

**TIME
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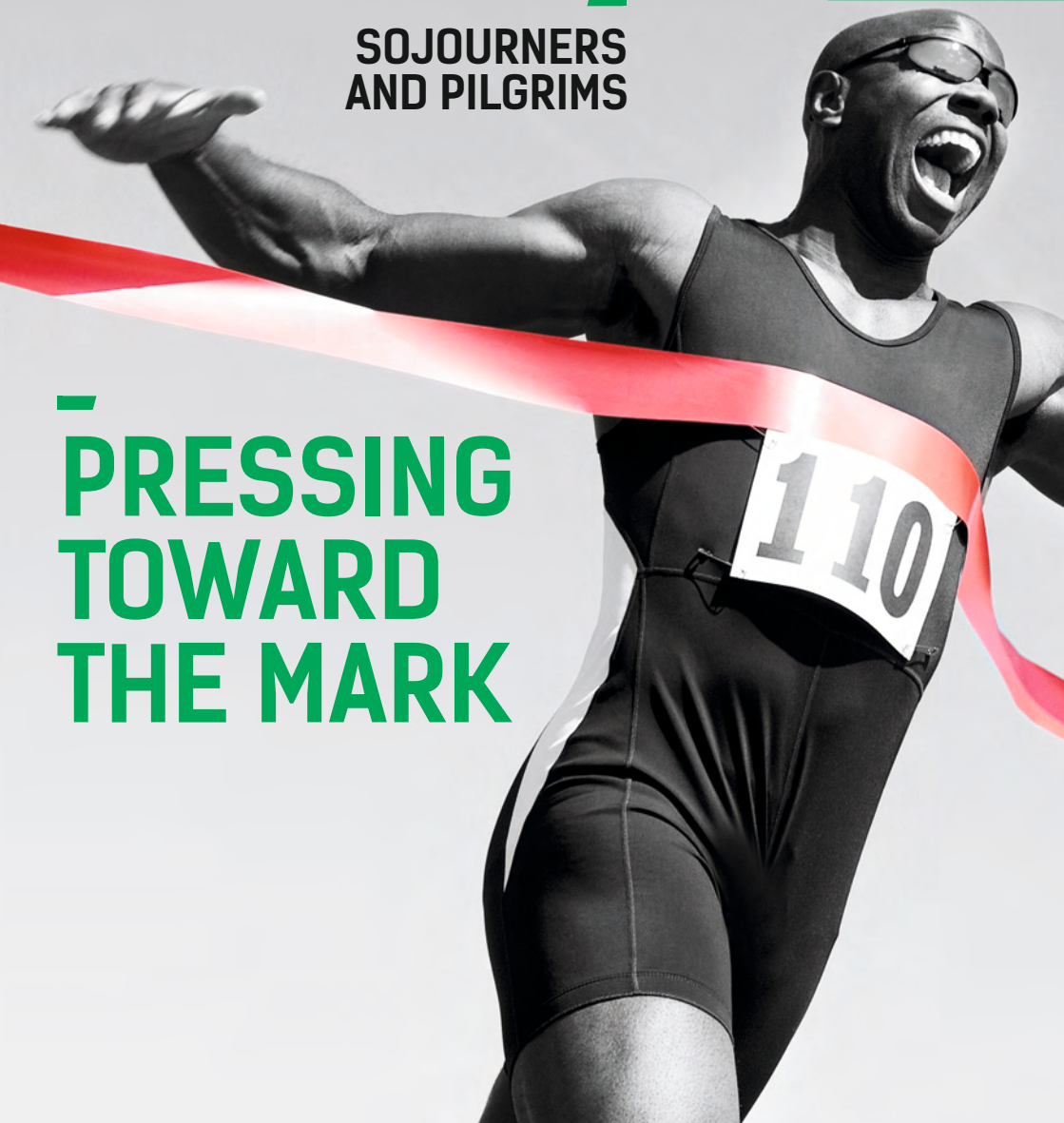
AWAKE

CALLING THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST TO WATCH & BE ALERT

Spring 2026

**SOJOURNERS
AND PILGRIMS**

**PRESSING
TOWARD
THE MARK**





Christian
Ministerial
Fellowship
International

TIME TO AWAKE is the official
magazine of Christian Ministerial
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CMFI exists to advance the
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a fellowship for the furtherance
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of the gospel of the Lord Jesus
Christ through associated
Biblical churches and ministries.

