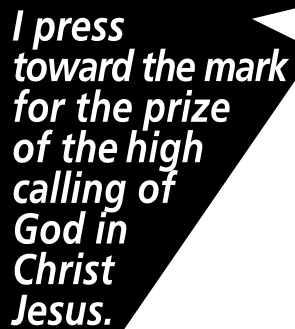


SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 10



I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:14

NEVER LOOK BACK

Scripture Texts: Luke 9:62, Hebrews 12:25-29; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 3:13-14; Mark 13:13

He who turns from following Christ loses his salvation. God is going to allow severe testings to shake off the weak and false, and keep the strong and true. God has provided means, through His grace, whereby we may stand. We must endure to the end to be finally saved.

Prayer is often requested for the unsaved. This is good, but we must also pray for the saints. (Read **Ephesians 6:18; 2 Timothy 1:3**). Think back of many seemingly strong saints who made a strong start, but failed to finish the race. This is why we should pray for one another. As Satan's attacks increase, how much will our prayers for ourselves and for each other have to do with our enduring unto the end?

MEMORY VERSE: *Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but 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*

Hand to the Plow

Luke 9:62 When a man starts to plow a field, he plans a straight line and sets a point on the farther side toward which to drive. To take his eyes from that point and look back would turn him from the straight course. He would miss the goal. Jesus, in the previous five verses, had been talking with three who wanted to follow Him if it did not require a complete break with their former lives. Jesus made it clear that no one can serve Him without a clean break with sin and complete dedication to Him. God has laid a straight line for us to plow spiritually—a holy life for us to live. He set a goal for us to work toward—eternal life with Him. One who starts the Christian life, then looks back, wishing again for the world's pleasures and comforts, is not a fit member of God's kingdom—he is not a child of God. The words are "**looking back**," present tense. While he is looking, he is unfit. He can repent of his looking back (backsliding), if he has not gone too far, and again plow a straight furrow. But many, yes most, never do. It is dangerous to look back. REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE (**Genesis 19:1-26**).

A Final Shaking Off

Hebrews 12:25-29 Those who refused, or disobeyed, **him that spake on earth**—Moses, the mediator of the old covenant—were punished. Much greater punishment will be for those who **turn away from him that speaketh from heaven**—Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, the Gospel (**John 1:17**). Jesus spoke **from heaven** because He came from heaven (**John 8:23**). God's voice **shook the earth** when He gave the law on Mount Sinai. Now He promises to shake **once more both earth and heaven** (**Haggai 2:6-7**). Why? To remove all that can be shaken off and keep all that are so firmly anchored they **cannot be shaken** loose. **Things that are made**—made by man, purely human, of the earth, will be shaken off. The things of God will remain, people who are **born of God**, and led by His Spirit.

How can we be ones who remain? God's kingdom **cannot be moved**. In it He reigns in the hearts of His saved ones. He provides grace sufficient to withstand all shakings. **Let us have grace**—take it, use it. Without it we cannot **serve God acceptably . . .**" God receives no burnt offering not kindled by fire from His own altar." (Adam Clarke)

Since there is such great danger in looking or turning back, we cannot afford to let conditions and situations affect our position with God. God's grace is sufficient for us (**2 Corinthians 12:9**). We cannot afford to allow

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our position to depend upon our companions. Their strength is not sufficient for us. Their weakness can pull us down. We need one another's prayers, but God has so designed that we can make it if no one else prays for us. If we use the grace He gives us now, He will give more as needed. We stand by being filled with the Holy Spirit—**this grace wherein we stand (Romans 5:2).**

A Way to Escape

1 Corinthians 10:13 Satan pursues us to tempt and destroy. Looking back is a spiritual condition which begins in the mind. Actions depend on thoughts. Thoughts of evil will weaken one's hold on God, and he will fall when the shaking time comes. **God is faithful . . . with the temptation He makes a way to escape.** He supplies grace equal to the need. To avoid sin and do what is right, look for the way to escape. It is always there. No one can say when he falls into sin, "I can't help it." When God sees faith and a desire for a way out, He opens the way—always.

Reward for Enduring

Philippians 3:13-14 Paul had not yet finished his course, completed his work, or obtained his crown. So he pressed on **toward the mark** or goal to which God called him. With strong exertion, he cut out all other interests. He did not even look to the left or to the right. **Forgetting . . . things . . . behind**—Paul did not neglect obligations or fail to make right past sins, but he did not look back to the world in indecision, nor turn in desire to his old life of companions. When he repented he left the old life and began a new one. As Paul kept his eyes on the mark, so must we. That mark is Jesus.

Mark 13:13 **Ye shall be hated**—The Church of God and the people of the world are on opposite sides, different spirits motivate them, they serve different masters. Therefore the world hates the church as it hates Christ. **For my name's sake**—because we are His. **He that shall endure**—continue **unto the end** in the life of faith—**he shall be saved.** He shall receive the final phase of salvation: the resurrection of the body in an incorruptible state, entrance to Heaven, and a crown of life. No promise of this is ever given to one who puts his hand to the plough and then looks back and goes into sin. It is for those only whom death finds abiding in Christ.

Are we praying for those who persecute our brethren and ourselves as we are praying for our brethren who are being persecuted? Is not the reward worth the commitment?

JUST A THOUGHT

**No farmer ever plowed a field by turning it
over in his mind.**