

Marquand Chapel
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Press On...The Reward is Great!

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Philippians 3:12-21

...forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on... In the name of the one Triune God...Creator, Reconciler and Redeemer. Amen

These words from Paul to the Philippians are perhaps of special significance as we press on now that midterm exams and papers are behind or almost behind us. The sorely needed and anticipated refreshment of Spring Break is before us and we are straining these last hours to get there. That is how we live our lives. We move from one thing to the next focused on earthly goals. We worry whether or not what we've done in the past is "good enough." Too often we find ourselves wishing for a second chance to do it again and to perhaps get it right the next time. Some of you might be feeling that way right now; wishing you had a chance to take that exam, write that essay or do that project just one more time. I know I can do better you say!

There are certainly lots of forces in the world, in our lives, that are at work telling us whether or not they think what we have done is "good enough." Perhaps there's a family member or a friend who just doesn't understand why you're willing to endure what must be endured here at YDS. If others aren't instilling doubts about our vocations, we can do a pretty good job of that on our own. It is at such times that our focus or perhaps that of those who express love for us is on earthly goals however instead of "*the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.*" Paul's exhortation to the Philippians is indeed helpful today. We are to press on, "*forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead.*"

We press on because of the promise of a life in Christ...with Christ. It is a promise that is better and more precious than anything available to us on earth.

If you're waiting to hear about or have perhaps already been rejected for admission into a graduate program ... press on

If it seems like every potential supervisor for your internship is living on some other planet...press on.

Haven't gotten accepted into that CPE program on which you had your heart set? Press on!

Perhaps you've been interviewing for that first position following your anticipated graduation from YDS and they've all told you "thanks but no thanks." If so...press on!

If your Commission on Ministry, Standing Committee, bishop, Care Team, Presbytery or whatever your judicatory or ecclesiastical authority happens to be, tells you that they don't discern a call to ordained ministry in you at this time...press on!

When a TA here at YDS has told you that they found your exegesis paper completely incomprehensible...press on!

Or perhaps a professor has informed you that "Your dialectical participation in the didactic exercise pertaining to the teleological significance of the eschatological hope that is the bedrock of Christianity lacked clarity." (say what?) No matter...press on!

If you're still struggling with the difference between eschatology, teleology, soteriology, ecclesiology, theology and biology (it's alright) just...press on!

If you got your GOE results back and your scores suggested that you hadn't learned a doggoned thing after 3 years of working as hard as humanly possible with seemingly endless sacrifice, struggle and sleep deprivation...press on!

If yours remains the lone voice crying in the wilderness to end the insidious, capricious and salacious permeation of racism in the world, this nation, the state of Connecticut, New Haven, Yale University and, yes, Yale Divinity School...press on!

If you sometimes feel like you are drifting in the middle of the ocean in a canoe without even a paddle as you attempt to draw attention to the rape, mutilation and destruction of this precious planet that God has so lovingly provided us...press on!

If you've been denied the opportunity to serve that same loving God as an ordained clergy person because of your gender or sexual preference...press on!

When you find the courage to finally speak truth to power and proclaim that a war is being waged unjustly...the civil liberties of citizens are being violated...that building a wall to divide a holy land is unholy...that the abuse of prisoners on Guantanamo Bay or any other bay is illegal and inhuman...press on!

When people sneer at you because you find it repulsive that a nation (this nation) will allow the legally sanctioned murder of a 75 year old man who is blind and confined to a wheelchair or the execution of a former gang leader whose life has become an example of redemption, let them sneer and...press on!

When you are castigated for drawing attention to the arrogance of a nation that insists on imposing its democratic principles on another country only to then reject the result of a democratic election by the people, of the people and for the people...press on!

If someone tells you that politics and religion don't mix, remind them that when Moses confronted Pharaoh...it was about politics...when the Israelites demanded a king...it was about politics...when Herod ordered a census upon learning of the birth of Jesus...it was about

politics...when Jesus turned-over the tables in the market outside the synagogue...it was about politics...when Jesus the Christ was handed over to the Romans by the chief priests and scribes and led to Golgotha to be executed...it was about politics so...press on!

If your road to sanctification has been a little bumpy or if you've taken a detour away from the route to holiness that you have chosen, know that you are forgiven for Jesus died for your sins and mine and we have already been made right with God through this sacrifice and by the faith we live, so...press on!

Ah, we must press on! It is not the easiest thing to do --- demands on us are so great; expectations are enormous but we must press on! However we press on not out of arrogance but out of a desire to live as Christ has commanded us to live...in love and humility. Yes, even loving those who misuse their authority and influence over our lives because they fail to see what we see. For our eyes are fixed on the heavenly prize not on earthly goals. The words of Paul exhort those of us who have committed ourselves to Christ to be of the same mind. Paul offers these words to us today just as he did to those at Philippi, "*Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests but to the interests of others.*"

As we begin our Lenten disciplines continue to press on. Giving-up chocolate, smoking, swearing, alcohol (or whatever is your drug of choice) or deciding to get more exercise during these forty days is commendable. However, deciding to live our lives in Christ might be a greater goal. The rewards are certainly greater. Whatever you do, press on for "*we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.*"