*"And do this, knowing the
time, that now it is high time to
awake out of sleep; for now our
salvation is nearer than when we
first believed." Rom. 13:11*

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FROM THE EDITOR



Paul Sherbird
Secretary, CMFI

In highlighting Paul's aim to, "press on to the mark" the articles within contain some challenging exhortations to follow Paul's example. We should take seriously the Biblical exhortations to live a holy, dedicated life that brings glory to our Lord, and that testifies to the reality of a born-again life which differs so greatly from the ways of the world. The standard set is high indeed, to be like the Lord Himself, and left to ourselves none could achieve it. But we are not left alone, we have the promises of the help of the Holy Spirit, a Shepherd to lead, and the keeping power of our God who began a good work and will complete it (Phil. 1:6; Jude 24).

And, let us not forget that we have one another in mutually supportive and encouraging fellowship, and are exhorted to, "strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed" (Heb. 12:12,13). As we press onward for the prize of the upward call, running the race set before us, may we encourage one another, stirring up love and good works, and thereby helping one another to, and then over, the finish line (Heb. 10:24,25). ■

CONTENTS

04 DEVOTIONAL

Toward
The Goal

06 THE MARK



13



10 THE PERSECUTION IN UTTAR PRADESH NORTH INDIA

13 SOJOURNERS AND PILGRIMS

17 GRAIN FOR THE FAMINE

Encouragement to read
good Christian books.

19 PRESS IN, PRESS ON, PRESS FORWARD!

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DEVOTIONAL

TOWARD THE GOAL



Howard Green;
CMFI USA

**“It is one of the devil’s oldest tricks
to discourage Christian believers
by causing them to look back
at what they once were”
(From, Mornings with Tozer; A.W. Tozer)**

TOWARD THE GOAL WITH DETERMINATION AND DEPENDENCE

Paul had one overarching goal in his life of glorifying Jesus, to become like Him, and know Him completely. How fitting that this dear Apostle would write one of the most well-known verses in the New Testament in Philippians 3:14. Paul made it clear that he hadn't attained it yet, but he was pressing toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Paul's life was one of determination and dependence as he pressed on. Let's look together at Paul's living example of pressing onward toward the prize of the upward call and how we should join in imitating him (Philippians 3:17 & 2 Timothy 4:7).

If anyone could have had confidence in the flesh, it was Paul. Just a few verses earlier, he spoke of his roots, pedigree, education, and zeal that he counted as "rubbish" so that he may gain Christ and be found in Him. In our day, we might hear fellow believers and even ministers boast of confidence in the flesh through self-promotion, position, "outwardly successful" churches, and namesake ministries that focus on the preacher, not the Chief-Shepherd. The fact that Paul counted worldly recognition as rubbish should serve as a loving reminder to all of us who want to gain Christ and be found in Him (Philippians 3:8-9).

Paul endured much for Jesus. Still, his daily pressing on wasn't the result of fleshly resolve, but rather a complete dependence on God (Philippians 4:12-13). This utter dependence on God is a common trait that I've observed in almost every on-fire remnant believer

I've known, and I bet you've found this to be true as well. The word that comes to mind is: yielding. It's a yielding of our desires, ambitions, and plans to the will of God (John 15:5). Yielding to and emptying ourselves before God and trusting in Him completely will help us stand and press toward the mark (Galatians 2:20).

Pressing toward the mark means that we forget what lies behind and don't look back (Philippians 3:13). I'm not thinking about reflection and remembering the faithfulness of God, which are biblical and faith-building. But rather anything that would impede our straining forward toward the prize. Satan is our enemy and the accuser of the brethren. Forgetting what lies behind isn't a theological deep dive; it's simply an exhortation to forget and press forward.

Hearing, "Well done, good and faithful servant" from our Lord Jesus is exactly what we are pressing on toward. Paul told us to hold true to or walk by what we've attained. If the ultimate prize is completely knowing, being like, and with our Lord Jesus forever, then we must hold true. The words from Paul mirror so many other exhortations by Jesus to stand, watch, wait, conquer, strengthen what remains, and endure to the end.

Beloved brothers and sisters, Jesus is coming soon. Let's renew our determination and dependence on the Lord as we encourage one another and press on toward the goal together (Philippians 2:1-2).



THE MARK



Pastor Tim McIlwrath

**“I press toward the mark
for the prize
of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”
Phil. 3:14**

We are instructed by the apostle to “press toward the mark.” To press figuratively speaking refers to one who in a race runs swiftly to reach the goal, the finishing line, the mark!

Dear brothers and sisters we are near home, the verse of a hymn we sing says:

**I can hear the chariots rumble
I can see the marching throng
The flurry of God's trumpets
Spells the end of sin and wrong
Regal robes are now unfolding
Heaven's grandstand's all in place
Heaven's choir now assembled
Start to sing "Amazing Grace"**

The King is Coming

Paul states we have something we should all individually and corporately be pressing toward, “the mark”. The Greek word for the word mark is found once: skopos, meaning the distant mark looked at, the goal or end one has in view.

