

WE PRESS ON, LAYING HOLD OF THE PRIZE KEEPING A GODLY PERSPECTIVE – WHEN PRESSURE COMES

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Pressure is an inevitable part of our journey on earth. At some points in our life we will have experienced a pressure. For students it may be a deadline you've faced. It could be financial, when you get those lovely brown envelopes from the taxman or a company requesting you settle your bill. Your health could be the battle that you have faced and the pressure is intense. How about relational? How are you feeling about the relationships you have and amongst those in your bubble.

Job

Job was an upright and blameless man. He was a good guy. In Job 1:8 God said to the devil, *"Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?"*

Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him; I will surely defend my ways to his face. (Job 13:15, NIV)

Jobs questions about the pressures that are overwhelming his life are not all answered. Gods' response doesn't give him a list of reasons why he had to go through so much, nor does He show him the purpose in the plan. Are you going through pressure that you just don't understand why it's happened this way? God left Job with unanswered questions, but it's so important that we grasp that God never left Job.

The Lord is near to the broken hearted and saves the crushed in spirit. (Psalm 34:18, NIV)

Elijah

What are you doing here, Elijah?" Elijah replied, "I have zealously served the Lord God Almighty. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too." "Go out and stand before me on the mountain," the Lord told him. And as Elijah stood there, the Lord passed by, and a mighty windstorm hit the mountain. It was such a terrible blast that the rocks were torn loose, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. (1 Kings 19:9-13, NLT)

A whisper speaks of intimacy. It's using soft undertones, to speak softly or under the breath so as to be heard only by one near at hand. God desires to be very intimate with us. Draw near to me and I will draw near to you. It's relational.

When Elijah had the experience with the Lord in the wilderness. After the intimacy, notice what the Lord did. God went straight to commissioning Elijah on what to do next. He brought him straight back to his purpose. Each one of us has a purpose to fulfil while we're here on earth. The Lord is merciful in that He walks with us every step of the way. Through every pressure, through every wilderness experience and when you come through He directs you back to His plan.

*I have told you all this so that you **may have peace in me**. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world. (John 16:33, NLT)*

The term take heart has also been translated as be of good cheer but the word in Greek means something so much stronger. ‘*Tharseite*’ from the root ‘*Tharreow*’. The root of the word means to exercise bold and confident courage!

We can have a bold confidence when pressures come. Why? Because if Jesus is living inside of us we have all we need!

They do not fear bad news; they confidently trust the Lord to take care for them. They are confident and fearless and can face their foes triumphantly. (Psalm 112:7-8, NLT)

Shammah

2 Samuel 23:11-12

One man, surrounded at all sides with all the odds against him obtained a triumphant success.

During lockdown we need to take our battles, our pressures, to the Lord in prayer and learn to stand our ground and allow the Lord to work through us. Our peace is not based on our circumstances and by what we see but is rested in the wholeness of who God is.

Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the centre of your life. (Philippians 4:6-7, MSG)

Maintaining a Godly home during lockdown:

In this season of lockdown we have a wonderful opportunity to really nurture our marriages, our children or those we are in close relationship with during lockdown by making the **biggest investment with the greatest gain - Our relationship with Jesus**. Lets be diligent to press on into God. The Holy Spirit will help us to hold back on frustrations that can arise from confinement.

In keeping a Godly perspective during lockdown we need to recognise:

- God as our hiding place.

For you are my hiding place; you protect me from trouble. You surround me with songs of victory. (Psalm 32:7, NLT)

In the midst of adversity when you feel the heat of the battle, God wants us to run to Him and not from Him.

- God is the only defence we will ever need.

The name of the Lord is a fortified tower; the righteous run to it and are safe. (Proverbs 18:10, NIV)

Notice that the reference here is to Gods name. This tells us that the reputation of the name in this instance Yahweh has already proven themselves as completely reliable. God is able to handle any situation you bring before Him.

Jesus

The name **Gethsemane** in Hebrew '*gat shemanim*' means "oil press".

Jesus went to Gethsemane with His disciples Peter, James and John. In Matthew 26:37 Jesus began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. Jesus was in a battle. He was being hard pressed because He knew what His commission was and the hour was at hand.

This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. (Hebrews 4:15, NLT)

Jesus faced overwhelming pressure to bail. He even cried out in prayer to the Father in Matthew 26:39 *My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.*"

- Jesus was at a place of totally surrendering to Gods will.

In this time of being in lockdown what an opportunity we have been given to draw closer to the one who is the very lover of our soul. The God who wants to be known. Confinement isn't always a negative. Sometimes God uses the times of confinement to repair or reconstruct areas where we've perhaps got our priorities wrong due to the busyness of life. He is bringing us back to **intimacy first**. Where we recognise that all that we are and all that we will ever need is found in Him alone. In His kindness, He dries up all other places where we once went looking for fulfilment and satisfaction and He brings us to the point where we declare like Psalm 87:7 *all my springs are in you.*

*My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness
I dare not trust the sweetest frame
But wholly lean on Jesus' name*

*When darkness hides His lovely face
I rest on His unchanging grace
In every high and stormy gale
My anchor holds within the veil*

- Bob Kauflin