

Philippians 3:14 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

CLICK VERSE

To go directly to that verse

[Philippians 3:1](#)
[Philippians 3:2](#)
[Philippians 3:3](#)
[Philippians 3:4](#)
[Philippians 3:5](#)
[Philippians 3:6](#)
[Philippians 3:7](#)
[Philippians 3:8](#)
[Philippians 3:9](#)
[Philippians 3:10](#)
[Philippians 3:11](#)
[Philippians 3:12](#)
[Philippians 3:13](#)
[Philippians 3:14](#)
[Philippians 3:15](#)
[Philippians 3:16](#)
[Philippians 3:17](#)
[Philippians 3:18](#)
[Philippians 3:19](#)
[Philippians 3:20](#)
[Philippians 3:21](#)

Philippians 3:14 I [press on \(1SPA\)](#) toward the [goal](#) for the [prize](#) of the [upward call](#) of [God in Christ Jesus \(NASB: Lockman\)](#)

Greek: [kata skopon dioko \(1SPA\)](#) eis to brabeion tes ano kleseos tou theou en Christo lesou.

Amplified: I press on toward the goal to win the [supreme and heavenly] prize to which God in Christ Jesus is calling us upward. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

Barclay: I press on towards the goal, in order that I may win the prize which God's upward calling in Christ Jesus is offering to me. ([Westminster Press](#))

Eadie: Toward the mark I press on, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Lightfoot: I press forward ever towards the goal, that I may win the prize of my heavenly rest whereunto God has called me in Christ Jesus.

NLT: I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us up to heaven. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: I go straight for the goal - my reward the honour of being called by God in Christ. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Wuest: I am pursuing on for the prize of the call from above of God which is in Christ Jesus.

Young's Literal: to the mark I pursue for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

I PRESS ON: dioko (1SPA):

- Lk 16:16; 2Co 4:17,18; 5:1; 2Ti 4:7,8; Rev 3:21

- [Philippians 3 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

Related Resources:

- Athletic Metaphor
- Commentary on Running/Boxing
- 1Co 9:24-note, 1Co 9:25-note, 1Co 9:26-note, 1Co 9:27-note

Index to "The Metaphors of St Paul" by John Saul Howson (1868)

- [Chapter 1 - Roman Soldiers](#)
- [Chapter 2 - Classical Architecture](#)
- [Chapter 3 - Ancient Agriculture](#)
- [Chapter 4 - Greek Games](#)

I press on - Paul says that "It is the habit of my life to keep pressing on" for the verb **dioko** is in the **present tense**, which emphasizes the lifelong commitment that gripped and guided this sold out saint. **Are you sold out? Has a passion for pursuit of the Person of Christ gripped your heart? What you are passionate about is that for which you will make time?**

What the Bible teaches – I shall never forget seeing a prize-winning picture of two great runners, the one pictured giving a glance backward to see his rival, the other runner, breasting the tape on the other side. The photographer captured in that tense moment a race lost by a backward glance.

Press on (1377) (**dioko** from **dío** = pursue, prosecute, persecute) means to follow or press hard after, literally to pursue as one does a fleeing enemy. It means to chase, harass, vex and pressure and was used for **chasing down criminals**. **Dioko** speaks of an intensity of effort leading to a pursue with earnestness and diligence in order to obtain. To go after with the desire of obtaining or in some contexts the desire to harm. It gives us the picture of going on the track of something like the hounds on the hunt and pursuing after the fox and implying a continuing effort to overtake, reach, or attain the goal.

Vincent says that **dioko** is "Stronger than "follow". A favorite word with Paul to denote the pursuits of moral and spiritual ends. See Rom. 9:30, 31; 12:13; 1 Cor. 14:1; Philip. 3:12." (Vincent, M. R. Word Studies in the New Testament. 4:307)

Summary of dioko...

