

PRESSING ON

I. [Philippians 3:8-16](#) [Habakkuk 3:17-18](#) [Hebrews 12:1-3](#) [2 Timothy 4:7-8](#)

A. [Philippians 3:8-16](#) (ESV) Paul, imprisoned for the sake of the Gospel, not knowing if he'd be set free or executed, who said, *"To live is Christ and to die is gain"* writes the following encouragement: **8** *Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, (WHY?) in order that I may gain Christ* **9** *and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith--* **10** *that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death,* **11** *that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.* **12** *Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me His own.* **13** *Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,* **14** *I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.* **15** *Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.* **16** *Only let us hold true to what we have attained.*

B. The lyrics to that old Bob Dylan song, *"Pressing On"* are borrowed from the Apostle Paul: *"Well I'm pressing on, yes, I'm pressing on, well I'm pressing on to the higher calling of my Lord."* V14 one more time: *"I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."*

C. 2020 has ended. 2021 has begun. As believers, our mission has not changed. Spreading the Good News about Jesus, preaching the Gospel to every creature; making disciples; advancing the Kingdom of God one person at a time; seeking to know Christ and make Him known until the Day He returns; loving God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind and one another as ourselves--none of this has ever changed! SO, we can quit, cower in fear, turn tail and run, escape to a bunker, eat, drink, and be merry (*for tomorrow we die*), OR we can press on!

D. To press on will require ever increasing trust in our Lord. So do you believe He will prove faithful? Will His steadfast love remain steadfast? Will His steadfast love and faithfulness, which have been from of old, really and truly endure forever and ever? Will the God who has called us to trust-in-Him prove trust-worthy? Or will some choose to believe the *father of lies* and chase after his falsehoods and empty promises, guzzling down his poison elixirs, stumbling into *the lake of fire*?

E. Here's the truth fellow believers: We've no other real choice before us but to press on towards the higher calling of our Lord. And when we step across the threshold of heaven's gates into the streets of glory and see all the battle-scarred Saints of Old who've passed before us, will they see a bunch of self-preservationists, whining victims of inconsequential circumstances, or see good and faithful servants who by the strength and grace of God helping them never quit no matter what?! Which will they see?

F. One among that heavenly number will be a lesser known OT Prophet. His name was Habakkuk. (*Say his name three times real fast!*) Here's what he wrote at the end of

his book in the Bible, found in **Habakkuk 3:17-18 (ESV)** *17 Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, 18 yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.*” (That was a good word for 2020 and also a good one for this brand new year! But I have another Scripture to post on our spiritual bulletin boards to bolster our faith and resolve.)

G. Hebrews 12:1-3 (AMP) could be our daily fight song before we head into the arena each day: *12 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses [who by faith have testified to the truth of God’s absolute faithfulness], stripping off every unnecessary weight and the sin which so easily and cleverly entangles us, let us run with endurance and active persistence the race that is set before us, 2 [looking away from all that will distract us and] focusing our eyes on Jesus, who is the Author and Perfecter of faith [the first incentive for our belief and the One who brings our faith to maturity], who for the joy [of accomplishing the goal] set before Him endured the cross, disregarding the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God [revealing His deity, His authority, and the completion of His work]. 3 Just consider and meditate on Him who endured from sinners such bitter hostility against Himself [consider it all in comparison with your trials], so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

H. With this being the first Sunday of the new year, it behooves us to Commune together with the One *Who* for the joy set before Him, endured the cross and scorned its shame. On that cross love and justice met. Our holy and just God could not let sin go unpunished or He'd be neither just or holy. So instead He saw that our sin was imputed to His Son, Jesus, and unleashed His wrath upon Him while the penalty for our sins were paid for in full. And what could be more fierce than God's wrath? One thing: **His Love!** God's love was so fierce, so pure, so precious, so priceless, that He manifested it in the giving of His only Son. (John 3:16) (2 Cor. 5:21) The Bread & Cup remind us...

* Pray & Officiate Communion...

* **Benediction...** The Great Awakening preacher George Whitefield said: "It is better to wear out than to rust out." My prayer is that none of you rust out; rather that you **'keep on keepin' on'** until the Day our Lord calls you home. **2 Timothy 4:7-8 (ESV)** records what Paul wrote Timothy from the Mamertine Prison in Rome before he was beheaded by Nero. May his words be the testimony of each and every one of us when our time finally comes: *7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved His appearing.*

[Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff](#)

[Philippians 3:8-16 \(ESV\)](#)

8 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ **9** and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith-- **10** that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His

death, **11** that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. **12** Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me His own. **13** Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, **14** I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. **15** Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. **16** Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

Habakkuk 3:17-18 (ESV)

17 Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, **18** yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.”

Hebrews 12:1-3 (AMP)

12 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses [who by faith have testified to the truth of God’s absolute faithfulness], stripping off every unnecessary weight and the sin which so easily and cleverly entangles us, let us run with endurance and active persistence the race that is set before us, **2** [looking away from all that will distract us and] focusing our eyes on Jesus, who is the Author and Perfecter of faith [the first incentive for our belief and the One who brings our faith to maturity], who for the joy [of accomplishing the goal] set before Him endured the cross, disregarding the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God [revealing His deity, His authority, and the completion of His work]. **3** Just consider and meditate on Him who endured from sinners such bitter hostility against Himself [consider it all in comparison with your trials], so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

2 Timothy 4:7-8 (ESV)

7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. **8** Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Quote by George Whitefield

"It is better to wear out than to rust out."

