

Press On! – Phil 3:13-14

Phil 3:13-14; This place was hopping last week with High Five – our summer day-camp for 1-5th graders – and what a great week it was
262 kids attended with a 110 leaders, supported by a phenomenal Harvest Kids staff
And we can praise God for 13 salvations (**photo**)
I had the opportunity to peek in on most of the electives, and shared a photo moment w/ the *Princess Party*; Being the father of 3 girls, I'm proud to say I felt right at home
Best of all, is that the gospel was woven into everything they did*****

➤ That said, I start my sabbatical July 1st, so this is the last weekend I'll be preaching for the next 5 months; With the encouragement and support of the elders . . .
Becky and I are going to unplug, travel, connect with family, and rest
Not that I'm hanging by a thread or on the verge of burnout, but that we want to keep it that way
And what a blessing; Not only the opportunity to get away and refresh, but that so many of you have expressed your love and goodwill; Thank you

And if you're worried that I'm leaving for good, please don't
We *love* this church; We love *you*; And we're most definitely coming back
I already know the *Christmas* series I'm going to preach when I return, and the new theme and study we're going to start in *January*

➤ With that in mind then, I want to talk to you about *you* while I'm gone (**Intro**); What I'd like to see in *you* the next 5 months
B/c God's doing some great things around here, and I don't want them to stop
We have a gifted staff, a godly elder board, dedicated deacons, and a host of ministries that are bearing amazing fruit; And I don't want that to stagnate
I want to see our discipleship go and grow; I want to see even *more* fruit; Even *more* life change; *More* witness; *More* love; *More* worship

So to that end, I want to encourage you to press on; Just like the Apostle Paul did
Phil 3:13-14 – [13] *Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own [it referring to the full power and glory of Christ's resurrection; he hasn't yet experienced it all]. 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.*

Paul's entire *life* was a constant, purposeful, *pressing* – to experience the fullness of God's glory; All that he has for us in Christ; And *our* life should be as well
As our example (Phil 3:17), Paul pressed on, and we should too

➤ Becky and I have no less than a 4 page spreadsheet for what we're going to do these next 5 months
From where we're going to be and how we're going to get there, to where we're going to stay and who/what we're going to see
Not to mention a plan for the books we're going to read, the Bible studies we're going to do, and the things we're hoping to learn
All for the purpose of stoking our fire to *press on*; With a greater love for the Lord, a greater love for his work, and a greater love for his people

And I'd love to see the same in you; For God's glory, your joy, and our church – I'd love to see you press on these next months

➤ Starting with a *passion* for him

Press on with a passion for God!

A *love* that exceeds all others; A *desire* to know him more; A *yearning* to be near him; An *earnestness* to seek him (Is 26:8); That kind of passion

Look at how Paul says it in Phil 3:7-11; After listing his accomplishments *apart* from Christ, he says in v7 . . .

[7] *But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. [8] Indeed, I count everything as loss [I give it all up; willingly] because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord [that's passion; a passion for God].*

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—[IOW I consider my former life and everything in it worthless, if I can just have Jesus; that's passion]

I have suffered the loss of all things . . . in order [v10] . . .

[10] *that I may know him [Jesus] and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death [I want to know him even if it means dying Paul says; more passion], [11] that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead [life eternal].*

It's not an expression of salvation by works, but Paul's *passion* to be saved; And his passion to experience everything that goes with it
His passion to be like *Jesus*; First, last, and always
That's the idea; Paul had an overwhelming *passion* for God

And you can too

➤ 1st – **by drawing near to him every day**

You'll never have a *passion* for God, if you don't draw *near* to God
If you don't spend dedicated time with him; If you don't make him the constant companion of your thoughts
Just like you won't have a passion for your wife, if you don't draw near to *her*
Proximity leads to passion
And you'll find it with *God*, if you draw near to him every day

➤ 2nd, if you worship him every week

Press on with a passion for God, **by worshipping him every week**

Gathering with other believers, right here, to lift high the name of Jesus; To exalt the King of kings; To praise the Lord of lords
To extol the creator and redeemer of this world

What if you made *this* the year, to bust out of your half-hearted participation in worship?

To get past your embarrassment of entering fully in?

What if your passion for God was so all-consuming, that you not only *sang* in worship, but clapped and raised your hands as well?