1) (Closely related to #2) To make to run or flee. To put to flight. To drive away (Mt 23:34)

2) **To persecute** - 30/45 NT uses convey the sense of the intention of doing harm. To hunt down like an animal. To run swiftly after something. To in any way whatever, to harass, trouble, molest. To carry out physical persecution, to harass, to abuse, to treat unjustly. (Mt 5:10, 11, 12, Mt 5:44, Mt 10:23, Lk 21:12, Jn 5:16; 15:20; Acts 7:52; 9:4, 5; 22:4,7, 8; 26:14, 15; Ro 12:14; 1Co 4:12; 15:9; 2Co 4:9; Gal 1:13,23; Gal 4:29; Gal 5:11; Php 3:6; 2Ti 3:12; Passive sense - to be maltreated, suffer persecution on account of something -Gal 6:12. Dioko conveys a sense of urgency and a sense of intensity of purpose.

Comment: How do we respond to persecution? We **remember** that suffering persecution is part of what it means--in certain situations at least--to live as a Christian (1Th 3:4; 2Ti 3:12). Like Paul, "when we are persecuted, we **endure** it" (1Co 4:12). We **respond** by loving and blessing our persecutors and **praying** for them (Mt 5:44; Ro 12:14). And through it all, we **remember** that we are surrounded by the love of Jesus. For no "hardship or **persecution** (**diogmos** derived from **dioko**) or famine or nakedness or danger" will ever be able to separate us "from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ro 8:35, 39). ([Richards, L O: Expository Dictionary of Bible Words: Regency](#))

3) To run swiftly in order to catch some person or thing, to run after; to press on; diligently follow. Figuratively used of one who like a runner in a race runs swiftly to reach the goal and thus to pursue a specific objective. To hasten, press forward, press on (Php 3:12, Php 3:14). To pursue in a hostile manner (Acts 26:11, Rev 12:13).

4) To run swiftly after, follow after here without the idea of hostility (Luke 17:23)

5) Figurative - To actively pursue some course. To seek after eagerly. To earnestly endeavor to acquire (Ro 9:30; 1Ti 6:11; 2Ti 2:22; Ro 9:31 (Pr 15:9; Dt 6:20; Ro 12:13; Ro 14:19, 1Co 14:1; 1Th 5:15; He 12:14; 1Pe 3:11.

Balz & Schneider note that...

The original Greek sense of the word is based on the meaning drive, set in motion, push, which then becomes persecute, banish and, used metaphorically, follow, strive for a person or a thing, push forward zealously, aspire to, be zealously behind something, endeavor with zeal. The NT uses the verb and the noun in connection with Hellenistic Judaism in the sense of religious persecution of Jesus and his followers and then, under the influence also of Greek philosophy, particularly the Stoa, as an expression for striving toward ethical and religious attitudes and goals. ([Balz, H. R., & Schneider, G. . Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans](#))

NIDNTT writes that...

dioko is perhaps connected with the Homeric diemai, flee. It means literally to chase, pursue, run after, drive away, and figuratively to pursue something zealously, try to achieve something, try to obtain, prosecute.

In the **LXX** dioko, along with ekdioko and katadioko, is used primarily of pursuit by hostile soldiers (Ex 15:9), or by anyone whose intentions are hostile (Gen. 31:23). It translates a number of Hebrew verbs, but chiefly radap, pursue; the other verbs occur only in isolated instances. This gives rise to the usage which is characteristic of the Psalms of individual lamentation (e.g. Ps 7:1, 5... cf. also Jer 15:15; 20:11), where persecution and persecutors refer to the circumstances and persons that cause the psalmist to suffer, without there necessarily being active persecution in the narrower specific sense.

The OT also contains exhortations to strive for a goal. In normal Greek settings it will be the good, the beautiful, or virtue that is to be pursued. In the **LXX** it is relationships, e.g. social righteousness (Dt. 16:20; cf. also Josephus, Ant. 6, 12, 7), peace (Ps. 34:14), and righteousness in the sense of true honoring of God (Pr 15:9), that are to be followed. The corresponding NT usage has its roots here. ([Brown, Colin, Editor. New International Dictionary of NT Theology. 1986. Zondervan](#))

Warren Wiersbe writes that **dioko** "carries the idea of intense endeavor. The Greeks used it to describe a hunter eagerly pursuing his prey. A man does not become a winning athlete by listening to lectures, watching movies, reading books, or cheering at the games. He becomes a winning athlete by getting into the game and determining to win! The same zeal that Paul employed when he persecuted the church (Phil. 3:6), he displayed in serving Christ. **Come to think of it, wouldn't it be wonderful if Christians put as much determination into their spiritual life as they do their golfing, fishing, or bowling?"**

Dioko - 45x in 44v -**NAS** = **persecute(10), persecuted(13), persecuting(7), persecutor(1)**, practicing (1), press on(2), pursue(7), pursuing(2), run after(1), seek after(1).

