



TODD LEVIN MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

A monthly teaching publication to our partners and friends

PRESSING ON IN GOD

Dear Partners and Friends,

Have you ever sat down and took a stroll through memory lane? How often we reflect on the memories of our past, the yesteryears and how things used to be - “Well I remember when...” We’ve all had our share of good times and bad, victories and triumphs, sorrows and disappointments. I’m sure everyone has his or her story to tell and song to sing. There are many things I’ll be sure to pass on to my children and grandchildren in the years to come. I thank God for the “good old days,” but one thing I must be sure not to do is to live in my past. Good or bad, it’s time to RELEASE MY PAST in order to STEP INTO MY FUTURE, i.e. the plan that God has set before me.

The Apostle Paul in writing to the Philippian Christians said it this way:

“Now I have given up everything else--I have found it to be the only way to really know Christ and to experience the mighty power that brought him back to life again, and to find out what it means to suffer and to die with him. So whatever it takes, I will be one who lives in the fresh newness of life of those who are alive from the dead. I don't mean to say I am perfect. I haven't learned all I should even yet, but I keep working toward that day when I will finally be all that Christ saved me for and wants me to be. No, dear brothers, I am still not all I should be, but I am bringing all my energies to bear on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God is calling us up to heaven because of what Christ Jesus did for us. I hope all of you who are mature Christians will see eye-to-eye with me on these things, and if you disagree on some point, I believe that God will make it plain to you-- if you fully obey the truth you have.

Philippians 3:10-16 (Living)

For Paul, though he had achieved much in life from an educational, theological and moral standpoint, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, in all that he had accomplished from the world’s viewpoint, his conviction at heart was this:

“But all these things that I once thought very worthwhile--now I've thrown them all away so that I can put my trust and hope in Christ alone. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the priceless gain of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. I have put aside all else,

counting it worth less than nothing, in order that I can have Christ, and become one with him.”

Philippians 3:7-9 (Living)

Notice what He said, *“all these things that I once thought very worthwhile, I’ve now thrown all away.”* He is saying, “I’m not holding onto or living in my past.” Regardless of the victories and triumphs, ups and downs, I choose to release my past in order to enter my future.

Friends, when you live your life through a rear view mirror, you’ll never go very far in life. You’re going to have to let go of your past and move on. You see the Gospel is not about your past, it’s about your future. In Jeremiah 29:11, the Word shows us that God has planned a future for us.

“For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. They are plans for good and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.”

Some people enjoy living in their past. They actually prefer the way that things used to be. I remember living over in Eastern Europe for over eight years and listening to some of the comments from the older generation. Many actually expressed a desire to have communism back. They preferred the “old system,” the way that things used to be as opposed to moving on in life. I know it may sound hard to believe but it’s the truth. People today are not any different. It may not be a desire to revert back to communism, but there are other issues they have: “I wish things were the way they used to be when I was a child.” “I remember when so and so was alive, we used to take long walks together. I sure miss him. What am I going to do?” “I remember when so and so was the pastor, I think the church was better off. I wish he was here again.” Of course we all know what happened to Lot’s wife. She did not want to leave her past behind and as a result, ended up staying in her past. She missed what God had planned for her future.

Friends, whether it be things that people have said to you or things that people have done, all hurt, animosity, ill will, unforgiveness, rejection, self denial, guilt, shame, unfortunate childhoods and past failures, they **all must be released in order to move on with God’s master plan for your life!**

Others have no problem letting go of their past. In fact they rejoice in the very fact that God is willing to forgive and cleanse and stand them back up on their feet again. The Apostle Paul had no problem with this. He said, *“This one thing that I do (make a point of) forgetting what was behind and pressing, straining, and looking forward in order to reach the end of the race and receive the prize.”*

We need to rejoice that God has given us a second chance and a third; in fact His margin of grace is greater than you’ll ever need. I’m sure Peter was thrilled that God gave him a second chance. How would you liked to have walked with Jesus for three years on the Earth, only to publicly deny that you ever knew him right before His crucifixion? Thank God Peter could move on and get over it and accept the Lord’s forgiveness and still be used by God in a powerful way as we see as demonstrated in Acts

chapter two on the day of Pentecost.

Then of course there was Lazarus who had been dead for four days and lying in a tomb. I'm sure he was thrilled to leave his past and that God gave him a second chance in life.

Then there was blind Bartimaeus who knew no other way of life other than to beg and to be at the mercy of others. He was surely overjoyed when Jesus stepped into his life. Bartimaeus was delighted to leave his past, one of poverty, hopelessness, helplessness and rejection in order to move on into God's plan and God's best!

In John's Gospel and chapter eight, we have the woman who was caught in adultery. When the scribes and Pharisees brought this woman to Jesus and tried to accuse her, Jesus said unto them,

“He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.”

