us and redeemed us from all evil.” But Lord, may we be quick to be those who allow You to do that work in a way that is unto Your glory and in a way that is a blessing even to others in this world. Lord, instead of challenges and difficulties, we want to be those who are conscious of our natural ways of settling. But Lord, You have overcome. You have given life and shown us something of Yourself. As we cling to that and cling to You, You will bring us into more and more. And Lord, we thank You for Your wonderful promises, this promise, and this call to repent and return to stay in this place of constant communion with You. Lord, take even these feeble words this morning. What is of man, may we forget; but what is of Christ and what You want us to hear, may You plant that in our hearts. And may we continue to walk in the reality of this marvelous, this glorious, personal, and intimate relationship, and corporate relationship, we have with You. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

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