

Living in Hope with the One Leader Study Series

Title: *Pressing In and Pressing On*

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As we are all working through these challenging times, I want to encourage us with some of Paul's words as he sought to build up the church in Philippi while himself confined to a jail cell. He began with a right perspective and did not let his difficult circumstances define him. **He says, "My circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel... For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:12, 21).**

During this COVID-19 crisis, we aren't in jail, yet many of us have been confined to our homes ("shelter in place") and face many uncertainties and challenges. Yet, even in this situation we can be an encouragement and help to those around us (family and neighbors) and our coworkers by PRESSING IN and PRESSING ON.

"Pressing In" defined: *"to be persistent, unrelenting, and tenacious in seeking to learn, grow, and serve others."*

Philippians 3:8,10 says, "More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ... that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death."

Pressing In with these truths:

1. **The suffering and sacrifice of the moment.** Embrace the difficulty. Paul calls us to embrace the suffering and its reality. He says, *"for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ"* and *"know...the fellowship of His sufferings."* Suffering in this life is real, and today we have it in many forms. Counting all things as loss is a form of "dying to self." Secondly, we may not necessarily be thankful for the actual loss, but we can be thankful the Lord is with us, He will never leave us, and we can grow in the midst of it. This suffering and knowing Christ's sufferings gives us perspective and opens doors to others.
2. **Knowing Christ and His character.** We are also called to tenaciously pursue knowing Christ. This knowing is not intellectual but knowing from the heart. It is growing in intimacy. Slow down, be still, and listen to Him. Be neutral before you act. The Lord wants to teach all of us something in these times. Let Him be your foundation.
3. **God's promises.** God's promises are sure and vast—we can count on their being true. For example: "God works all things for good" and "nothing can separate us from the love of Christ." Take these promises to heart and give them to others.
4. **The Body of Christ.** In difficulties we need one another. When I am weak, you are strong.

Pressing In today means:

Be thankful in your circumstances. Be intentional and persistent in reaching out to others (family, neighbors, co-workers) and enter into their worlds. Find out how they are doing, ask questions. Connect with people and hear their stories. Be an encouragement to others—life is not only about you.

“Pressing On” defined: *“to move toward and take possession of a goal and future.”*

Philippians 3:12-14, “Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

Pressing On with these truths:

1. **Laying hold of Christ.** Realize what you have in Christ: you have the riches of Christ, you have the life of Christ, you have the blessings, and much more. The Christian life is not one of performance but one of an intimate relationship.
2. **Forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward.** You don't dwell in the past of what God did. You live in the moment, and you have a biblical hope and expectation of what the Lord has in store for you.
3. **The goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ.** The “why” of your purpose and your work is clear, and your eternity—heaven—is sure. This motivates us when others are down or confused. It compels us to make the most of any situation.

Pressing On today means:

The difficulties of today are stirring people up. They sense they are vulnerable, out of control, and don't know the future, let alone today. This produces anger, blaming, and even rage. These are opportunities to offer comfort, grace, and reassurance that comes from Christ in us. We also can take this time to reflect on our true priorities and make some adjustments. The Lord can and will use this worldwide calamity to bring many to Himself. Will you be a conduit of His love?

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