What if you *stopped* caring about what somebody else thinks, and *started* caring about what God thinks? What if? Attendance doesn't equal worship; Only passion does
Press on with a *passion* for God, by *worshipping* God

➤ And 3rd – **by spending and being spent for his cause**

Paul told the church in Corinth – *I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls.* (2 Cor 12:15); Most *joyfully* will I give of myself for others – completely/exhaustively
What if *you* did that? What if you gave of your time, talent, and treasure for the cause of *Christ*? For all he wants to *accomplish* in the world?

I'll tell you what – you'd be full of passion; B/c *where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.* (Mt 6:21)

Where your time is spent, your passion will be; Where your talent is used, your passion will be; Where your money is given, your passion will be (**Summary**)

Press on with a passion for God, by spending and being spent for his cause
That's the first encouragement I want to impress on you

The 2nd is this:

Press on with a hunger for truth!

You say, “How do you do that? How do you make yourself hungry for something?”

Well, by eating it; Short of being force fed, if you eat the same thing over and over, you'll be hungry for what you're fed

Eat popcorn, and you'll be hungry for salt; Eat candy, you'll be hungry for sugar

Why do you think Germans love sauerkraut? Or Indians love curry? Or the tribes of Papua New Guinea, grubs? We're hungry for what we're fed

And the same is true of the things we listen to, read, and observe

Look at pornography and you'll be *hungry* for pornography

Listen to raunchy *music* and you'll be *hungry* for raunchy music

Read conspiracies and you'll be hungry for *lies*

But read the *Bible*, and you'll be hungry for *truth*

It's like *Jeremiah* said to God (**Jer 15:16**), in his OT *prophecy*

[16] Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O LORD, God of hosts.

Jeremiah was *exposed* to God's Word, and he took it in; He read it, and absorbed it

No doubt *hungering* for more, b/c of his *delight*; We long for what we love

➤ So the 1st way to press on with a hunger for truth, is to **read your Bible**

Every day; Read it on your own, study it with others, listen to it in your car, memorize it, meditate on it – and pretty soon you'll find your appetite *insatiable*

You won't be *able* to satisfy it; You'll keep going back for more and more and more

And if you don't know where to start, start with the book of John; And then keep going

Or get on our website and pick one of the Bible reading *plans*, under *Resources*

➤ 2nd, **listen to biblical preaching**

Press on with a hunger for truth, by listening to *biblical* preaching

Not Bible *light* preaching, where hard things are avoided and controversial things glossed; Or felt-*need* preaching, where it's only what *you* want, *when* you want

But *comprehensive* preaching – that covers the *whole* counsel of God; Listen to that
Listen to *expository* preaching, where the pastor works through a passage to tell you what *God* thinks, instead of what *he* thinks

Out with moral therapeutic deism, where it's all about *you* and how to feel *better* about yourself – and in with the truth of God's *Word* . . .

Where it's all about *him*, and how to *live* for him (**Summary**)

That's the kind of preaching you're going to hear around *here* the next 5 months

And I trust that it won't just be status quo in your heart, but gas on fire; Hunger fulfilled

Press on for that

3rd . . .

Press on with a commitment to pray!

A *commitment* to pray; B/c that's what it takes

Prayer is far too *hard* to happen by itself; Far too difficult to *want* to do it; At least at the beginning

You have to *decide* on it; And follow through

Which we often don't, b/c we're lazy; Let's be honest

In fact, it's the first of **3 Obstacles** to prayer:

1. Laziness – We don't pray b/c we're lazy; Which makes a commitment crucial

2. Unbelief – We don't pray b/c we don't really believe in it; Winston Churchill said that, “Christians can be counted on to pray, after they've exhausted all *other* possibilities.”

We don't think it does any good; If we did, we'd stay at our prayers early, late, and long

3. Presumption – We presume on God to work in our lives, whether we pray or not

We assume he's going to act on our behalf whether we pray or not

Which he often *does* in his amazing grace, but often *doesn't* as well

Saying in the book of James – *You do not have because you do not ask.* (James 4:2)

Laziness, unbelief, and presumption are all obstacles to prayer

➤ Which means that a *commitment* to prayer, starts with a prayer of *repentance*

Admitting our laziness and unbelief and presumption – and asking forgiveness

If that's *you*, and I can't imagine that it's not, bow with me right now will you? And *repeat* after me this prayer of repentance; Out loud

“Lord, I'm sorry for not praying; I'm sorry for my laziness, and my unbelief, and my presumption; Please forgive me; And spur me on with a commitment; In Jesus name; Amen”

That's where a commitment to pray *starts*

And I'd like nothing more than to come back to a church on its knees

Praying together, praying separately, praying fervently, and praying constantly

Press on *that* way

And then last . . .

