

Press On

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 5

Chapter 1 7

INITIATION, WORSHIP AND RESPONSE

Chapter 2 12

COME JUST AS YOU ARE

Chapter 3 17

DO ALL THAT IS IN YOUR HEART TO DO

CONCLUSION 22

INTRODUCTION

Think of what it means to press on, upward, with God. Understand that pressing upward means progressing exactly in what the grace of God provides us for strength. The love of God motivates us by giving us energy to continue, and the mercy of God follows us through every type of trial we encounter.

When our valleys are deep and the mountain is steep, we press on. When our bodies are weak, when we stumble and fall, we press on. In the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, we press on. In the essence of God's love, we press on. Before our eyes is the prize of God's high calling on our lives. We will win that prize if we consistently refuse to live in sin and decide by grace to ever press on. This brings an old song to my mind:

*I'm pressing on the upward way,
New heights I'm gaining every day.
Still praying as I upward bound,
Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.*

No matter what our situation, let us be focused on Jesus Christ, and press on.

How do we press on? As this booklet will show you, we press on by responding to God's initiations.

Chapter One

INITIATION, WORSHIP,
AND RESPONSE

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5).

“God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24).

Unbeknownst to many, the highest form of worship is in receiving the mind of Christ with meekness, through categories of doctrine, in the preciseness of a divine provision. Then, the Holy Spirit, by the operation of divine transfer, carries doctrine into our memory center, to the streams of consciousness, so we can literally have the mind of Christ.

With the mind of Christ, a believer worships God with what he has been taught. There is no system of worship. There is no philosophy of worship. We simply are to worship as we have been taught (Colossians 2:7).

How do we worship God? We worship in our human spirits, which is our only God-conscious capacity, and in truth, which is categorical thinking with the Spirit of the living God.

Often in our church services, we have had beautiful seasons of praise and worship. These seasons, however, are the direct result of having the mind of God as we rightly divide the absolute truth of His Word (2 Timothy 2:15). As we live in the inner man of meekness and grace, we will manifest a revelation of the essence and nature of God. All of this is the result of our responding to God's initiations.

God Wants Our Attention

One woman told me of how she got herself all ready to meet her husband when he came home from work. She put on her best dress. She fixed her makeup and lipstick. She did all of this after making sure a wonderful dinner was waiting for him. Well, he came home and plopped himself down in front of the TV.

"Honey, dinner's ready," she called.

"Give me five minutes," he answered.

Now what kind of a response was that? Not a good one.

Did the husband respond to her initiations?

No. Did the wife react? Yes.

I gave that story to illustrate how we sometimes put God on hold. Imagine it! In the Bible, God initiates nearly eight thousand promises toward us, and He wants our response. Christ finished the work of our salvation on Calvary, and now He wants a response. In Isaiah 6, God said, "Who will go for us? Whom shall we send?" The prophet said, "Here am I, send me" (Isaiah 6:8).

Now, that is a great response.

Read through Song of Solomon, and you will discover that as the bride develops her capacity for love and begins to understand her beloved, she starts to respond to his initiations.

Brokenness Softens the Heart

There are many reasons why some people do not respond. One reason is that they have never been through anything. Therefore, there is no brokenness in them. They haven't watched a father or mother die. They haven't lost a child. They haven't had dear friends go home to Jesus. We all need to be broken, and God has different ways of doing it with each of us. Do you know why an average preacher can speak messages that are really anointed? It is because he is broken before God. There is a humility because of

what he knows and what he has seen.

Some mornings in my office, I will sit and think of dear ones who have gone home to be with the Lord, and I think of what their families are going through. At other times, I will consider the church and think about the various situations folks are going through. I think about every trial different ones are facing, and I become very broken before the Lord. It is real.

There is a reason that God allows things to break us. If you have never been broken, then the soil of your heart is not ready for the Word of God.

“Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

“Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

“Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again” (Luke 6:36-38).

“The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh” (Proverbs 11:17).

“For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment” (James 2:13).

What is God doing in these verses? He is responding to our responses. It is crucial that we understand His mode of responding to us. The original Hebrew text of Proverbs 11:17 indicates that when we give mercy, we receive divine goodness; however, when we are merciless, we trouble our bodies.

Mercy *rejoices* (which is a response) against judgment. God responds when we receive mercy, and then we give mercy as good stewards of the manifold grace of God (1 Peter 4:10). I receive grace upon grace according to John 1:16, so I have plenty to give to you. I receive it for my life, and I give it for your life, and God helps us both.

