



Letting Go and Pressing On

2015 to 2016 ~ Sunday, December 27, 2015

¹⁰ I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, ¹¹ so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead! ¹² I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. ¹³ No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but *I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead,* ¹⁴ *I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize* for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us. (Phil 3:10–14 NLT-SE)

- CLOSING THE DOOR ON 2015

- **Take a quick look in your rear view mirror.** When you look back at your life in 2015, what do you see? Good times? Celebrations? Disappointments? Frustrations? Heart-break? Hope? There are some great memories you may want to hold on to and others you've already let go of.

I do have one compelling focus: *I forget all of the past as I fasten my heart to the future instead.* I run straight for the divine invitation of reaching the heavenly goal and gaining the victory-prize through the anointing of Jesus. (Phil 3:10–14 Passion Translation)

- **The word “forget” here is...** *epilanthanomai*, and it refers to Paul's determination to “forget” (literally, **put aside from his mind**) what lies behind him.
- Sometimes, simply putting things aside is not enough. At times, we need to get a bit *more aggressive* about the past and actually separate ourselves from the past in a more tangible way.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us *strip off every weight that slows us down...* (Heb 12:1 NLT-SE)

- Paul is not implying that we should erase our past, but that we *don't let the past impede the progress of the present and future*. Many people rest on their past accomplishments, or wallow in their past failures. Too often we get anchored to our past failures. It keeps us from growing. We need to learn from the past and move on.
- **Now, let's fill in the blanks...**

- ALIGNING OURSELVES WITH THE GOD IS THE REASON TO FAST

- How Jesus Feels About **Prayer and Fasting**...

⁵ “*When you pray*, don't be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. ⁶ But when you pray, go

away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you. ⁷ “**When you pray**, don’t babble on and on as people of other religions do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. ⁸ Don’t be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!...¹⁶ “And **when you fast**, don’t make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. ¹⁷ But **when you fast**, comb your hair and wash your face. ¹⁸ Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.” (Matt 6:5–8, 16-18 NLT-SE)

- **When you fast...** He doesn't say, "if you pray," or "if you fast," but WHEN! This alignment with the will of His Father was an important key to Jesus’ relationship with His Father. We can learn a great deal about the value Jesus gave to prayer and fasting from what is revealed in this encouragement.
- **That’s where we are today...** We are taking time to listen intently to what the Father is saying to us, His church. So, we stir up hunger for aligning ourselves with His will, allowing Him to express His kingdom through our lives. This is no small thing!
- **Question:** WHO, not what are we aligning ourselves with?

When we align ourselves with the Word, we are **aligning ourselves with God** and we are able to receive the promises and power of the kingdom. The more we know the Word of God, the more pure and precise our prophetic insight and revelation will become. His Word will give us strength to overcome. **When we see a generation fall in love with God’s Word, our culture will change.** ~ **Andy Byrd** in *Culture of Revival: A Revivalist Field Manual*

When we have been raised with Christ, we are now “in Christ,” and Christ is “in us”; we have a new capacity, a new energy, a new power to live the Christian life. It is activated not by squeezing a lever but by **aligning our minds and hearts with the available power of the kingdom of God that is now among us and in us** (Colossians 1:27).

When we do, we find ourselves pulled along for a very nice ride. We work, but we don’t sweat. We act, but a stronger, greater, quieter power is acting within and around us. ~ **James Bryan Smith** in *Hidden in Christ: Living as God’s Beloved*

- **Fasting Guidelines:**

I am preparing you for what is on the road ahead, just around the bend. Take time to be still in My Presence so that I can strengthen you. The busier you become, the more you need this time apart with Me. So many people think that time spent with Me is a luxury they cannot afford. As a result, they live and work in their own strength— until that becomes depleted. Then they either cry out to Me for help or turn away in bitterness. How much better it is to walk close to Me, depending on My strength and trusting Me in every situation. If you live in this way, you will do less but accomplish far more . Your unhurried pace of living will stand out in this rush-crazed age. Some people may deem you lazy, but many more will be blessed by your peacefulness . Walk in the Light with Me, and you will reflect Me to the watching world.

Sarah Young

Jesus Calling: Enjoy Peace in His Presence

December 27

1. **Preparation for Fasting...** As the fast approaches you may want to begin to prepare your heart and schedule to make room for additional time with Him. You may want to dramatically decrease your exercise time while fasting. Also, begin to look at your schedule and see where you can carve out a bit more time with Jesus. Remember,

fasting without prayer is really just starvation. Either *The Pursuit of God* or *The Knowledge of the Holy*, by A.W. Tozer are great resources, as well as Mike Bickle's book, *The Rewards of Fasting*.

