

## Pressing On When You Don't Feel Like Pressing On

*I Will Choose Joy: Philippians #6*

*Philippians 3:13-14*

*Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. <sup>9</sup> Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. <sup>10</sup> Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*

They're on our refrigerators, bathroom mirrors, and dashboards. They might even be above the entry and exit ways into homes and businesses. "They" are those brainy, perhaps sometimes cheesy, little quotes that someone fairly famous once said about pressing on that we repeat to ourselves specifically because we don't feel like pressing on. You've heard them; even if you've never found the inspiration to keep them in front of you as a motivational trigger: (1) "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step" (Lao Tzu). (2) "The only impossible journey is the one you never begin" (Tony Robbins). (3) "The journey is just as important as the outcome" (Alex Morgan). (4) "The American Express Card. Don't leave home without it" (American Express). The reason why these quotes are on our refrigerators, bathroom mirrors, and dashboards has everything to do with fact that all of life occurs between the goals, hopes, and desires that we have for our lives and the stone-cold water in the face reality that our life circumstances don't quite go as planned. When they don't, we have a decision to make. Will we continue to press on in that specific area of our lives? Or will we press stop in that specific area of our lives when it seems like this well-worn arterial thoroughfare is only going to lead to another destination off a cliff again?

I want to suggest to you this morning that when it comes to pressing on when you don't feel like pressing on, the answer isn't found in some creative slogan that spikes your endorphins momentarily and evaporates when life spoils another goal you set. It is only found when you choose to press on specifically when the joy of the Lord is lacking in the journey. It is only found when you forget what is behind and set your sights on what's ahead. It is only found when you know you've come so far but haven't arrived. It is only found when you press on to win the prize Jesus has for

you when you arrive at your final destination. It is only found when you choose to press on in the power of the Holy Spirit; especially when you don't feel like pressing on. That's the choice Paul had to make in his journey between the goal of reaching all of Macedonia for Christ and the stone-cold reality of finding himself chained to stone walls in a dungeon in Rome while writing Philippians. Turn with me to see it in Philippians 3:13-14.

*<sup>13</sup> Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

### The Choice to Press On Requires:

#### **1. A Decision About the Past – “Forgetting what is behind”**

**Hakuna Matata** – Hakuna Matata! What a wonderful phrase. Hakuna Matata! Ain't no passing craze. It means no worries for the rest of your days. It's our problem-free philosophy. Hakuna Matata!

**Everyone Has A Past that Lies Beneath the Surface:** (1) Simba had a past. (2) You have a past; (3) I have a past; (4) Abraham had a pass; (5) Moses had a past; (6) David had a past; (7) Matthew had a past; (8) Peter had a past; (9) Paul had a past.

**But the Way We Deal With It Has A Direct Impact on Our Lives:** (1) We can overlook it and sing Hakuna Matata – To overlook something means to disregard or ignore with leniency. You will not find God approving of that mentality in Scripture. Or we can (2) Forget what lies behind – to forget means implies that you knew it well. You wrestled with it or you rejoiced in it. And you simply made the decision to lie what is behind, well, behind.

**Forgetting What Lies Behind Means Not Resting On Past Laurels** – (1) If anyone could rest on past Laurels, Paul could. (2) At this point in the Apostle Paul's life, he had written 75% of the New Testament; (3) Crossed the Mediterranean on three separate occasions to preach the Gospel; (4) Laid the theological foundation from

which we get our understanding of the significance of Jesus Christ in our lives; (5) Yet Paul says: “that’s in the past. I’m looking at what lies ahead.”

**Implication** – Living in a state of constant reminiscing will suck the joy out of your life because the past is celebrated and the present in the future is anticlimactic.

**Not Bemoaning Past Regrets** – (1) If could bemoan the past, Paul could. (2) Rooted on the murder of Stephen by holding the stone throwers coats; (3) Blood lust wasn’t enough; (4) Immediately after it, he’s on the way to Damascus for more blood until the Lord stopped him in his tracks, literally.