Significantly, it is only found once because there is only one goal, one focus, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

There are many marks in Scripture, but the only one that matters is this one! To miss this mark, we have missed it all! We may have revelation on the “mark of the beast”, “the mark of Cain”, we may rightly mark the ones that “cause division”, but one mark we can never deviate from even a degree is Jesus Christ Himself! Seems too simple? Yet history records too many great men and movements which started so well and ended in shipwreck as deviations from the mark produced wreck and ruin for men, ministries and movements. We read of it in the church at Galatia, the liberty and freedom in Christ was stripped from the church as they deviated back into the yoke of bondage, as false doctrines infiltrated the church claiming it was a necessity for Gentile believers to be circumcised to be saved. The consequences:

For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace (Gal. 5:3,4).

Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? (Gal. 5:7).

To deviate from the mark will have dire consequences to the individual. As pastors, if we deviate, it will be catastrophic to our churches, and lastly it will be devastating to the generation coming behind us!

We are told that the Sun is approximately ninety-three million miles away from God's great earth. If you stood on earth and aimed for the centre of the sun, and set off on that six year journey to reach it, if your calculations were off even by one degree, at the end of that great journey you would miss the centre of the sun by over *1.6 million miles*. Google says, "For context, the diameter of the sun is about 865,000 miles, so an error of 1 degree means you would miss the sun entirely, passing by more than twice its diameter away from its centre."

The Old Paths

The sad reality of our time, particularly in the western church, is that we now are reaping the seeds sown a generation ago by church leaders, who deviated from the old paths and now we live in the consequences of their deviation as Paul

writes to Timothy, "concerning faith have made shipwreck." The tragedy of these times are so many are no longer pressing toward this mark! They have deviated from old paths, that are well proven and trodden for centuries by the faithful saints that have gone before them. Many deviate for popularity, earthly prestige, for personal gain they have stepped away from the highway of holiness and are pursuing their own goals within the context of "church" however their coordinates are off, the tragedy will be many have missed the mark and the cost will be great.

It should be a warning to other parts of the body of Christ in India and across Africa and Asia not to depart, even a degree from the old paths. Don't be deceived by the prosperity gospel, the music movements, the slick made up presentations, the bells and whistles and worldly stages that seem attractive and draw in the crowds. Deception, seducing spirits, doctrines of devils are on the menu! The consequences are a Christless church, a powerless church, no cross and no Pentecost. No supernatural power, just super normal, no voice, with no effect on the world around them, yes their emotions aroused, but lives untouched with the reality of His presence. Worst of all, a generation lost to the powers of darkness and the false religions plundering our nations.

It is truly time for the church in the west to repent of what we have done and cry unto the Lord till He come and rain righteousness upon us. We need the

rivers of His glorious presence filling the local assemblies again, floods of revival, the wind of God blowing, a real holy fear of the one true living God, with holy lives as the fruit of the encounters with Jesus. We cannot deviate a degree! We are near our home, the line is before us, the goal, the mark awaits us - Jesus Christ, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, my Saviour! We are not home, but we will be soon. Finish well, be encouraged, stay the course, it's not what man says, or what churches say, it's the words of the Saviour that matter:

Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord (Mt. 25:23).