Here are the NT uses of **dioko**...

Matthew 5:10-**note** "Blessed are those who have been **persecuted** for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11-**note** "Blessed are you when people insult you and **persecute** you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. 12-**note** "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they **persecuted** the prophets who were before you.

Comment: One who lives as a Christian and actively represents God's point of view to a lost world should not be surprised if he or she is persecuted. The same active antagonism that Jesus experienced (in one degree or another) is promised to the true believer who seeks to live a Spirit filled holy life in front of an unholy world.

Matthew 5:44-note "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who **persecute** you,

Matthew 10:23 "But whenever they **persecute** you in one city, flee to the next; for truly I say to you, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes.

Matthew 23:34 "Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and **persecute** from city to city,

Luke 11:49 "For this reason also the wisdom of God said, 'I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and some they will **persecute**,

Luke 17:23 "They will say to you, 'Look there! Look here!' Do not go away, and do not **run after** them.

Luke 21:12 "But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will **persecute** you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake.

John 5:16 For this reason the Jews were **persecuting** Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath.

John 15:20 "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they **persecuted** Me, they will also **persecute** you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

Acts 7:52 "Which one of the prophets did your fathers not **persecute**? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become;

Acts 9:4 and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you **persecuting** Me?" 5 And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are **persecuting**,

Comment: Paul's persecution of believers was equivalent (in God's eyes) to persecution of Jesus because He was in covenant with them and thus identified fully with them. When they were persecuted, He was persecuted. Note how this fact is repeated in the passages below from Acts. Clearly this is a truth God wants believers to be know and believe, especially when they are being persecuted for His sake!

Acts 22:4 "I **persecuted** this Way (Acts 9:2, 18:25, 26, 19:9, 23, 24:14, 22) to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons,

Acts 22:7 and I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you **persecuting** Me?' 8 "And I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are **persecuting**.'

Acts 26:11 "And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept **pursuing** them even to foreign cities.

Acts 26:14 "And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, 'Saul, Saul, why are you **persecuting** Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' 15 "And I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are **persecuting**.'

Romans 9:30-**note** What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not **pursue** righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; 31 but Israel, **pursuing** a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law.

Comment: The Jews were pursuing but their pursuit was like a football player with the ball running to the opponents goal line. The Jews were running the "wrong direction", by works (in contrast to faith)

Romans 12:13-**note** contributing to the needs of the saints, **practicing** hospitality. 14 Bless those who **persecute** you; bless and do not curse.

Comment: Interesting picture - pursuing hospitality, not my strong suit.

Marvin Vincent - pursuing hospitality. For a similar use of the verb compare 1Co 14:1; 1Th 5:15; Heb 12:14; 1Pe 3:11. A necessary injunction when so many Christians were banished and persecuted. The verb indicates not only that hospitality is to be furnished when sought, but that Christians are to seek opportunities of exercising it. (Ibid)

Romans 14:19-**note** So then we **pursue** the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.

1 Corinthians 4:12 and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are **persecuted**, we endure;

1 Corinthians 14:1 **Pursue** (**present imperative** - the direction of your life. Chase after Christ-like agape love with intensity) love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.

1 Corinthians 15:9-note For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I **persecuted** the church of God.

2 Corinthians 4:9-note **persecuted**, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;

Comment: What a picture by Paul of his many enemies continually (present tense) stalking him like an animal day and night, every day (cf. Acts 9:23,24, 28,29; 14:5, 6, 19; 20:3; 23:12). When you stand for Christ, everything that stands against Him will come against (persecute) you!