**Implication** – The way Paul was able to break free of the shame and guilt of what lies behind had everything to do with looking forward. Each day is an opportunity to serve the Lord and others. Not to atone for previous mistakes; but to walk and serve in the grace of God that is sufficient.

## **2. A Decision About the Future – “straining toward what is ahead”**

**Tremendous Difference Between How Olympic Runners Approach the 400 Meter Hurdle and How We Would** – (1) The first thing we would do is calculate that is .248548 miles; (2) Then, we would look at the hurdles and dread jumping over them while running a ¼ of a mile; (3) Not Olympic runners: they are right there on the starting blocks; (4) And often default at the line several times because they can’t wait to tackle what lies ahead.

**Paul Paints a Picture of How to Approach What Lies Ahead With One Word:** (1) Straining; (2) It means to reach forward. (3) It’s the image of a runner pushing every muscle in his/her body forward just to get millimeter closer to the finish line while running.

**That Implies That The Proper Way to Approach Future Hurdles:** (1) Isn’t to remain on the starting block for fear of them; (2) Or to plan to skirt around them; (3) You approach them by reaching closer to them by reaching your whole body forward.

**That Implies That The Proper Way to Approach the Race God Still Has Marked Out Before You:** (1) Isn’t with a pace that suggests your best years are behind you. (2) It’s by reaching and straining towards the race God has marked before you.

**Implication** – The future is as bright as the Promises of God. If God can plan for us a future before the foundation of the world, then we can certainly trust him in the day to day race marked out before us.

### **3. A Decision About the Present – “I press on”**

**About the Day** – (1) 24 hours in a day; (2) 1140 minutes; (3) 86,400 seconds; (4) Not one great hero of the Bible who was human had the privilege of living in the 24 hours, 1140 minutes, 86,400 seconds you are living right now; (5) This 24 hour day, 1140 minute day, 86,400 second day is the oldest day in the history of the human race. (6) And You have the privilege of being involved in that unrepeatabe miracle from God at the very moment you breathe and you will until you breath your last.

**How We Live in the Present: Press On** – (1) Persevere; Endure; Finish; To go on when you don't feel like going on; (2) A military term used by Paul to paint the picture of troops hiking forward in the snow that the church in Philippi, a military colony of Rome, would have been familiar with.

**How We Live in the Present: Towards the Goal** – (1) Philippi was also a sports town; (2) Now he uses a sporting metaphor to denote what we strive for; (3) A runner doesn't run aimlessly, but with a purpose; (4) A Boxer doesn't swing reckless punches, but he aims; (5) Lives a life of great purpose – towards something.

**Example of Living in the Present** - “You may be 38 years old, as I happen to be. And one day, some great opportunity stands before you and calls you to stand up for some great principle, some great issue, some great cause. And you refuse to do it because you are afraid....Well, you may go on and live until you are 90, but you're just as dead at 38 as you would be at 90. And the cessation of breathing in your life is but the belated announcement of an earlier death of the spirit” (Martin Luther King, Jr.)

### **4. A Decision About the Aim – “To win the prize”**

**Best Television Game Show** – (1) Price is Right; (2) Best Game = Pinko; (3) Main prize right at the center of the board

**Why We Press On When We Don't Want to Press On** – (1) To win the the prize; (2) After race, most anticipated moment occurred; (3) Every runner was brought to

a wooden platform with a throne-like seat; (3) There, the presiding judge would either crown, pass over or disqualify each runner.

**Implication** – (1) Though we are saved by grace and heaven is the reward for those who know Christ, there is a time coming when we will be measured for how we've run that race. (2) That's what a crown of righteousness is all about; (3) It will either be bestowed or withheld.

**App** – Every step in a Christian's life carries with it eternal significance. Yesterday. Tomorrow. And most especially, right now!