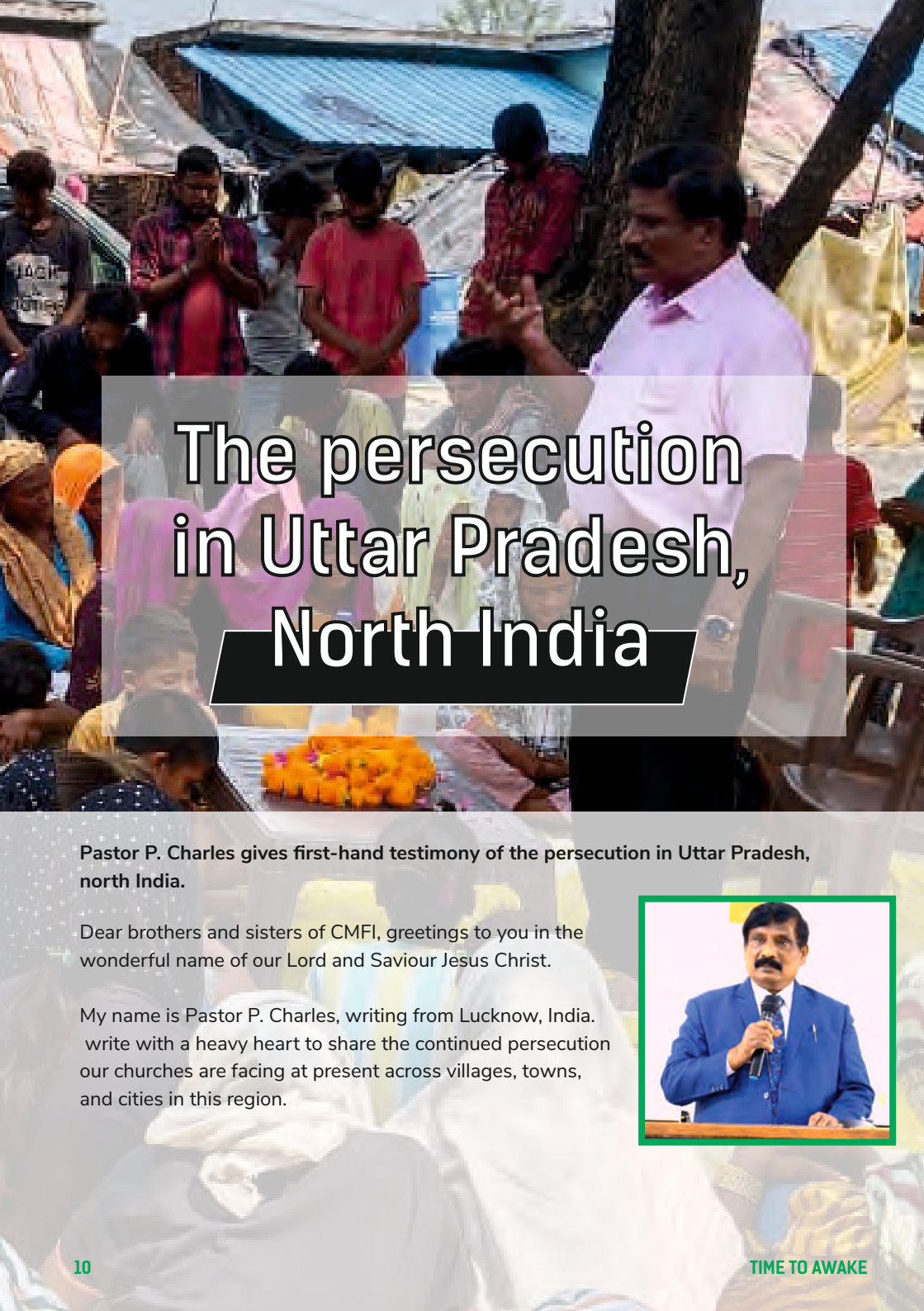
Be encouraged brothers and sisters, although the finish is in sight, we must finish well. Many may feel discouraged, or are in the valley of sickness, disappointment, suffering, struggles and discouragement,

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us (Rom. 8:18).

A famous story often told and worth repeating is the account of an unknown missionary returning from serving Jesus in the great continent of Africa for over forty years. Some say he buried his children there, endured many afflictions and trials, battled sickness, demons,

disappointments but endured all by the grace of God and was kept by His glorious power. Now he journeyed home after forty years. No savings, no earthly home, all his earthly belongings in a simple suitcase. On that great ship home as they boarded 3rd class, it was made known to them that riding first class on the same boat was the president of the USA Theodore Roosevelt. He was returning from a big-game hunting trip. After the long journey across the great Atlantic arriving into New York they prepared to disembark. He was delayed to make way for the president and his entourage. The President stepped off, huge crowds greeted him, the band played, confetti fell from the sky, the old missionary could hear the roars as the president made his way to shore and to his onward destination. The missionary was then advised he could disembark, he walked the gang plank to shore, the streets now empty, the band gone, no cheers, no greeters, no one. Now discouraged, disheartened he sat down, no doubt with tears in his eyes and said to God, "I have served you 40 years, I have endured hardships and great loss, I listened and watched as the President was greeted by thousands and cheered and here I am alone, with no one to greet me" As he sat, he felt an arm around him and a voice from heaven whisper, "You are not home yet!"

Dear brothers and sisters, we are not home, it will be worth it all when we see Jesus! Stay the course, don't deviate a degree, preach the whole council of God, preach Christ and Him crucified, press toward the "Mark"!



The persecution in Uttar Pradesh, North India

Pastor P. Charles gives first-hand testimony of the persecution in Uttar Pradesh, north India.