Galatians 1:13 For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to **persecute** the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it;

Galatians 1:23 but only, they kept hearing, "He who once **persecuted** us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy."

Galatians 4:29 But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh **persecuted** him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also.

Galatians 5:11 But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still **persecuted**? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished.

Galatians 6:12 Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply so that they will not be **persecuted** for the cross of Christ.

Philippians 3:6-**note** as to zeal, a **persecutor** of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.

Philippians 3:12-**note** Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but **press on** so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:14 I **press on** toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Comment: Amazing, transforming grace, is able to change a **persecutor** of Jesus' people (Php 3:6) into a **pursuer** of the Person Jesus! (Php 3:12, 14)

1Thessalonians 5:15-**note** See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always **seek after** (**present imperative** - the direction of your life) that which is good for one another and for all people.

Comment: The corollary admonition is that if the "direction" of your life is pursue after that which is evil, you may be saying more about your eternal destiny than you realize. Faith in Jesus is not a "fire (eternal) insurance" policy, but a "life (eternal) assurance" policy, and is manifest and validated by a changed life (direction, not perfection!). Do not be deceived. Faith alone saves, but the faith that saves is not alone. (cp 2Co 13:5).

1Timothy 6:11 But **flee** from (**present imperative** - the direction of your life) these things, you man of God, and **pursue** (**present imperative** - the direction of your life) righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.

Comment: A T Robertson - Vivid verbs in present active imperative. The preacher can not afford to parley with such temptations.

2Timothy 2:22-**note** Now **flee** from (**present imperative** - the direction of your life) youthful lusts and **pursue** (**present imperative** - the direction of your life) righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

2Timothy 3:12-**note** Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be **persecuted**.

Comment: One of those "precious and magnificent promises" (2Pe 1:4) in Scripture, but not one we really like to heard! Note who will be persecuted - those who even "desire" to live godly. The lost world loathes godliness because it convicts them of their rank ungodliness. And so with the "promise" of persecution, how can a believer live godly? There is only one way beloved, and it's "in Christ Jesus". In the sphere of. In the "atmosphere" of Christ. Like a fish lives when it lives in the sphere of water. A believer can only really live, when he or she lives in the grace (power) of Christ (cp 2Ti 2:1-note).

Hebrews 12:14-**note** **Pursue** (**present imperative** - the direction of your life. Remember - the direction, not perfection!) peace with all men, and the sanctification (holiness) without which no one will see the Lord.

1Peter 3:11-**note** "HE MUST TURN AWAY FROM EVIL AND DO GOOD; HE MUST SEEK PEACE AND **PURSUE** (aorist imperative) IT.

Revelation 12:13-**note** And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he **persecuted** the woman who gave birth to the male child.

Dioko - 70x in the **Septuagint (LXX)** -

Gen 14:15; 31:23; Ex 15:9; Lev 26:7f, 17, 36; Deut 16:20; 19:6; 30:7; 32:30; Josh 2:7; 23:10; Jdg 4:16, 22; 7:23; 8:4f, 12; 9:40; 20:43; 2 Sam 18:16; 20:7, 10, 13; 21:5; 22:38; 24:13; 2 Kgs 5:21; 9:27; 25:5; Ezra 9:4; Job 19:22; Ps 7:1; 34:14; Prov 9:12; 12:11; 15:9; 21:6; 28:1, 19; Eccl 3:15; Isa 1:23; 5:11; 13:14; 16:4; 17:2, 13; 30:16, 28; 41:3; 51:1; Jer 17:18; 20:11; 51:31; Lam 1:6; 4:19; 5:5; Ezek 25:13; 35:6; Dan 4:32; Hos 6:3; 12:1; Amos 1:11; 2:16; 6:12; Mic 2:11; Nah 1:8; 3:2; Hab 2:2; Hag 1:9

Wiersbe adds that...

There are two extremes to avoid here: (1) "I must do it all" and (2) "God must do it all!" The first describes the

activist, the second the quietist, and both are heading for failure. "Let go and let God!" is a clever slogan, but it does not fully describe the process of Christian living. What quarterback would say to his team, "OK, men, just let go and let the coach do it all!" On the other hand, no quarterback would say, "Listen to me and forget what the coach says!" Both extremes are wrong.

