

Pressing On

Life can be hard. Trials and tragedies can seem, and often even be, apparently never-ending. Job loss and other factors beyond our control can bring on financial hardship. People, even those closest to us, can let us down. Parts of congregations (or even whole ones) can abandon the way of truth, love, and holiness for Satan's counterfeits. Paul experienced all of these:

- Though at times *personally destitute*, he wrote that he "*knew how to get along with humble means*," [Phil.4:12](#); and that even with just the barest essentials for life, "*contentment*" was possible, [1Tim.6:7-8](#).
- He was also obviously deeply hurt and greatly saddened when both John Mark (cf. [Acts 13:13; 15:37-38](#)) and Demas ([2Tim.4:10](#)) deserted him and the work.
- Likewise, his stinging rebukes of the church at Corinth ([1Cor.](#)) was born of two factors: 1) his great love for them, [2Cor.2:4b](#); and, 2) his great "*anguish of heart*" over their apostasies, [2Cor.11:4a](#).

Yet despite these *hardships, trials, and setbacks*, note what Paul DIDN'T do:

- When facing financial hardship, he DIDN'T quit or cry "foul," he found another way to support himself (making tents with Priscilla and Aquila) and kept on preaching and teaching until the situation could be resolved and he could again *devote himself completely to the word*, [Acts 18:3-5](#).
- When facing abandonment, he DIDN'T become exasperated and quit, but instead found another work-mate and kept on preaching, [Acts 15:40](#), "*But Paul chose Silas and departed, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord.*"
- When cities or churches turned against him and the Lord, he DIDN'T decide "It just isn't worth it anymore!" and quit, but picked himself up (literally and figuratively), "*shook off the dust of their feet*" as the Lord had commanded (cf. [Matt.10:14](#)), and kept on preaching the word, [Acts 13:51](#).

Now, you don't have to be an apostle or even a preacher to learn from Paul's example. When as Christians, we face similar hardships and even tragedies, we need to learn one simple lesson: **Don't quit, press on!** As he wrote to the Philippians, "*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet, but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus*," [Phil.4:13-14](#).

We're facing many trials and hardships right now. Incomes have been lost, family members both physical and spiritual have succumbed to the effects and ramifications of disease both physically and spiritually. Churches in part and in whole have lost or are losing their way. We need to heed the example of this great soldier of the cross. Don't *victimize* yourself; find another way. Don't allow *hurt* and/or *disappointment* to exasperate you into quitting; find a new *helper* and get back to work. Don't *tie* yourself to people, places, or groups that are heading the wrong way; if you've done your best to warn/correct them to no avail, move on. Sometimes the best we can do is to "*forget what lies behind and reach(ing) forward to what lies ahead*" and "*press on!*" My friends, keep the faith and don't quit, press on! (Philip C. Strong; Southport Church of Christ; 7202 Madison Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46227; online at southportcofc.org)