



## **“Strive Forward”**

**Text: Philippians 3:12-21**

As we stand on the threshold of 2026, many of us have already begun drafting our "New Year's Resolutions." Some have spent these final days of 2025 in deep reflection, mentally preparing for the months ahead, while others are still soaking in the holiday spirit.

Regardless of where you are today, the practice of setting a vision for the year is invaluable. Establishing a "New Year's Resolution" is more than just a tradition; it is a spiritual discipline that:

- Provides a fresh start and renewed motivation.
- Encourages intentional living through self-reflection.
- Build healthier habits and holy routines.

Scripture does not discourage us from looking ahead. In fact, it invites us to be diligent (Proverbs 16:3). However, there is a delicate balance we must maintain. While we set our goals, we must not hold them with a clenched fist. We must remain humble, resting in God's ultimate sovereignty (Proverbs 19:21).

There is a fundamental difference between how the world plans and how a child of God approaches the future. The world views success through the lens of personal preference and self-attainment. As disciples of Christ, however, we are called to plan with spiritual significance in mind. We must align our hearts with God's will rather than defining our objectives based on our own limited wisdom.

### **HEART: Examine our Attitude.**

To move forward in 2026, we must first assess our internal posture. Even the Apostle Paul—the most “successful” missionary in history—refused

to rely on his credentials. Despite planting churches, writing Scripture, and performing miracles, Paul's self-assessment was: *“I have not yet arrived”* (vv. 12-13). He counted his past achievements as “rubbish” compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ.

The greatest threat to your growth in the New Year is the prideful belief that you have already “made it.” When we embrace an “I have arrived” attitude, we face five spiritual dangers: Unteachable Spirit, Legalism, Stagnation, Loss of Passion, Pride. To strive forward, you must maintain a humble heart that is always hungry for more of God.

### **EYES: Evaluate our Focus.**

To strive forward, we must be mindful of what we are pursuing and what is hindering us. Paul describes his life with the singular focus of a runner in vv.13-14.

Paul had one aim: The Goal. This means becoming like Christ and knowing Him fully. To achieve this, he utilized two essential perspectives:

- **Straining Forward:** Pursuing the “upward call” of God with total dedication.
- **Forgetting the Past:** Letting go of things that anchor us to the ground.

Like Lot's wife, looking back with longing or bitterness can cause us to stall. When we fix our eyes on past disappointments, we lose the ability to use our God-given gifts today. Bitterness acts as a weight that prevents us from running the race God has set before us.

### **ASSOCIATION: Discern your Influences.**

In v.17, Paul invites the church to *“keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.”* This was not a statement of

pride, but a sincere reminder that our environment determines our direction. Your associations can build you up or break your future. Consider King Rehoboam (1 Kings 12:8); he had a bright future, but he abandoned the wisdom of godly elders to follow the reckless advice of his peers, leading to a divided kingdom.

As you review your circle from 2025, ask yourself:

- Do they lead me closer to Jesus and challenge me to grow in holiness?
- Are they peacemakers who encourage reconciliation, or do they sow discord?
- Do they offer loving corrections, or do they let me remain in my mistakes?

### **RESPONSE: Assess your Passion.**


The final check for 2026 is to notice what genuinely stirs and moves your heart. While Paul was a man of great strength, his heart remained soft. In v.18, he warns about the “enemies of the cross”—but he does so “even with tears.” To be an enemy of the cross is not just about active opposition; it is about living in a way that denies the cross's power of surrender and separation from sin. Paul identifies three traits of this lifestyle: Living for personal pleasure, greed, or comfort rather than Christ; Boasting in worldly success or sinful lifestyles that should cause grief; Priorities and goals that are entirely horizontal, with no heavenly perspective.


Paul did not respond to sin with anger or self-righteousness; he responded with brokenness. His tears reveal a heart transformed by grace.


### **TRANSFORMATION: Reflect on your Growth.**

Paul presents a clear contrast: we can either live with minds set on earthly things, or we can live as citizens of heaven vv. 19-20. While we live in this world, our identity and home are with Jesus.

As citizens of heaven, we must not be easily caught up in worldly passions or enticed by what the world offers. When we remember that we are just “passing by,” we gain the strength to remain content and avoid being taken captive by the culture around us.

 **Ponder:** If the Apostle Paul who wrote half the New Testament still felt he was a work in progress, how much more should we remain humble? Real growth only begins when we admit we are not there yet. Are you a “finished product” in your own eyes, or are you still a masterpiece in the making?

 **Practical Application** Conduct a “Mirror Audit” of your life using the five points discussed. On a piece of paper, write down: Identify one past hurt, mistake, or “glory day” from 2025 that you need to “forget” and let go of so you can strive forward.

 **Prayer:** Lord, as I enter 2026, I surrender my plans and pride. Forgive me for losing sight of my true purpose. Help me care for what matters to You and see my path clearly. Give me grace to move past the old and strength to pursue Christ. Let my life reflect Your power. In Jesus' name, Amen.

“As we strive forward in the new year, may we keep our focus on Jesus, for He gives us strength to run the race ahead.”