Chapter Two

COME JUST AS YOU ARE

Charlotte Elliott was born in England in 1789. At the age of thirty, she became an invalid and never walked again. At times, she was depressed, unstable, and discouraged. Then, she began a “spiritual correspondence” with Henri Malan of Switzerland. This man built up Miss Elliott, and she went on to write one hundred and fifty hymns, including one of the all-time favorites, “Just As I Am.”

Just as she was, Charlotte Elliott pressed on to meet Jesus. In her sickness and her terrible pain, she came to the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Every time I think of that story, I consider what it must have been like for John the Baptist to meet Jesus. He saw Jesus and cried out such beautiful words. “There He is! The Lamb that takes away the sin of the world.” Some thousands of lambs had been slain in Passover cere-

monies and as offerings up until then. But on this day, the Lamb that saves was on the scene (John 1:29).

Charlotte Elliott refused to live in negativity. "I will not be depressed, because Jesus is in my heart. I will not live in exhaustion, and I will not live in negative energy. I am going to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. His strength will be made perfect in my weakness" (see Ephesians 6:10; 2 Corinthians 12:9).

*Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*

That beautiful song has been sung again and again by people everywhere. She was an invalid, bound to a wheelchair, but she kept pressing on in the upward way. She was gaining new heights every day with Jesus.

As she drew close to death, Charlotte Elliott, at 82, who had now spent more than fifty years in her wheelchair, wrote this, "What a thrill to fellowship with God in the state that I am in." She received such illumination and joy from writing hymns for those who would respond to God. She pressed on for the prize of His high calling.

Divine Distinction

One of the great reasons we are so encouraged to press on for God is because the Bible makes such a divine distinction between the sinner and his sin.

As God looks at you today, He sees you with divine distinction.

Yes, He sees you as hid with Christ in God. Yes, He sees you as a brand-new creation with all of your “old things” passed away. Everything about you has been made new (2 Corinthians 5:17). He sees you as seated above, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion (Ephesians 1:20-21). He sees you far above every thing in this age and in the ages to come. He went far above it all, and He has seated you above it all.

We are above the attacks that come against us. Sure, we get tempted, but we are above the attacks of the devil. Yes, we still have an old sin nature, and there are those times when we need to be corrected by love.

I love the principle of Romans 7:17-20: It is no longer I who sin. The life I now live is no longer my life (Galatians 2:20). Christ lives in me, therefore I live by the faith of the Son of God

who gave Himself for me. “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin” (Romans 4:7-8).

Yes, He lovingly corrects (Hebrews 12:6-11). But, oh what a beautiful thing it is to know that when it is all said and done, God makes a clear-cut, divine distinction between what we do and who we are in Christ. This gives us great hope.

Great Hope Is in Us

I can remember a beautiful couple. After both of them came out of prison, they accepted Christ and were saved. I recall the moment they were totally delivered. Now they are running homes for men and women who need help. Hope came into their lives—not just a better day, but an absolute, eternal hope.

Another man, John, found Jesus Christ, and a tremendous hope came into his life to deliver him from drug addiction. Jay also experienced an amazing deliverance and is now an amazing servant of God. What hope he has now!

What an amazing, divine distinction God makes! Then, He gives us—sinners—a privilege to respond and act as stewards of His grace.

Some of us have left the graves of our loved

ones with many tears. But in the midst of those tears was an absolute hope. This hope becomes resident within us. And it is such a beautiful thing God gives us, even though the tears come back now and then.

Chapter Three

DO ALL THAT IS IN YOUR HEART TO DO

“Now it came to pass upon a day, that Jonathan the son of Saul said unto the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over to the Philistines’ garrison, that is on the other side. But he told not his father.

“And Saul tarried in the uttermost part of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree which is in Migron: and the people that were with him were about six hundred men;

“And Ahiah, the son of Ahitub, Ichabod’s brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the LORD’S priest in Shiloh, wearing an ephod. And the people knew not that Jonathan was gone.

“And between the passages, by which Jonathan sought to go over unto the Philistines’ garrison, there was a sharp rock on the one side and a sharp rock on the other side: and the name of the one was Bozez, and the name of the other

Seneh.

“The forefront of the one was situate northward over against Michmash, and the other southward over against Gibeah.

“And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us: for there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few.

“And his armourbearer said unto him, Do all that is in thine heart: turn thee; behold, I am with thee according to thy heart.