Press on with a burden for people!

Like Jesus had when he saw the crowds (Mt 9:36); And some of you have in *our* crowd

Let me give you 2 examples; One, that illustrates the *extreme* of pressing on with a burden for people, and the other, the *norm*

➤ The *extreme* comes from **Joelle Merrifield**, 1 of our Global Partners in the Middle East
Walking home recently, she heard one of the Syrian beggar women she had befriended, screaming for help
And as she got closer, she saw that the woman was being dragged down the street by a man; Her kids were following and crying; And pretty soon a crowd started gathering
And it didn't take long for Joelle to figure out that the woman had allegedly stolen the man's wallet, and he was restraining her until the police came

Meanwhile, the crowd began to berate her Joelle said
Shouting demeaning and demoralizing things, and basically treating her like garbage

So out of a burden for people, Joelle stepped in and tried to explain that she *knew* this woman, and could vouch for her; Which resulted in mockery directed at *her*
The idea that she could be friends with a beggar was a joke to them

And when the police showed up, it went from bad to worse; They handcuffed the woman, refused to listen to anything she said, and threw her and her kids in the police car
So when Joelle got home, she got in her car and followed them to the police station
“I felt this situation was way over my head,” she said, “but what else could I do? I *had* to go. They needed someone to speak on their behalf, otherwise they would never be heard. It was a desperate situation.” That's a burden for people

Little did she know, *how* desperate the situation was; B/c when she got there, she found them in a filthy room with a handful of angry officers . . .
Who were interrogating her, calling her names, and ridiculing her; Just like the crowd

So Joelle joined her in the room; And refused to leave; Spending the next several hours praying desperately, as she too was yelled at and told to go home
“She's a filthy beggar with no papers and no rights,” they said. “What do you care?”

Eventually, the *facts* began to trickle in
Turns out, the man had left his wallet in a grocery cart on the street; And seeing it, one of the beggar woman's young daughters, took \$13 dollars out of it; 13
And b/c of Joelle's burden for people, she was able to convince the man to *drop* the charges, and convince the police to let her go; She was burdened

And listen (**quote**) to what she wrote later:
“While I was aware that some beggars are cons and thieves, this particular woman was not. They all saw her poverty through a particular lens and I knew that God had me there to paint a *different* picture for them. One that *challenged* the existing status quo.”

That's what a burden for *people* does – it challenges the status quo; Often in the *extreme******

➤ But that's not where most of us live; Most of live in the *norm*
Like **Tim and Kim Millage**, right here in our church
Tim and Kim have been doing a Backyard Bible Club for 6 years now (**photos**), out of a burden for kids; *Little* people; Having fun and sharing the gospel with them . . .
Every Tuesday evening for 2 *months* in the summer

And lest you think it's all about the kids, listen to this:
“God has certainly blessed our neighborhood and the Backyard Bible Club . . .He even provides at least one personality each summer, to refine us in ways we didn't even realize we needed!”
God even challenges *our* status quo with a burden for people

➤ That's where *most* of us live; And that's how most of us will express *our* burden
Not by standing in the gap for those in *extreme* situations, but by standing in the yard under *normal* ones
Reaching out to love on children, and sharing the Good News of Jesus*****
Or *serving* people in the *name* of Jesus; Or leading a neighborhood Bible study for adults; Or inviting anybody you can to church
That's where *most* of us live; That's what most of us should do

But it starts with a burden – a burden for *people*
No burden, no action; No passion, no purpose; No hunger, no truth (**Summary**)

➤ Instead of being content to coast these next few months, why not fan into *flame* your passion for God, and press on!
Instead of feeding yourself with the things of the world, why not open your Bible and feast on truth?
Instead of being presumptuous, why not *commit* to pray, and follow through?
Instead of sitting idle, why not act with a burden for *people*?

That's the goal, that's the point – press on!
For God's glory, your joy, and our church – press on!

Pray – Lord, we've not yet experienced the *fullness* of your power and glory, and we want to; We want to; So fill us with your Spirit and infuse us with your strength, to *press on toward the goal for the prize of* your upward call
We love you, and we give now our tithes and offerings; With hearts of joy for all you're doing, and all you'll do