

HIGHER GROUND – PHILIPPIANS 3:12-16

INTRODUCTION

1. Are you the kind of person who struggles to not only set goals, but to also stick with it and achieve them?
2. How about in your spiritual life?
3. Do you have any goals to grow in your faith?
4. Do you doubt sometimes if you will be faithful or if you will inherit eternal life?
5. If so, let us consider the hymn, *Higher Ground*, that not only helps us orient our focus where it needs to be but also gives us the encouragement that, with the Lord's help, we can take hold of eternal life (**Phil. 3:12; 1 Tim. 6:12**).

DISCUSSION

I. ON THE UPWARD WAY

- A. *"I'm pressing on the upward way, New heights I'm gaining ev'ry day; Still praying as I'm onward bound, "Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."*
- B. As we begin this song, we are declaring that we are on the upward way, which is to say that we are striving to gain eternal life with the Lord.
- C. As Jesus reminds us, this "way" is only found in Him (**John 14:6**).
- D. The upward way is not easy, and many will refuse it (**Matt. 7:13-14; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; 5:1**).
- E. But if we have chosen to follow Jesus, we must keep pressing on, growing in grace and knowledge – we cannot rest until we reach the goal (**Heb. 5:11-6:2**).
- F. And there is no way we can do this without praying to the Lord to guide and lead us.
- G. We must keep on trusting, loving, and relying on Him (**Phil. 4:6-7; Ps. 23:2-3; 25:5**).

II. NO DESIRE TO STAY

- A. *"My heart has no desire to stay Where doubts arise and fears dismay; Though some may dwell where these abound, My prayer, my aim, is higher ground."*
- B. In the second verse, we are again reminded that traveling on the way with Jesus means we have to change our heart's desires and longings.
- C. As we meditate on this verse, perhaps we should ask ourselves where our treasure is (**Matt. 6:19-21**)?
- D. Are we fully embracing our identity as Kingdom citizens, or do we still have some part of our hearts pining for this world (**Phil. 3:20; 1 Pet. 2:11**)?
- E. Because of God's love in Christ, our hearts should have no desire to be consumed in the passing pleasures of sin (**1 John 2:15-17**).
- F. Instead, we should desire to be conformed into the image of Christ and to do God's will and so we set our mind on heavenly things (**Rom. 12:1-2; Col. 3:1-2**).
- G. Without the Lord and the promises and assurances we have in Christ, we will be lost to the darkness and doubt of this old world (**Jas. 1:27; 4:4**).

HIGHER GROUND – PHILIPPIANS 3:12-16

III. LIVE ABOVE THE WORLD

- A. *“I want to live above the world, Though Satan’s darts at me are hurled; For faith has caught a joyful sound, The song of saints on higher ground.”*
- B. The third stanza continues to build on the idea that we should become more and more detached from this world.
- C. What exactly does it mean to “live above the world?”
- D. God certainly doesn’t call on His people to draw back from the world and have no part in trying to be a good influence **(1 Cor. 5:9-10)**.
- E. No, the Lord wants us to go and engage the world – we are sent out into the world **(John 17:14-19; Matt. 5:13-16)**.
- F. But since the world lies in the power of the evil one, Satan will try his best to draw us away from the Lord **(1 John 5:19; 1 Pet. 5:8; Eph. 2:1-3)**.
- G. What are we to do?
- H. If we keep our eyes on Jesus and trust in His might, He gives us the power and weapons to resist Satan and keep pressing on **(Eph. 6:10-18; Jas. 4:7-8; 1 John 5:4; Matt. 6:13)**.

IV. SCALE THE UTMOST HEIGHT

- A. *“I want to scale the utmost height, And catch a gleam of glory bright; But still I’ll pray till heav’n I’ve found, “Lord, lead me on to higher ground.””*
- B. The fourth and final stanza takes us to the pinnacle of heights, to be with the Lord in eternity.
- C. Again, notice what this verse is saying.
- D. Do you have a personal desire to be with the Lord **(2 Cor. 5:1-5)**?
- E. Do you long to see Him as He is and to witness and share in His glory **(1 John 3:1-3; Rev. 22:4; 2 Cor. 3:18)**?
- F. That should be our goal – that should be what keeps us keeping on with Jesus **(2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 22:20)**.
- G. But until that day comes, in love, faith, prayer, and perseverance we must press on, keeping our eyes on Jesus **(1 Cor. 9:24-27; Heb. 12:1-2)**.

CONCLUSION

1. As each verse draws us ever upward, the refrain is a prayer for God to help us to keep moving forward and to have the heart and character of Jesus as we journey on.
2. *“Lord, lift me up, and let me stand By faith, on heaven’s tableland; A higher plane than I have found, Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.”*
3. Though we sometimes may doubt our own ability to keep moving forward, may we be encouraged that the Lord can make us stand **(Eph. 6:13; Rom. 14:4; 2 Cor. 5:9-10)**.
4. May we put our full confidence in Him.
5. May we keep following Him on to higher ground **(Ps. 61:2; Micah 4:1-2)**.