



Faith Action Verbs

As we are moving through this faith class, we've had some interesting lessons so far. The lessons have dealt with a variety of things, but I want to focus in on the different action verbs in our past verses. Verse 7 kicked it all off for us as we found the first action verb, **consider**. Let's take a look:

- **consider** - in many ways this is a mental task, where in our minds we choose to think of something as having much lesser value than our faith in Christ. Some versions use the words **counting as loss**. Just as counting is a mental activity, this kind of faith considering takes a great deal of mental action also.

Another action verb that really stood out was the word **straining**. We see this word in verse 8:

- **straining** - in many ways this is also a mental effort, where in our minds we purpose to not give up, to try our best, to exercise our faith with great effort. This word suggests we are not content to just hope for progress in regards to our faith, we are committed to it, so we will make the effort, straining, even if it hurts.

As we begin to look at verse 14, there is another action verb that shines out. However, we will find it is a more intense action verb than those already mentioned. The word is **press**. Verse 14 reads:

*"I **press** on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."*

In studying verse 14, we are going to focus on this word and the message Paul conveys through it. This verse is a more common one among many Christians; it is a verse that calls us to action, mainly because of this strong faith action verb, **press**.

- **press** - this word goes beyond the mental task and involves an actual doing. In reading the descriptions of the original word, we find it is a prolonged verb, meaning it is something that happens over time, it isn't a one time thing. We also find that it is an intense verb that gets involved.

You see when I **consider**, I make a personal mental calculation of this world versus eternity; when I **strain**, I make a personal mental choice to put effort into what I believe. Both of these are very necessary personal thought processes for my faith. But... when I **press**, it is different.

You may ask, how is it different? Well let's think about that. If I am pressing, then I have to press against something. It is not just something that happens in my mind, it has to come out in my actions as I press against the opposition. Living in this world, in which the Bible tells us we are strangers, is often difficult. When we make the personal mental faith choice to say that we are considering things of this world a loss, you can guarantee that challenges will come from that. When we make the personal mental faith choice to strain, to put real effort into our faith, you can also guarantee that challenges will come from that too. These challenges become the opponents that we have to press against. So... pressing is like the next level up beyond considering and straining in this faith walk 101.

So...if we are seeking to move forward in our faith walk, the next action verb in line is **PRESS!** Let's think about some things we might need to press against? The Bible mentions quite a few:

- **Fleshly desires** - Once we choose to consider all things as loss and to strain toward what is ahead, fleshly desires will stand in direct opposition to those choices. In verse 14 Paul makes it clear he is going to press against anything that might hinder him. Any fleshly desire that is in

opposition to the faith choice we have made can present a challenge for us. Some fleshly desires might be:

1. Sexual desires outside of God's plan
2. Using our mouths in ungodly ways – gossip, complaining, negativity, slander
3. Abusing our bodies through substance abuse, food related issues, lack of care
4. Laziness, not making the effort needed to answer to God's call to faith on our lives
5. Selfishness that brings about Indulgences of all kinds

These are serious issues, but there are definitely other things beyond fleshly desires we need to press against, like:

- Weariness – As we choose to consider all things as loss and to strain toward the good that God has for us, we will at times become weary in the effort. Paul would encourage us to press past weariness, toward the goal.
- Fear – As we choose to consider this world as loss and to strain toward what is ahead, fear will seek to grip us in its strength. Paul determined to press past fear.
- People who don't understand – People will not always be impressed that we have made strong faith choices. Even well meaning people will stand in opposition to our faith. Paul determined to press beyond people who would hold back his faith from strong growth.

If anyone ever thought the Christian life was for wimps, he is dead wrong! You may be like me however and look with great familiarity at all these things listed above. This list and more will stand in opposition to the faith life God wants us to experience. We need to get our faith in action and press past it. The things on this list can be overwhelming and very difficult and because of that, all too often, I believe Christians make those mental faith choices but stop there, close, but not pressing past them to reach what God has in store.

Sometimes we get stuck and I wonder if we get more involved in the other forms of pressing like:

- Impressing
- Suppressing
- Depressing
- Oppressing
- Repressing

Let's let our faith take us beyond that stuff; we have to press like Paul pressed! Recently I saw a movie that really touched my heart, some of you may have seen it too. It is called "Fireproof". In this movie, a husband and wife are really struggling in their marriage. There are all kinds of issues, but one is that the husband is involved in viewing internet pornography. At one point he comes face to face with the fact that this behavior is in opposition to his faith and his marriage. He has to make a faith choice between saying:

"I wish I could change but it is too hard, I don't know how and I don't have the power."

Or

"This will rule me no longer, I am going to press against it through the power of Christ."

I love the intensity of the choice he makes; he puts the action in action verbs. Do you know what he does? He takes the computer outside and smashes it with a baseball bat! I think we can all agree, he was pressing. This approach sounds similar to the time that Jesus said,

"If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off, and throw it from you..." (Matthew 5:29)

That is pretty intense; it also makes me think of the time that Paul said:

"Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize."

(1 Corinthians 9:24-27)

Pretty serious stuff, huh? As you memorize this week I encourage you to take a moment and read Mark 5:24-34. This describes a time when a crowd was pressing in on Jesus. However this account only describes one who actually touched Him. She was an afflicted woman who pressed in on Him to receive a healing and she did so by faith. She was a woman who didn't deserve a healing, she really shouldn't have even been there, but God's grace smiled on her faith. Again, I love the intensity, the action, the relentless faith that said, "I will reach the goal." I believe God does too.

So I ask you today, are you pressing? I am asking myself the same thing. You see I can easily get caught in the mode of mental faith, where I consider this world alongside all that God wants me to have by faith and I tell myself in my mind, "I want what God has". And I can talk myself into trying, really straining toward the mark. But what happens when the opposition hits? Am I content to just stay there, in the mental trying mode, close to where I want to be, wishing I could overcome, or am I willing to press? I read something lately that said, "close is not close enough!" That sounds like a pressing attitude to me.

Over and over, the Bible tells us that the righteous man lives by faith. This week, let's allow ourselves to really live, taking our faith beyond the mental consents and moving into the places of pressing. Whatever we need to press against may seem overwhelming, too big or beyond our ability. To be honest, it probably is. Thankfully we have One who has authored our faith. Of Him it is said,

"Therefore, since we have a great High priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need"

Jesus has pressed against everything we can ever imagine and He was stronger than it all. He is there to help us. Call on Him to help you press!

Considering, straining and pressing!

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