2. **Be Realistic...** Fasting causes weakness. By choosing to fast food, we choose to walk in voluntary weakness; ***emotional, spiritual and physical*** weakness. Most of us do not like being weak. It's humbling to find yourself wanting, especially spiritually. When you fast, your weakness reflects a void that God can fill. Think about it. What do you want to fill that void?
3. **Be Wise...** It does you no good to commit to a fast that ignores wisdom. If you drive a vehicle, operate dangerous equipment, or are responsible for the care of other, etc., for a living, your ability to do those things safely is a priority. It doesn't mean that God cannot fill that void, but fasting is not a challenge to your body. ***Fasting moves not-so-essentials out of the way so the Lord can move in and occupy that space.***
4. **Fasting is less an event, more of an emerging lifestyle...** Don't make this a competition to see who can make the greatest sacrifice. You won't prove anything to yourself or others by "making the ultimate sacrifice." ***Commit to fast in a realistic way and stick with it.*** Our desire is that fasting becomes a lifestyle, not a twice-a-year challenge.
5. **What this Fast is NOT...** This is not *mostly* a time to ask God for things. Many times, a time of prayer and fasting is to focus on moving the heart of God on our behalf. What tends to happen is that we ask the Lord to align His will with ours by asking Him to respond to our prayer requests. This is not wrong, but not the focus of this particular fast. Spiritual fasting is not a way to earn God's favor by getting him to do something for us. Rather, ***we want this fast to produce transformation in us—a clearer, more focused attention and dependence upon God.*** This is "spiritual alignment."
6. **The Focus for our 10-Day Fast...** This fast is designed to be quite the opposite. What we want during this ten days together is for our hearts to be moved and aligned with His! You can choose any type of fast you like, i.e., Daniel Fast (fruits and veggies), Juice Fast, One-Meal-A-Day, or Water-Only Fast. If tweaking with your food intake is out of the question, you can fast things like media, caffeine, etc, but ***you should forgo something that will open the door for you to spend more time engaging with the Lord.***
7. **After the Ten-Days are Up...** We will gather together as a Body on Saturday, January 10, from 6:00 to 9:00 pm. ***Let's see what the Lord revealed to us*** during this amazing time of prayer and fasting. Bring a little snack to share. Let's stay away from sugary stuff. Maybe fruit, veggie, or sandwich trays. You'll thank me later!
8. **Fast on!**

- PRESSING ON TOWARDS THE GOAL

- **Knowing Him and wanting to know Him more...** We never stop growing in our knowledge of Jesus. In fact, the deeper you go in your knowledge of Him, the more accepting of your need to know Him more!
Oh, that we might know the LORD! ***Let us press on to know him.*** He will respond to us as surely as the arrival of dawn or the coming of rains in early spring." (Hos 6:3 NLT-SE)
- Come near to the holy men and women of the past and you will soon feel the heat of their desire after God. They mourned for Him, they prayed and wrestled and sought for Him day and night, in season and out, and when they had found Him the finding was all the sweeter for the long seeking. ~ A.W. Tozer in *The Pursuit of God*
- **Why all the focus on "pressing on?"**

³⁵ So do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord. Remember the great reward it brings you! ³⁶ Patient endurance is what you need now, so that you will continue to do God's will. Then you will receive all that he has promised. ³⁷ "For in just a little while, the Coming One will come and not delay. ³⁸ And my righteous ones will live by faith. But I will take no pleasure in anyone who turns away." ³⁹ But we are not like those who turn away from God to their own destruction. ***We are the faithful ones***, whose souls will be saved. (Heb 10:35–39 NLT-SE)

- The "back story" here is that situations arise for all of us that can ***distract, frustrate, and eventually discourage*** us in our pursuit of God. If our hope is fixed on being a "good Christian" thinking that choice will guarantee us a trouble-free life. Sorry. God does some of His best work in the midst of adversity. Our focus should be on remaining steadfast, not giving up, and pressing on in our pursuit of God and His design for our lives, individually and corporately.

- **Run with purpose...run to win!**

²⁴ Don't you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So ***run to win!*** ²⁵ All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. ²⁶ So ***run with purpose*** in every step. (1 Cor 9:24–26 NLT-SE)

- **What does it mean to "win?"** Paul is telling the Corinthians about the discipline and perseverance it takes to finish well. He's painting a good picture of what Jesus calls an "overcomer" in His letter to the seven churches in Revelation:
 - The Church in **Ephesus**... "To him who **overcomes** (*not doing the most important things*), I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God." (Rev 2:7 NIV)
 - The Church in **Smyrna**... "He who **overcomes** (*adversity and suffering*) will not be hurt at all by the second death. (Rev 2:11 NIV)
 - The Church in **Pergamum**... "To him who **overcomes** (*spiritual and moral compromise*), I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it. (Rev 2:17 NIV)
 - The Church in **Thyatira**... "To him who **overcomes** (*spiritual and moral compromise*) and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations (Rev 2:26 NIV)
 - The Church in **Sardis**... "He who **overcomes** (*spiritual dullness and lethargy*) will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels. (Rev 3:5 NIV)
 - The Church in **Philadelphia**... "Him who **overcomes** (*world-wide testing*) I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name. (Rev 3:12 NIV)
 - The Church in **Laodicea**... "To him who **overcomes** (*lack of passion, devotion and walking in presumption*), I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. (Rev 3:21 NIV)



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What happened in your life in 2015 that hit you like a truck? Good or bad. Blessing or trial. Don't worry about making a list. Start with one event and the rest will start to flow...

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.
