



# **Press On**

**By**

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## In-Person Classes on Hold

I watched a joint news conference with school superintendents and government leaders in our city and county yesterday. They decided to move all public school classes to online learning for the beginning of the school year and possibly longer. That means no in-person classes .. no lunch with friends .. no recess or playtime .. no extra-curricular activities .. no personal time with teachers.

My first thought was about the challenges families will face and how difficult it will be on both parents and children.

My second thought was how Christians should respond and remembered the words of the Apostle Paul –

*“Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think*

*otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.”*

### **PHILIPPIANS 3:13-16**

Paul wrote to the Philippians from prison, so you can imagine what kind of challenges he faced. What had Paul done to deserve time in prison? He preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That included teaching people how to live for Christ (Philippians 1), explaining what Jesus had done for them and why (Philippians 2), warning them about false teachers (Philippians 3), and the importance of trusting Christ in all things (Philippians 4).

Look at that list again and think about your own circumstances as a Christian:

- teaching people how to live for Christ
- explaining what Jesus had done for them and why
- warning them about false teachers
- the importance of trusting Christ in all things

## Pressing On

Does that seem like a good way to live your Christian life during good times and tough times? It does. That's why Paul's words from the 1st century AD about reaching forward and pressing toward the goal "for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" are so appropriate for what we're going through in the 21st century.

The idea of "reaching forward" and "pressing toward" are interesting in the original language of the New Testament. The word for "reaching forward" has the idea of *stretching forward* even to the point of *straining after* something. The word for "pressing toward" has the idea of *putting to flight* and *chasing aggressively* after something.

What Paul called on the Philippians to do was to take their situation and opportunities seriously. That's the same thing God wants us to do today: to take our current situation and opportunities seriously. God wants us to *reach forward* and *press toward* "the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ

Jesus.” Remember that we have an *upward* call. Our goal is spiritual and our prize is in Heaven with Jesus.

Jesus knew that the time between His ascension and return to Earth would be many hundreds of years. Jesus knew Christians would face every imaginable challenge during those years. That’s why Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to guide and comfort His disciples. That includes us! We find much of that guidance and comfort through the writings of the apostles who were inspired by the Holy Spirit to reveal the Mind of Christ to us.

Is life tough? Yes. Can we get through it? Yes. Can we be victorious no matter what the circumstances? Yes.

Those were some of my thoughts as the superintendents made their announcement. It will be difficult for us, our families, friends and neighbors. It will also be an amazing opportunity to demonstrate the love of God to them.

Let us not lose hope in these difficult days because God has placed us in our family and community for such a time as this. Christians are messengers of hope. We are salt and light to our friends and neighbors. We can and do make a big difference through our words, our actions and our prayers.

What we are facing now, just like in Paul's day, is not out of God's control. God has a plan and He provides His children with knowledge, wisdom, talents and spiritual gifts to make a difference in this topsy-turvy world.

May we use what God has given us for His glory and the benefit of people in our lives; people made like us in the image of God. May we, along with Paul and centuries of Christians who have faced tough times, "press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

*“Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.”*

**PHILIPPIANS 3:15-16**

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