“Then said Jonathan, Behold, we will pass over unto these men, and we will discover ourselves unto them.

“If they say thus unto us, Tarry until we come to you; then we will stand still in our place, and will not go up unto them.

“But if they say thus, Come up unto us; then we will go up: for the LORD hath delivered them into our hand: and this shall be a sign unto us.

“And both of them discovered themselves unto the garrison of the Philistines: and the Philistines said, Behold, the Hebrews come forth out of the holes where they had hid themselves.

“And the men of the garrison answered Jonathan and his armourbearer, and said, Come

up to us, and we will shew you a thing. And Jonathan said unto his armourbearer, Come up after me: for the LORD hath delivered them into the hand of Israel.

“And Jonathan climbed up upon his hands and upon his feet, and his armourbearer after him: and they fell before Jonathan; and his armourbearer slew after him.

“And that first slaughter, which Jonathan and his armourbearer made, was about twenty men, within as it were an half acre of land, which a yoke of oxen might plow.

“And there was trembling in the host, in the field, and among all the people: the garrison, and the spoilers, they also trembled, and the earth quaked: so it was a very great trembling” (1 Samuel 14:1-15).

Jonathan was a courageous servant of God who knew how to respond. Saul, his father, was hiding behind the garrison, but Jonathan and his armor bearer were caught between two rocks. Bozez means strong and powerful, and Senneh means thorny and weak—and that is where these two guys found themselves.

But Jonathan had a word from God and was ready to respond. His armor bearer was with him, saying, “Do all that is in your heart, be-

cause you are filled with God.” What a response that was. The armor bearer knew his leader and trusted him. “I want you to do what God tells your heart to do.”

As a preacher, I love that, because the heart of a preacher must be to love. The heart of the preacher is to invest. The heart of the preacher is to establish disciples through Jesus Christ. The heart of the preacher is to have missionaries in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the world. The heart of the preacher is to establish and reproduce his congregation through obedience to faith (Romans 15:6; Romans 1:5).

Just Keep Climbing

In 1 Samuel 14:12-13, Jonathan said, “Come up after me: for the LORD hath delivered them into the hand of Israel. And Jonathan climbed up upon his hands and upon his feet, and his armourbearer after him: and they fell before Jonathan; and his armourbearer slew after him.” Jonathan climbed upward. He knew that God will win, even if there are just a few with you.

God moves when we respond and press on. Those two killed twenty, and the enemies began to tremble. No matter what the number is, no

matter what the problem is, we press on in the upward way. We are gaining new heights every day. We are praying as we are upward bound, and God will plant our feet on higher ground.

Charles Spurgeon pressed on in the face of sickness and depression. He had to spend three months a year in southern France to stay well. His wife also experienced health problems. But during these seemingly dark days, Spurgeon wrote his magnificent volumes on the Psalms.

Sick with gout, he pressed on.

His wife was also an invalid, but he pressed on.

Back in London, a couple of harassers hollered, "Fire! Fire!" in Spurgeon's crowded church, and some people were trampled to death trying to escape. The London Times story the next day put all the blame on the preacher. "Spurgeon Responsible for Deaths in His Church" read the headlines.

Isn't that the way it goes for Christians who are fruitful? Satan is always after the fruitful ones. Hey, if you are not fruitful, the devil doesn't have to fight you.

The only thing to do is press on.

CONCLUSION

I have suffered plenty in my life. There have been times of what I like to call “holy depressions.” Paul the apostle experienced these very same things, and it was not sin at all. His “depressions” had everything to do with his love for people and sickness. Epaphroditus became sick because he thought he was never going to see his congregation again (see Philippians 2:25).

The only thing to do is to press on. God gives us grace. God gives us strength. It is mystical, and you don’t always feel it, but God will be there for you. Respond and press on. God will give you the faith you need because of His nature. He will give you the power because of His character. He will give you the provisions because of His promises. And, He will give you peace because that is His nature.

There is one thing I know. God is for me, and I am never alone. Every time I respond to His initiations, I get blessed, transformed, renewed,

and conformed in another degree to the image of God's Son.

Father, thank You for Your faithfulness to Your people. Help every one of us to realize that You are for us. You are with us. You know our precise need, and You are so ready to answer us with Your provision, because of Your promises. We desire to be quickened more and more, to be sharp and ready to respond to your initiations. Recognizing that the battle is Yours, we press on, in Jesus' name. Amen.