Dear brothers and sisters of CMFI, greetings to you in the wonderful name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

My name is Pastor P. Charles, writing from Lucknow, India. I write with a heavy heart to share the continued persecution our churches are facing at present across villages, towns, and cities in this region.



For many years, we conducted our church meetings peacefully in a rented marriage hall. However, due to the enforcement of the anti-religious conversion law and increasing opposition, we were forcefully asked to vacate the hall and were no longer permitted to worship there. Since then, we have been worshipping in our homes. Sadly, even house meetings are frequently disturbed, as local authorities and anti-Christian intimidation and obstacles to prevent gatherings.



Several churches have been closed, and believers are being questioned, threatened, and falsely accused in an unlawful manner. My village churches have been officially closed by local police authorities for more than one year. Despite repeated and humble requests, permission from our state government to worship peacefully has been consistently denied. As a result, many of our church families are struggling to meet basic needs such as food, education for children, medical care, and rent. Although the situation is painful, we continue to trust in the Lord and remain committed to do His work with prayer.

Due to continuous pressure and harassment, my family has been forced to vacate thirteen rented houses till today. The house we are currently living in is our fourteenth one. This ongoing displacement has caused serious hardship and instability to us.

Recently, the administrative authorities have advised us to purchase a piece of land and construct a permanent building, stating that worship services and its activities may be conducted there in a regulated and permanent manner. While this guidance has been presented as a constructive and lawful solution, our current circumstances make it extremely difficult to fulfill this requirement as we do not have adequate finance. We as a church are entirely dependent on God alone for this need to be supplied.



We humbly request your prayers, encouragement, and as we walk through this season of persecution and trial. We firmly believe that God will open doors and bring change for the sake of His Kingdom.

Thank you for standing with the persecuted Churches in India. May the Lord bless you abundantly.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor P. Charles, Lucknow, India



Please continue to pray for Pastor Charles and the believers in North India who face such persecution. Despite the great risk and the threats, Pastor Charles faithfully continues his missionary ministry, the photos show him visiting villages to share the gospel, trusting in the Lord for protection

SOJOURNERS AND PILGRIMS



Paul Sherbird
(Secretary CMFI)

Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul (1Pet. 2:11).

It's not often these days that we hear mention of Christian pilgrimage in the Biblical sense. Some do indeed make pilgrimages to the physical sites in Israel which lay claim to be places visited by Jesus Himself, and while such trips may be some benefit in deepening understanding of Biblical events and culture, the true and final goal of the Christian pilgrim is heaven, and for which all believers are called to a living hope, and which we look forward to with longing as our eternal home. The pilgrimage of the follower of Jesus, is therefore not so much physical as spiritual. In Hebrews we read of the faith of the patriarchs that they confessed themselves as, "strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb. 11:13), and that they, "desire a better, that is a heavenly country" (Heb. 11:16), that attitude to a life of faith is given as an example for us to follow; heaven is our goal, and all our endeavours in life should be undertaken with that goal in mind.

In any sense of understanding of a pilgrim there will be the recognition of a single-minded, even obsessive, devotion to obtaining the goal, with every effort being exercised to obtain the goal. This includes the laying aside of all that may distract the pilgrim from obtaining the goal. For the Christian this laying aside of all distractions is exhorted several times. Peter in our text advises to, "abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul"; the writer of Hebrews exhorts to, "lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us" (Heb. 12:2); in Philipians Paul notes

how he, "counted all things loss" before writing that, "I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God" (Phil. 3:8; 14); and we may consider the words of the Lord Jesus when He said, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God" (Lk. 9:62). In light of such exhortations, there must be a determined and fixed attitude to walk the straight and narrow way that leads to life (Mt. 7:13,14).

Temporary Things

We know from the Bible that this earth on which we live has limited lifespan. Peter reminds that a day will come when the heavens and the earth will pass away, be dissolved and melt in fervent heat (2Pet. 3:10-12). It is a very sobering and serious teaching, how vain it is to count our earthly possessions as something to be treasured, and Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount told us not to lay up treasures on earth, but in heaven where neither rust nor moth corrupt, nor do thieves break in and steal (Mt. 6:19,20). Jesus went on to teach that if we put service of God first in our lives above all other concerns, we do not even need to worry about the daily necessities of life; our Heavenly Father knows what we need even before we ask, therefore we should seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Mt. 6:24-33). Such words from our Lord are challenging, worries and concerns can so easily beset us and take a hold upon our thoughts and actions and so become a distraction, even a deterrent, from the whole-hearted service of God to which every

believer is called. We remember the parable of the sower, and Jesus' warning that, "the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word" and so render such a one unfruitful (Mt. 13:22).