The Christian runner with the spiritual mind realizes that God must work in him if he is going to win the race (Php 2:12-note, Php 2:13-note). "Without Me ye can do nothing" (Jn 15:5). God works in us that He might work through us. As we apply ourselves to the things of the spiritual life, God is able to mature us and strengthen us for the race. "Exercise thyself rather unto godliness!" (1Ti 4:7, 8-note) Some Christians are so busy "dying to self" that they never come back to life again to run the race! And others are so sure they can make it on their own that they never stop to read the Word, pray, or ask for the power of the Lord. ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary. 1989. Victor or Logos](#))

Steven Cole writes that Paul exemplifies...

An attitude of moving ahead in the present: Keep moving!... (Ed: Even though Paul had been converted some 25 years prior to writing Philippians, in this section he reveals his mindset that he was still in process and had not yet arrived. He's been at it for 25 years, but he doesn't view himself as having arrived!) Paul had a holy dissatisfaction with where he was at, so he kept pressing on. Yesterday's blessings or experiences wouldn't do for today. He walked daily with the Lord, always wanting more, always learning, always growing, never treading water or coasting. ([Philippians 3:12-16 Christian Growth Process](#))

J.C. Ryle the devout 19th century theologian said that...

Zeal in religion is a burning desire to please God, to do His will & to advance His glory in the world in every possible way. It is a desire which no man feels by nature... (A zealous man) will always find a sphere for his zeal. If he cannot preach, or work, or give money, he will cry, and sigh, and pray. Yes; if he is a pauper, on a perpetual bed of sickness, he will make the wheels of sin around him drive heavily, by continually interceding against it... If he is cut off from working himself, he will give the Lord no rest till help is raised up from somewhere else, and the work is done. This is what we mean when we speak of **zeal** in religion...

See him (Paul) from the day of his conversion, giving up his brilliant prospects-forsaking all for Christ's sake-and going forth to preach that very Jesus whom he had once despised. See him going back and forth throughout the world from that time-through persecution-through oppression-through opposition-through prisons-through chains-through afflictions-through things next to death itself, up to the very day when he sealed his faith with his blood and died at Rome, a martyr for that Gospel which he had so long proclaimed. This was true Christian zeal. (Practical Religion)

C H Spurgeon described the **zeal** that presses onward and upward writing that...

If you never have sleepless hours, if you never have weeping eyes, if your hearts never swell as if they would burst, you need not anticipate that you will be called zealous. You do not know the beginning of true zeal, for the foundation of Christian zeal lies in the heart. The heart must be heavy with grief and yet must beat high with holy ardor. The heart must be vehement in desire, panting continually for God's glory, or else we shall never attain to anything like the zeal which God would have us know... As well a chariot without its steeds, a sun without its beams, a heaven without its joy, as a man of God without zeal.

Onward and Upward

In his exposition of this verse **Spurgeon** wrote a believer should be...

Always making progress, — throwing himself into it, having the reward before him, the prize of perfection in Christ, and running towards it with all his might.

David Livingstone, pioneer medical missionary to Africa upon returning to Great Britain was asked,

"Where do you want to go now?"

Without hesitation, like the good Christian racer he was, Livingstone replied...

"I am ready to go anywhere provided it be forward." (Amen!)

Stephen Charnock a respected Puritan theologian (The Attributes of God) wrote...

'As there is not a moment but we are under His mercy, so there is not a moment that we are out of His presence (Pr15:3). Let us therefore look upon nothing, without thinking who stands by, without reflecting upon Him in whom it lives, and moves and hath its being... Let us not bound our thoughts to the creatures we see, but pierce through the creature to the boundless God we do not see: we have continual remembrances of His presence; the light whereby we see, and the air whereby we live, (all things) give us perpetual notices of (God) ... Yea, what a shame is our unmindfulness of (God), when every cast of our eye, every motion of our lungs, jogs (our memory of God)... How shall we do to be (more) serious? Mind God's presence. How shall we avoid distractions in service? Think of God's presence. How shall we resist temptation? Oppose to them the presence of God.'

