

## Negativity

Another deterrent to maintaining our course is how we react so negatively to any challenges that we encounter. Let me clear up something right now, **"Many things are not going to work out like we planned them!"** That is partly due to the fact that we do not know everything and often God has something else in mind for us. Also when dealing with other people we have to remember that they have self-centered wills that resist God's best plans for them just like we do. And when things start to go wrong, as far as we are concerned, we start blaming and getting negative almost immediately.

God sent the prophet Jeremiah to the nation of Israel to clear up their wrong ideas about how He felt about them: *"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end (a hopeful outcome)"* (Jeremiah 29:11). But how many times do we automatically begin blaming God and thinking He doesn't like us!

The Apostle Paul's remedy for anxiousness and negativity was to immediately go into prayer bringing God our concerns, stay in an attitude of thankfulness, and set our minds to concentrate on whatever is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, that gives a good report, or are full of virtue and praise (Philippians 4:6-9). David added, *"That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments"* (Psalms 78:7). To stay on track even when difficulties arise in our paths, we have to maintain a positive outlook by focusing on God who is on our side!

## Casting Away Our Confidence

When we forget that God is on our side (Romans 8:31), and allow negative thoughts to control our minds and poison our emotions, we begin to lose our confidence. We start tearing apart our plans, blaming others for their lack of helpfulness, and secretly or openly begin accusing God.



The writer of Hebrews reminds us that after we have done the will of God we have to have patience as we wait for the fulfillment of the promise. It is important that we don't abandon our confidence in God just when we need Him most. He also reminds us that Christians "live by faith" not by what they are presently seeing (Hebrews 10:35-38). We have to learn to lay hold upon the hope that God gives us and never let go!

***"Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind"*** (Romans 14:5b). Determination comes from first settling things in our own minds and hearts. Then we set out to accomplish our goals with God's insight and direction. We don't allow ourselves to grow forgetful or negative while maintaining our confidence in the Lord and His Word. Let's press towards the goal together!

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# "Determination"

## How Christianity Works Series

By Pastor Curt Carter

## Determination

***"For the Lord God will help me, therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed."***

- Isaiah 50:7

***"And it came to pass, ...he (Jesus) steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem"***

- Luke 9:51

***"I press toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"***

- Philippians 3:14

***"This is the last time you'll see me here,"*** they say, ***"I'm never going to be behind bars again!"*** When you have had countless one-on-one meetings with incarcerated men and women, you will have heard that declaration many times leading up to their release. I believe that they are sincere in their desire to never again be imprisoned. But I also can look at the national recidivism rate (how soon someone is rearrested and re-incarcerated.) It tells me that within three years of release, 67.5% will be rearrested and 51.8% will return to jail or prison. The reasons for this are, of course, many and complicated. But I do recognize a Biblical quality in some inmates that has greatly increased their successful return to their families and community. It is their level of godly **determination**. So how do we stay determined to live our lives pleasing to God?



## We Serve a Determined God

We can be encouraged to know that our heavenly Father operates in a very determined way to accomplish His will. In Daniel, it says, "...for that which is determined shall be done..." (11:36), meaning that everything God has planned will unquestionably be carried out. God has determined the length of our lives (Job 14:5), that all mankind would share the same blood, the duration of every nation and its boundaries were determined beforehand by God (Acts 17:26). He also plans to gather all nations together one last time to render His judgment (Zephaniah 3:8).

Jesus, God's Son, also lived His life in a very determined way as our opening verses express. His face was set "like a flint" for Jerusalem where He was to accomplish the predestined will of God upon the cross of Calvary. We should be so grateful that nothing was able to deter Him from finishing the work that the Father had given Him to do. As God's children, we should follow the example given by Jesus and echoed by Paul to continually press toward the goal of living a life pleasing to the Father.

However, anyone who has ever planned to do something realizes all the hindrances to seeing it accomplished. Just try to lose a few pounds, watch your language, control your temper, overcome an addiction, spend more quality time with your loved ones or devotional time with God and see how far you get. Our spirits may be willing but the weakness of our flesh gets us every time. Our once strong determination grows fragile.

## Solving Three Problems

When we consider our difficulty with staying on point or being determined, we should examine three issues:

- ◆ Becoming forgetful
- ◆ Going negative
- ◆ Losing confidence

## Forgetfulness

In the New Testament, the word for determination is also closely tied to the word for "being mindful".

That is because to be determined we have to stay mindful of our past mistakes, our promises, our goals and the details of our carefully thought out plan. The Apostle Paul said to his close friend Timothy, "*Greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy*" (2 Timothy 1:4). It's not a bad idea for us to keep in mind the tears that we have caused others to shed for us to motivate us to stay on track.

James gives us a wonderful study of the danger of forgetfulness in his book (James 1:22-25). He teaches us that we are only deceiving ourselves when we listen to God's Word but never become "doers of the Word", applying the truth practically to our lives. When we forget who we were before God's saving grace found and transformed us, we are bound to repeat our mistakes again and again. However when we remind ourselves daily of God's intervention in our broken lives, live gratefully, and work hard to change the defects in our personalities, we will see God's blessing in our lives.