All of which does not mean we cannot enjoy and appreciate the material things that this world offers, some things are of course necessary for daily living, but it does mean we must hold to them lightly, not storing up for ourselves treasure on earth, being always ready and willing to let go even of our possessions. We must heed the many warnings of Scripture concerning the danger of riches (see for e.g.: Lk. 12:13-21; 1Tim. 6:9,10; Heb. 10:34; Heb. 13:5; 1Jn. 2:15-17), and let us take note of some wise words in Proverbs, "He who trusts in riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like foliage" (11:28), and, "By humility and fear of the Lord are riches and honour and life" (22:4).

In Genesis 13, Abraham, one of our examples of faith, had to make a decision. His herdsmen were quarrelling with Lot's herdsmen, there was not room for both in the land. Abraham, though being the patriarch and the elder, gave Lot the choice to go right or left, Lot seeing the rich and fertile land of the plain of Jordan, chose what looked best to his eyes. Lot went his way and ended up among the wicked and sinful men of Sodom. Abraham going on his way was met by God and received the covenantal promise of the land for his descendants forever (Gen. 13:15). Taking up the cross to follow Jesus, will come at a cost, and we may well feel deprived of some

worldly goods and pleasures, but how much better, like Abraham, to suffer those losses, while waiting for the city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God (Heb. 11:10), knowing there is eternal treasure stored up in heaven for those who are free from covetousness and choose to serve God rather than mammon.

A Holy Life

So, the Christian pilgrim must be prepared for a life of sacrifice and devotion, walking the narrow way, seeking in all things to please His Lord, setting sight on the eternal home reserved in heaven. Yet there is more than denial of earthly treasure, there must also be the laying aside of all that is sinful and unholy (Heb. 12:2), and a commitment to conduct which is worthy of a citizen of heaven. In Colossians chapter 3 Paul exhorts his readers to, "set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:2), in doing so there must be a putting to death, and a putting off, of those things which are not fitting for a born-again believer who has become a citizen of, and witness to, the kingdom of God. Paul lists many things that should not be part of the believers' 'make-up': fornication, evil desire, covetousness, anger, malice, filthy language, to name a few. Rather the believer must put on the 'new man' who is merciful, kind, humble, forgiving, patient, loving, such attributes are fruits of the Spirit and give evidence that such a one is living and walking in the Spirit (Gal. 5:18-25; see Rom. 8:14). Yes, such conduct may well be mocked, even despised, by the world, yet it must be so

for the Christian pilgrim, as Peter notes, surrender to the lusts of the flesh will bring war into the soul. The way of holiness is also the way of peace for the saint. Confident and assured that heaven awaits and a place is reserved, assured of the Lord's blessing, His help and guidance along the narrow way, at times receiving tantalising and wonderful glimpses of the glories that await, with eyes so fixed, earthly treasures and sinful ways lose their allure, the hand is firmly set to the plough and there can be no turning aside or back from the path to eternal glory.

To Be a Pilgrim

In the 17th century John Bunyan wrote the well-known and much loved book *Pilgrims Progress*. In it he included a poem, known as “To Be a Pilgrim” or “He Who Would Valiant Be”, it well sums up the steadfast, determined and fixed commitment to live the life of one who knows his true treasure to be in heaven, and who will in no way be distracted from his aim to reach the goal of his pilgrimage, the home reserved in heaven. The poem here reproduced in its original form:

Who would true valour see, let him
come hither;

One here will constant be, come
wind, come weather.

There's no discouragement shall
make him once relent

His first avowed intent to be a
pilgrim.

Whoso beset him round with dismal
stories,

Do but themselves confound, his
strength the more is.

No lion can him fright, he'll with a
giant fight,

But he will have a right to be a
pilgrim.

Hobgoblin nor foul fiend can daunt
his spirit;

He knows he at the end will life
inherit.

Then fancies flee away, he'll fear not
what men say,

He'll labour night and day to be a
pilgrim.

May we, with the Lord's help, and strength from the Holy Spirit, set our hearts and minds on the pilgrimage set before us, keeping ourselves from fleshly lusts and unholy conduct, living lives worthy of the kingdom of God, accepting the sacrifices, knowing that as we do so we, “proclaim the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvellous light” (1Pet. 2:9), and so others seeing our whole-hearted commitment may be encouraged to join with us as we press on, passing through this earth, going from strength to strength until the day we appear before God in Zion (Ps. 84:5-7).

Paul Sherbird (Secretary CMFI)

**RECOMMENDED
READING ABOUT
DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF THE BIBLE**

John Mellor served the Lord for many years in DR Congo, and has huge and valuable experience of cross-cultural ministry, which has informed his book which we highly recommend.