C H Spurgeon explains that the metaphor of a Christian race implies **progress onward** writing that...

So far as acceptance with God is concerned a Christian is complete in Christ as soon as he believes. But while the work of Christ for us is complete, that of the Holy Spirit in us is not complete, but is continually carried on from day to day. The condition in which every believer should be found is that of **progress**. Nearly every figure by which Christians are described implies this. We are plants in the Lord's field, but we are sown that we may grow. "First the blade," etc. We are born into the family of God; but there are babes, little children, etc. Is the Christian a pilgrim? Then he must not sit down as if rooted to a place. Is he a warrior, wrestler, etc.? These figures are the very opposite of idleness.

J C Philpot wrote has the following devotional thoughts on Phil 3:13,14 ...

Press on to know the blessed mysteries of the gospel as the food of your soul; press on to know the Son of God, not only as a crucified man, not only as sweating blood in Gethsemane's garden, and agonizing on Calvary's tree; but **press on** to know him as the exalted God-man Mediator at the right hand of the Father, ever living to make intercession, able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him; and **press on** to enjoy him as your living Head, distilling into you as a living member of his mystical body, what the Psalmist calls, "the dew of his youth;" that is, the fruits of his resurrection, ascension and glorification, as manifested by the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit. **Press onward** to know the power of the precious gospel you profess, to enjoy it more in your soul, and to manifest its reality more in your conduct, your conversation, and your life. (J. C. Philpot. Daily Words for Zion's Wayfarers)

Wiersbe notes that "Each believer is on the track; each has a special lane in which to run; and each has a goal to achieve. If we reach the goal the way God has planned, then we receive a reward. If we fail, we lose the reward, but we do not lose our citizenship." (Wiersbe, Be Joyful)

Rob Mattoon - The word "**press**" is again the Greek word **dioko** which means "to intently, earnestly seek or pursue." It is in the present tense which indicates a continuous effort. It is the same word as "**I follow after.**" Paul pressed after the church or persecuted Christians, now he presses, he earnestly, continually pursues toward the mark of God's high calling. The Lord has a way of changing our goals, doesn't He? There are two extremes of pressing: 1) I must do it all, 2) God must do it all. God wants us to be dependent upon Him for the things we cannot do for ourselves. We are to do our best and leave the rest up to God. (Treasures from Philippians)

Max Lucado - Undefined priorities are at the root of much of our success-or-failure frustration.

Bruce Demarest writes that...

God has called us to gain the heavenly prize. Our divine vocation is not a life of ease and pleasure, but one of self-denial as we strive for the heavenly goal. The great apostle Paul expressed his life's goal in these words: "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:13,14). (Demarest, B. A. The Cross and Salvation : The Doctrine of Salvation. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books)

Brian Bill on Determination (Php 3:14). Paul not only turns his dissatisfaction into devotion and is headed in the right direction; he also demonstrates determination in verse 14: "I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." To "**press on**" has the idea of intensely pursuing the prize, of bearing down in order to win. **There are two extremes that we need to avoid when it comes to determination.** This is best demonstrated by thinking of boats and water. A raft just sits in the water and doesn't do anything. Some believers are saved but they're just sitting, waiting for God to do something. Are you drifting? A rowboat depends totally on the strength of the person doing the rowing. Some believers think that everything's up to

them. A sailboat is the right picture, for God moves us as His Spirit fills our sails, and yet we have a responsibility to steer and stay in balance. A good sailor must be determined in order to cruise across the water.

David Livingstone, a pioneer missionary to Africa, returned to Great Britain and was asked, "What do you want to do now?" I love his response: "I am ready to go anywhere provided it be forward." We must put the past out of our minds and never forget the future. We are called heavenward. Focusing on the future will have a purifying affect on the present as taught in 1 John 3:2-3: "But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure." As we look up and look ahead, we'll be less prone to be paralyzed by our past. We must live in light of eternity, expecting either the Rapture or our departure at death to the shores of heaven.