Thank God this woman was given a second chance in life! Jesus did not support or advocate this woman's lifestyle, that is why he said go and sin no more. Thank God there is forgiveness and acceptance available in Jesus no matter what you have done or where you have been in life! Jesus will not turn you away if you will call upon him for help in time of need. He loves you!

You see friend, I know some do not want to change anything. They have become so accustomed to doing what they want to do and living how they want to live – right or wrong – and simply refuse to let go and let God. What do I mean by that? I mean, not willing to conform to the image of Christ – whether it be in their thought life by renewing and cleansing their mind - thinking God's thoughts, or even in lifestyle – “This is just the way I am. I'll never change. Not even God can help me.” Remember this: Change is not always welcomed, but it is necessary in order for you to move forward in God's plan for your life!

Maybe as you're reading this you're thinking, “Yes Todd, I hear what you're saying, but the truth is, I don't have any vision or goals. I feel like I'm stuck in the mud, just existing and going through the motions of life. I would love to get out of this “rut” and move on with my life but I just don't know how.”

Let me help you friend. You see God's Word is a lamp unto your feet (it shows you

where you are standing), and a light unto your path (it shows you where you are going). His Word alone when it is sown deep down in your heart will actually create vision for your life and give you hope. What might seem impossible right now to you actually can become a reality in your life when the Word of God takes root in your heart. Let me give you an example.

For instance, some time ago you injured yourself on the job or for that matter at home, and now you're on disability. You can hardly make ends meet and you've tried to get your old job back but they won't hire you. Before the accident, you were the acting supervisor with 35 people under you, and making pretty good money, but now you sit at home day after day worrying if you'll be able to pay all the bills by the end of the month.

Friend, it's time to move on! If you'll take time to get into the Word of God and allow the Word of God to get into you, it will create vision and hope for your life. It becomes possible at that stage to release your past and move forward in life because God's Word has given you a new outlook on life. There is light at the end of the tunnel. God is not through with you. He does have a plan for your life. No matter how hard it has been for you, **IT'S ABOUT TO CHANGE! RELEASE THE PAST, LET IT GO, and PRESS ON! LOOK OUT IN FRONT OF YOU TO WHAT GOD HAS PLANNED AND SET BEFORE YOU AND PRESS ON!**

“By no means do I count myself an expert in all of this, but I’ve got my eye on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward – to Jesus. I’m off and running, and I’m not turning back. So let’s keep focused on that goal, those of us who want everything God has for us.”

Philippians 3:14 (Message)

I like what Paul said. Notice what direction he was looking in. His eye was on the goal that was before him, not the memories that were behind him. He was pressing on, moving forward and letting go of the past. He was focused and not distracted. Notice something else that he said. “I’m off and running, and I’m not turning back.” He was determined wasn’t he? He decided to turn away from his past and run into his future. I like that don’t you? I believe the reason he was focused on the goal is because he was determined in his heart. Likewise, I believe the reason he was determined in his heart is because he could see the goal out in front of him. This gave him more reason to **PRESS ON!**

What have you had your eyes on lately? Have you been looking out ahead at what God has set before you? Or have you been looking behind and living in your past? Either way, the choice is still yours. **You have to decide to press on or stay behind.**

Some have said, “I wish I had my health back again. Those were the good old days.” Others have said, “I’ve been thinking about how it was before I got married and I’m

wondering if I made the right decision.” Then there are those who struggle with finance and continue to ask themselves if getting their old job back again would be a step in the right direction.

Maybe you feel as though you’ve been knocked down this year through circumstances, disappointments and failure. Remember you’re not knocked out! You’re still in the race. You still have purpose. Keep on keeping on! Press on! Run with those who have vision, i.e. who want God’s best! Paul went on to say in verse 17-20 onwards,

“Stick with me, friends. Keep track of those you see running this same course, headed for this same goal. There are many out there taking other paths, choosing other goals (following their dreams, their careers, their ambitions, wants and desires instead of God’s), and trying to get you to go along with them...All they want is easy street. They hate Christ’s cross. But easy street is a dead-end street. All they can think of is their appetites. There’s far more to life for us!”

How important it is what friends we choose to hang around. Choosing unwisely become can be very costly and detrimental to our spiritual health.

Make it a point to eliminate apathetic, casual, lukewarm, carnal, lazy, critical and do-nothing-for-God Christians. They are a distraction and a detriment to your spiritual health and future. Surround yourself with people who have vision in their life. Iron sharpens iron, but bad company always ruins good character. (I Corinthians 15:33)

Maybe while you’ve been reading this letter, you realize that you have been either holding on to or living in your past. Make a point right now to release it, let it go, forgive if need be and accept God’s forgiveness for your mistakes. He will forgive you. He will strengthen you. He will help you if you cry out to him in time of need.

“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.”

Isaiah 41:10

“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

Heb 4:15-16

“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.”

Jeremiah 33:3

Your Friends and Partners,

Todd & Eva