Details can be found on the flyer reproduced on the next page.....



GRAIN FOR THE FAMINE

Encouragement to read good Christian books.

A cross-cultural adventure with Jesus; living with, learning from, and loving another people, in the love of God.

The book sets out to show the fundamental importance and feasibility of developing an intimate relationship with the people to whom God has sent one to serve Him.

The author and his wife, Rena, spent 37 years of ministry in the D.R. Congo. Thousands of miles were travelled on foot, by bicycle, in dugout canoes and by Land Rover, visiting innumerable villages with the gospel in the company of Congolese

evangelists, sharing the ministry with the latter.

There was very much one-to-one ministry, healing and deliverance, and other ministries, too.

"John has given this book such a title because he and his wife, Rena, identified so fully with the African people. No wonder he is respected! ... The contents cover a specific time frame and a geographical location. But the principles ... are what any true Christian would want to see exemplified. Settle down for a treat!"

Richard Harrison



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PRESS IN, PRESS ON, PRESS FORWARD!



Pastor Ian Huxham

It is my understanding that gym memberships increase significantly following Christmas, with January being the busiest month of the year for such establishments. It appears that in the natural, most people are only too willing and most keen to lay aside the extra weight they gained over the holidays.

In pursuit of a fitter, healthier body, and all the associated benefits that physical fitness brings, the gym bunny's mantra of, 'no pain, no gain', has become well known and accepted into everyday speech. How sad then, that for many believers, weighed down and so easily ensnared by besetting sin, a similar desire to reach peak spiritual fitness is all too often lacking. Not so for the apostle Paul, he who buffeted his body and disciplined it to bring it into subjection. In many places in scripture, the apostle portrays himself as a determined athlete running a race, eyes fully on the prize, and that 'of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.' This is the 'mark' or the goal he strove for and pressed toward.

And yes, dear reader, there are goals in the Christian life that we are to strive for and train for, that we might run our race with endurance. And teachings that suggest there is 'no striving' in the Christian life, are frankly wrong! Agreed that there should be no strife between us, but make no mistake, we are to strive in the race, to forget those things which are behind and reach forward with every fibre and strained sinew of our bodies, to those things which are ahead, pressing toward the mark. We are to press in, press on, and press forward, and never stop doing so until the race is run and won!

No couch potatoes

This is the approach to our Christian life the apostle urges us to adopt. Why? Because just as an inactive 'couch-potato' gains weight to the detriment of his physical health, so to, the inactive believer enters into a state of passivity and finds it increasingly challenging to run his race. Therefore, passive Christianity is dead Christianity. It may sound harsh to say so, but please do not stop reading at this point, and allow me to explain why I do say so. Passivity can be described as a state of inaction and when used in a grammatical sense it is a structure where the subject receives an action rather than performing it. In other words, passivity would cause us to be inactive in our faith and become merely hearers of the word and not doers of it!

And here is the pastor's little secret to be aware of: In understanding the biblical principle that we shall be known by our fruits, it's less what we say that is noted than that which we are. We may make any number of statements and eloquent speeches regarding our good intentions,

and how as soon as January comes we shall be in that gym, on that treadmill, laying aside every weight, but the road to hell is paved with good intentions. It's not about how we 'talk the talk', or even how we 'walk the walk' on that old treadmill, it's about how we run the race! And it soon becomes evident to all just how serious each of us are about 'pressing toward the mark', even though sometimes we ourselves, can be blinded by our own good intentions and lack the self-awareness to see that we are not moving forward and pressing on as we should.

But passive Christianity is dead Christianity. Just as faith without works is dead:

Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, 'You have faith, and I have works.' Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works (James 2:7-18).

Passive Christianity is dead Christianity just as love without deeds is dead:

But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth (1 John 3:17-18).

Passive Christianity is dead just as grace without holiness is dead:

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your

members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace (Romans 6:12-14).

And passive Christianity is dead just as discipleship without obedience is dead:

“Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).

We may say all the right words, however, we are not known by what we say, but rather what we do. Therefore, a clear indication of a healthy Christian is of one pressing in, pressing on and pressing forward.

A mark to be reached

There must be activity, an action born out of a sincere awareness that there is a fight to be fought, a race to be run, a mark to be reached, a goal to be achieved, and a crown to be obtained. The reality of such awareness caused Paul to run in such a way that he might obtain the prize with certainty, fighting not as one who beats the air, but as one who disciplines his body. Likewise, we must exercise that same discipline also.

If passive Christianity is dead Christianity, then we must be sure to be active! Some examples:

Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief (Hebrews 4:11).

