



PRESS ON

Philippians 1:1-30

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For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. Philippians 1:21



I'm amazed at the number of songs that I remember from childhood. Songs of faith and fortitude. Songs that were more overheard than taught. Songs which continue to increase in personal value as I grow older. One such song says, "We are soldiers in the army. We've got to fight although we have to cry. We've got to hold up the blood-stained banner. We've got to hold it up until we die."

Using the first person plural, "we," the song reminds the singer and listener that the disciple's life is not intended to be lived in isolation, but in community. We're in this movement together. Neither is it a life of leisure or ease. To the contrary, disciples are soldiers – Kingdom soldiers – fighting, crying, and pressing to uphold a banner which is stained with their Commander's blood. The Book of Acts and the Epistles bear out this reality for Jesus' early followers. Beloved, it's still true for us today. We must Press On!

In Paul's letter to the Philippians, he urges fortitude among the disciples by way of his own determination to press on. Early in the letter, he acknowledges their **Partnership** in the Gospel (v.3). He cites their shared *commitment* to the Gospel (v.7) and *confirmation* of the Gospel (v.7). Later he observed that they were experiencing the same *conflict* because of the Gospel (vv.29-30). Paul also communicates the **Priority** of the Gospel through his *passion, prayer and prospects* for the believers (vv.8-11). Knowing that we are not alone in our work, witness and warfare for Christ, should help inspire us to Press On!!

Through his confinement in prison, Paul illustrates that **Persecution** for the Gospel can and should be expected. Opponents of Christ and objections to Christ abound. In fact, millions of Christ followers are experiencing persecution throughout the world today (www.opendores.org). *Pressure, punishment and peril* are not the exception, but the rule. Jesus forewarned His disciples that "in this world you will have tribulation (Jn. 16:33b)." He's quick to add, however, "...but be of good cheer, I have already overcome the world (Jn. 16:33c)." So, come what may, He's paved the way. Let's Press On!

Now, don't miss this: Paul is not discouraged by the persecution. To the contrary, he seems to be motivated by it. This is because persecution for the Gospel results in the **Promotion** of the Gospel (vv.12-18). In these verses Paul attributes furthering the *proclamation* of the Gospel to his imprisonment. Rather than arguing over the motivation behind various individuals preaching Jesus (as is the case with celebrity Kanye West today), Paul is content knowing that, while he's being held captive, the Gospel is being spread (vv.15-18). He encourages his readers, then and now, to adopt the same perspective.

That's not all. Paul teaches us that promotion of the Gospel results in *perseverance* in the Gospel (v.12). He cites that other believers are exhibiting great endurance as a direct result of his suffering (v.12). Consequently, he exemplifies and encourages the *personification* of the Gospel as a way of life (v.27a), in light of the Christian's inevitable persecution. In other words, for the advancement of the Gospel, Press On!!

And here it is, my friend, the whole **Point** of the Gospel: "For me to live IS Christ!" (v.21). Paul declares the *preeminence* of Christ. Just as He is first, above all, before all and beyond all, in everything historically, cosmologically and categorically, so is Christ to be in His servant's life. Not only His preeminence, but His *prevalence*, is at the heart of what the Good News reports. He Wins! Every Time (now and then). Every Where (here and there). Hallelujah! Christ prevailed in our eternal salvation (v.28b) and will prevail in our daily deliverance (vv. 19, 25). This is the soldier's assurance as the battle wages on. This is why, as the aforementioned song concludes, we will "fight until we die." Because, in Christ, for Christ, and with Christ, We Win!! We are more than conquerors (Rom. 8:37). So, quite naturally, the essential point of the Gospel is the *praise* of Christ (26). "In Him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, Who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the PRAISE of His glory (Eph. 1:13-14). Armed with this aim, assurance and assistance, let us remain determined to PRESS ON!!