Apparently there's a tombstone at the foot of one of those majestic mountains in the Alps to honor the memory of a man who fell to his death while attempting to climb to the top. Underneath the individual's name the epitaph reads, "He died climbing." That's what should be said of each of us. We're to pursue the prize with dogged determination, so that when we die, we're already on the way up.

ILLUSTRATION (HUMOR) - Pressing On to Win the Prize - My five-year-old grandnephew was obviously worried as he looked down the long aisle of the church where his aunt was to be married the following day. His grandmother had an idea. "I think I'll give a prize to the person who does the best job tomorrow," she told him.

We were all holding our breath the next day, but when it was time, the ringbearer performed without a hitch.

When his grandmother told him he had won the prize, he was both excited and relieved. "I was pretty sure I had it," he admitted, "until Aunt Dana came in wearing that white dress and the horn was blowing. Then I started thinking—she might win!" —Barbara Lee, Goldsboro, North Carolina. Christian Reader, "Rolling Down the Aisle."

WHY WE NEED TO BE PRESSING ON - The Christian walk is much like riding a bicycle; we are either moving forward or falling off.

Pressing on to what lies ahead - When famed missionary Dr. David Livingstone returned from Africa to England, he was asked, "Where are you ready to go next?" "I am ready to go anywhere, provided it be forward!" This must be the attitude of the child of God every single day. "Lord, I am ready to go wherever you lead, no matter where that takes me." So many of us make our list and say, "Lord, if you don't mind, I'm busy today so could you just initial this at the bottom, and I won't bother you anymore." But that's not how it works. When people ask about the "secret" of God's will, I tell them it begins in the morning when you say, "Lord, let me take the next step with you today." If Paul were here today, he would say, "Press on!!!!" (Ray Pritchard)

I will place no value on anything I have or may possess, except in relation to the kingdom of Christ. —David Livingstone

PRESSING ON TOWARD THE GOAL - Are We There Yet? We were making a 3-hour trip to my mother's house for a visit when our 3-year-old, Jenna, asked, "Mommy, where are we?"

"We're on Highway 27," I responded.

A few minutes later she asked again, "Mommy, where are we now?"

"We're still on Highway 27," I answered.

Eager to be there, she thought for a moment, then asked, "Mommy, when will we be on Highway 28?" —Laura Reiser, "Small Talk,"

The Little Satellite That Could - In his book Pastoral Grit: the Strength to Stand and to Stay (Bethany), Craig Brian Larson writes:

"In 1972, NASA launched the exploratory space probe Pioneer 10. According to Leon Jaroff in Time, the satellite's primary mission was to reach Jupiter, photograph the planet and its moons, and beam data to earth about Jupiter's magnetic field, radiation belts, and atmosphere. Scientists regarded this as a bold plan, for at that time no earth satellite had ever gone beyond Mars, and they feared the asteroid belt would destroy the satellite before it could reach its target.

"But Pioneer 10 accomplished its mission and much, much more. Swinging past the giant planet in November 1973, Jupiter's immense gravity hurled Pioneer 10 at a higher rate of speed toward the edge of the solar system. At one billion miles from the sun, Pioneer 10 passed Saturn. At some two billion miles, it hurtled past Uranus; Neptune at nearly three billion miles; Pluto at almost four billion miles. By 1997, twenty-five years after its launch, Pioneer 10 was more than six billion miles from the sun.

"And despite that immense distance, Pioneer 10 continued to beam back radio signals to scientists on Earth. 'Perhaps most remarkable,' writes Jaroff, 'those signals emanate from an 8-watt transmitter, which radiates about as much power as a bedroom night light, and takes more than nine hours to reach Earth.'

"The Little Satellite That Could was not qualified to do what it did. Engineers designed Pioneer 10 with a useful life of just three

years. But it kept going and going. By simple longevity, its tiny 8-watt transmitter radio accomplished more than anyone thought possible.

"So it is when we offer ourselves to serve the Lord. God can work even through someone with 8-watt abilities. God cannot work, however, through someone who quits." —Leadership, Vol. 19, no. 1.

