

Feb. 22, 2021

Text: Philippians 3:10-12

And this, so that I may know Him [experientially, becoming more thoroughly acquainted with Him, understanding the remarkable wonders of His Person more completely] and [in that same way experience] the power of His resurrection [which overflows and is active in believers], and [that I may share] the fellowship of His sufferings, by being continually conformed [inwardly into His likeness even] to His death [dying as He did]; so that I may attain to the resurrection [that will raise me] from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained it [this goal of being Christlike] or have already been made perfect, but I actively press on so that I may take hold of that [perfection] for which Christ Jesus took hold of me and made me His own. *(AMP)*

Devotion: Jen Welch – “Press On”

“Really!? You expect me to believe that you WANT to suffer? Yeah, right. Nobody WANTS to suffer; especially for someone else. Get real!”

This is what I imagine the Christians at Philippi thinking when they read this part of Paul’s letter to them. Paul is telling them that to truly know Christ is to experience not only His resurrection power but also His suffering. That he [Paul] is willing to endure being imprisoned, beaten, shipwrecked and more just to know Christ more intimately.

We all know this past year has been rough! The loss has been overwhelming – lives, jobs, homes, marriages and more. How many of us, like Paul, have counted it all joy? How many of us have taken our pain, suffering, and loss and used it to identify more with Christ and know Him more intimately?

To be completely honest, this past year has been a struggle for me in my faith journey. My “suffering” has not been what many would consider great. I did not lose my job or my home or a spouse. But I learned a long time ago not to make a molehill out of another person’s mountain. Just because my struggle or suffering does not seem like much from your perspective does not mean it is not a mountain for me.

Nevertheless, in the midst of my “suffering” my response was not that of Paul. I did NOT count it all joy. I did NOT press on and use it to grow closer to Christ. Instead, I chose to grumble and complain. I wallowed in my misery instead of walking in the victory Christ gave me through his death and resurrection. I began to just go through the motions and the more I let it all weigh on my mind the less I went to God. I stopped opening my Bible. Sure, I attended church online and continued to listen to my favorite Christian music, but I am a creature of habit and it was just routine. (Yes, even church workers struggle with their faith sometimes and just go through the motions.)

So, why if I have been so far from God would I choose to write a devotion? Well, if I am going to be honest, I really did not want to do it. I signed up to do it more out of a sense of obligation than anything. BUT GOD! Yep! You read that right. BUT GOD! Despite me, God spoke (okay, maybe He shouted) through His Word when I finally opened it to read these verses in Philippians. I finally saw what I was missing.

It was God's way of telling me, enough was enough and it was time to turn around and face His throne again. Through it all, He never left me. It was me who turned away from Him. His arms have always been ready to receive my burden. I just had to choose to give it to Him instead of wallow in it. He wanted to draw me closer to Him so I could know Him more intimately; to be held in His arms and know that He will work it all for my good. (Check out Romans 8). But I was stubborn.

He wants to do the same for you. No matter what you are suffering through, He wants you to bring your pain and suffering to Him and lay it at the foot of Christ's cross and press on. Press on in His Word. Press on by praising Him in the midst of your storm. Press on in gratitude for the blessings you may have overlooked in your pain. Press on and seek to know Him more intimately. As you press through whatever it is you are going through, know that God is with you every step of the way along the journey and He knows your pain. We, like Paul, can not only know the power of His resurrection, but also can come to know Christ more intimately in the fellowship of suffering if we just press on in His presence! (See Romans 5 for a little more inspiration.)

It's hard not to wallow. It's hard to press on. But the more I press on in His Word, the more I press on and talk to Him instead of reasoning with myself, the more I press on through the tears, the more I press on to thank and praise Him, the easier it gets. Press on my faith family no matter what you are suffering. Press on in faith toward the throne and get to know your God. He is waiting!

Need a little help with praising Him through your storm? Here are a few of the songs I recommend. And if you don't have it in you to sing, just listen to the lyrics and let God speak to your heart.

God So Loved - <https://youtu.be/iVux5s-SWFc>

You're Gonna Get the Glory - <https://youtu.be/qUtfB4OqQIM>

Never Gave Up - <https://youtu.be/RFfc5CZX-YM>

He Knows My Name - <https://youtu.be/t7owFiihXgg>

Gracefully Broken - <https://youtu.be/AzZC3EbH6iE>

Graves Into Gardens - <https://youtu.be/KwX1f2gYKZ4>

So Will I - <https://youtu.be/QdIOaAvvOp8>

Another in the Fire - <https://youtu.be/zmNc0L7Ac5c>