Here the exhortation is to labour, or "make every effort" to enter into the rest found in the spiritual peace and eternal salvation found in Jesus Christ. This exhortation underscores the necessity of active faith and perseverance. It aligns with Paul's encouragement to press toward the mark and also to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. It requires action. It needs effort!

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 ... (Philippians 3:13).

In some translations, the phrase, 'reaching forth' is rendered as 'straining'. The imagery of "straining" not only suggests an athlete in a race, (as previously mentioned) but of one exerting maximum effort to reach the finish line. Therefore, not only are we to labour, or make every effort, we are to make maximum effort. Moreover, just as an athlete trains, and just as Paul explains how he disciplines his body, we must note from the words of Jesus, that this discipline will include self-denial:

Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."

Denying oneself involves a radical reorientation of priorities, of putting Spirit before flesh. We must all see the prize which lies ahead of us so clearly, that it becomes totally worth denying ourselves the carnal pleasures of the world. Just as an athlete will deny himself the comfort of his warm bed and rise at some early hour in order to train in all weathers, so too must we be willing to take up our cross daily if we are to follow Jesus. We will struggle even to fight the good fight if we do not train to do so:

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses (1 Timothy 6:12).

Evidently, Christian life is portrayed here, as a spiritual battle, a struggle and a fight to be fought. The phrase to 'lay hold of eternal life', calls for an active and intentional grasp of the promise of such. Jesus died and rose again that we might have it, but it requires laying hold of.

A prize to be won

Dear reader, if you have made it this far, well done. This is not an article for those looking for an 'easy life'. This is not an article for those that would be just hearers of the word but for those that would be doers of it. This is not an article for those that have merely heard that there is a prize before us but for those who purpose to win it. This is an article for those that fully believing they will one day be in the presence of the Lord, would have a crown to cast before Him. We all have weaknesses; we all struggle with our flesh

and have a natural propensity to give in to it. But if the first step toward physical fitness is simply to take a first step, then the first step toward spiritual fitness is to recognise that we will never win the race if we remain passive. Passive Christianity is dead Christianity. Therefore, we must no longer be passive but instead press in, press on, and press forward, and never stop doing so until the race is run and won!

Forget those things which are behind. Reach forward to those things which are ahead. Press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. As many as are as mature, have this mind: and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. I pray it may be so. In Jesus name. Amen.

Pastor Ian Huxham





CMFI EVENTS

Events schedule for 2026

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

21st - 24th April, 2026,
Ballynhinch, N. Ireland
For details, see back page.

SOUTHWEST UK WEEKEND

27th, 28th June, 2026
Venue: Hope Church, Porthleven, Cornwall

AUTUMN CONFERENCE AND AGM

Dates to be confirmed
Venue: Evangel Church, Sidmouth, Devon



Christian
Ministerial
Fellowship
International

REGIONAL DAYS

Other one-day and weekend events are held throughout the year in various locations in both the UK and Ireland.

INTERNATIONAL

West Africa and Nigeria conferences remain on hold due to visa difficulties.

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CONFERENCE 2026

PRESSING TOWARD THE MARK

Tuesday 21st April – Thursday 23rd April 2026

Starting Tuesday evening finishing Thursday Evening

New Testament Pentecostal Church
17-19 Main Street Ballynahinch, Northern Ireland, UK

Host: Pastor Tim McIlwrath
CMFI Council Member

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation is available at Homestead Hillsborough which is approximately 10-15 min drive from New Testament Pentecostal Church, Ballynahinch.

We have secured a special room rate of £225 for conference attendees. This rate includes a three night stay in a double room (sleeps 2 adults). There are limited triple and single rooms available.

Rates available upon request. Bed linen and towels provided.

BOOKING THROUGH HOST ONLY

<https://homesteadhillsborough.com/>

Payment for accommodation to be made via bank transfer.

Details of bank account will be sent after receiving email for registration.

Other accommodation options are available upon request. Please contact Pastor Tim McIlwrath.

VIA EMAIL: timothymcilwrath@gmail.com

Breakfast provided at the self-catering rooms each morning. Lunch and evening meals provided by the host church over the course of the three days. Tea/coffee & refreshments available throughout the conference.

Attendees will have the opportunity to give towards catering costs etc, via free will offerings during the conference.

AIRPORTS & TRANSPORT TO ACCOMMODATION

Belfast International Airport (BFS) or George Best Belfast City Airport (BHD)

A transport service from either airport to the accommodation is available upon request. We are happy to provide transport to & from accommodation at Homestead Hillsborough during the days of the conference.