Video Clips & Important Articles

"Pressing On" - Bob Dylan

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eVgyfjGlbWY>

How Do You Press On to Make It Your Own? - John Piper

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/how-do-you-press-on-to-make-it-your-own>

"Through It All" by Andraé Crouch Song, Performed by *The Isaacs*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g8hhtja1Gj0>

"Red Letters" - David Crowder
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YqvJXVFedb4>

Bonus Stuff

Galatians 2:20 (NLT)

20 My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

1 Timothy 6:12 (ESV)

12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (ESV)

24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. **25** Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. **26** So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. **27** But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

2 Corinthians 4:7-9 (NIV)

7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. **8** We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; **9** persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

Galatians 6:9 (NIV)

9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (AMP)

16 Rejoice always and delight in your faith; **17** be unceasing and persistent in prayer; **18** in every situation [no matter what the circumstances] be thankful and continually give thanks to God; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.

Quote by Oswald Chambers

"Perseverance is more than endurance. It is endurance combined with absolute assurance and certainty that what we are looking for is going to happen."

Quote by John Newton

"We can easily manage if we will only take, each day, the burden appointed to it. But the load will be too heavy for us if we carry yesterday's burden over again today, and then add the burden of the morrow before we are required to bear it."

Quote by Jonathan Edwards

"The way to Heaven is ascending; we must be content to travel uphill, though it be hard and tiresome, and contrary to the natural bias of our flesh."

Quote by George Whitefield

"Press forward. Do not stop, do not linger in your journey, but strive for the mark set before you."

Quote by Warren Wiersbe

"Nothing paralyzes our lives like the attitude that things can never change. We need to remind ourselves that God can change things. Outlook determines outcome. If we see only the problems, we will be defeated; but if we see the possibilities in the problems, we can have victory."

Quote by Duncan Campbell

"To me, it has been a source of great comfort and strength in the day of battle, just to remember that the secret of steadfastness, and indeed, of victory, is the recognition that 'the Lord is at hand.'"

Quote by William Thrasher

"There is a difference between a fleshly stubbornness and a godly perseverance. The former insists on getting one's will done in heaven, and the latter determines to get God's will done on earth."

Quote by C.S. Lewis

"God knows our situation; He will not judge us as if we had no difficulties to overcome. What matters is the sincerity and perseverance of our will to overcome them."

Quote by Hudson Taylor

"At the timberline where the storms strike with the most fury, the sturdiest trees are found."

Quote by Robert Leighton

"The flower that follows the sun does so even in cloudy days."

Pressing Forward

Ligonier Ministries

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/pressing-forward/>

"Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (vv. 13–14). - [Philippians 3:12–14](#)

Although Paul did not know when he wrote Philippians whether his path to his final resurrection body would go through his death as a martyr, through his natural death, or simply through his being alive at the return of Christ, he was willing to attain this body through any of these means ([Phil. 3:10–11](#)). He knew that his participation in the final glorification of God’s people was sure, whatever the Lord ordained as the physical event that would put him in place for the resurrection of the dead. He had abandoned all of his own efforts at securing a righteous status before the Lord and cast himself entirely on Jesus, the only One in whom sinners can be reckoned righteous and acceptable to God (vv. 2–9).

Some misinterpret the Apostle Paul’s doctrine of justification by faith alone and the certainty it gives Christians about our part in the resurrection of the just as giving us permission to do nothing once we come to faith. But Paul’s teaching and example offer no evidence for a “let go and let God” attitude when it comes to perseverance in faith. Certainly, the Apostle explains that all those who have faith persevere to the end, for nothing can separate God’s elect from His love in Christ Jesus our Lord ([Rom. 8:38–39](#)). Still, only those who persevere to the end have true faith, for we must work out our salvation with fear and trembling, even if our work results from God’s own work in us ([Phil. 2:12–13](#)).

So, in [Philippians 3:12–14](#), Paul is only repeating his teaching on our role in perseverance that he introduced earlier in this epistle. Knowing that he had not yet reached the consummation of his redemption in his glorification, Paul told the Philippians that he was pressing on in service to Christ until that final day. Understanding that God would not fail to complete the good work of salvation begun in him (1:6) encouraged the Apostle to seek to know Jesus in every way possible. The security of being declared righteous in the Savior moved him to pay diligent attention to the Holy Spirit’s work, through sacred Scripture, to convict him of sin, bring him to repentance, and warn him to stay active as a runner in the race of faith ([Heb. 4:11–13; 12](#)). All those who rightly understand what it means to be declared righteous in Christ heed the Spirit’s work in these ways as well.

Coram Deo

John Chrysostom, the noted ancient church preacher, says that the pursuer of a goal “sees nothing, he thrusts away all who impede him with great force, he cherishes his mind, his eye, his strength, his soul and his body, looking at nothing other than the crown” (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, NT vol. 8, p. 259; hereafter, ACCNT). We should embrace our pursuit of Christ in this way, that we might stay in faith until the ends of our lives.

Passages for Further Study

[Proverbs 21:21](#) [Isaiah 55:6–7](#) [Romans 9:30–33](#) [2 Peter 1:3–11](#)