OLYMPIC ILLUSTRATIONS - "The 1992 Summer Olympics featured two tremendously poignant moments. American sprinter Gail Devers, the clear leader in the 100 meter hurdles, tripped over the last barrier. She agonizingly pulled herself to her knees and crawled the last five meters, finishing fifth—but finishing.

Even more heart-rending was the 400 meter semifinal in which British runner Derek Redmond tore a hamstring and fell to the track. He struggled to his feet and began to hobble, determined to complete the race. His father ran from the stands to help him off the track, but the athlete refused to quit. He leaned on his father, and the two limped to the finish line together, to deafening applause." ("What Makes Olympic Champions? John E. Anderson, February, 1994. Reader's Digest)

The late president of Moody Bible Institute, **Dr. William Culbertson**, often prayed, "Father, may we end well."

"The Greeks had a race in their Olympic games that was unique. The winner was not the runner who finished first. It was the runner who finished with his torch still lit. I want to run all the way with the flame of my torch still lit for Him." (Stowell, J: Fan the Flame. Page 32, Moody).

Here are a few quotes on **zeal** that might stimulate us to ponder what it means in our personal life to truly press on toward the goal...

It's easier to cool down a fanatic than warm up a corpse. - Brother Andrew

Attempt great things for God; expect great things from God. - William Carey

As well a chariot without its steeds, a sun without its beams, a heaven without its joy, as a man of God without zeal. - C. H. Spurgeon

I cared not when or how I lived, or what hardships I went through, so that I could gain souls for Christ. - David Brainerd

It is better to wear out than to rust out. - Richard Cumberland

A zealous man in religion is a man of one thing. He only sees one thing, he cares for one thing, he is swallowed up in one thing; and that one thing is to please God. - J. C. Ryle

We need an outbreak of holy heartburn, when hearers shall be doers, when congregations shall go out from meetings to do things for God. - Vance Havner

One live coal may set a whole stack on fire. - John Trapp

Get on fire for God and men will come and see you burn. - John Wesley

I have one passion only: It is he! It is he! - Nicolas von Zinzendorf

If by excessive zeal we die before reaching the average age of man, worn out in the Master's service, then glory to God, we shall have so much less of earth and so much more of heaven. - C. H. Spurgeon

I am never better than when I am on the full stretch for God. - George Whitefield

O Lord, make me an extraordinary Christian. - George Whitefield

Zeal is like fire; in the chimney it is one of the best servants, but out of the chimney it is one of the worst masters. - Thomas Brooks

Give me the love that leads the way,
The faith that nothing can dismay,
The hope no disappointments tire,
The passion that will burn like fire.
Let me not sink to be a clod;
Make me thy fuel, Flame of God.

Amy Carmichael

Tozer in **The Root of the Righteous** says...

Progress in the Christian life is exactly equal to the growing knowledge we gain of the Triune God in personal experience. And such experience requires a whole life devoted to it and plenty of time spent at the holy task of cultivating God. God can be known satisfactorily only as we devote time to Him. Without meaning to do it we have written our serious fault into our book titles and gospel songs. "A little talk with Jesus," we sing, and call our books *God's Minute*, or something else as revealing. The Christian who is satisfied to give God His "minute" and to "have a little talk with Jesus" is the same one who shows up at the evangelistic service weeping over his retarded spiritual growth and begging the evangelist to show him the way out of his difficulty.

A thousand distractions would woo us away from thoughts of God, but if we are wise we will sternly put them from us and make room for the King and take time to entertain Him. Some things may be neglected with but little loss to the spiritual life, but to neglect communion with God is to hurt ourselves where we cannot afford it. God will respond to our efforts to know Him. The Bible tells us how; it is altogether a matter of how much determination we bring to the holy task.

Tozer in the **Size of the Soul** has an interesting discussion on how to have a personal revival...

I have previously shown that any Christian who desires to may at any time experience a radical spiritual renaissance, and this altogether independent of the attitude of his fellow Christians.

The important question now is, How? Well, here are some suggestions which anyone can follow and which, I am convinced, will result in a wonderfully improved Christian life.

1. Get thoroughly dissatisfied with yourself. Complacency is the deadly enemy of spiritual progress. The contented soul is the stagnant soul. When speaking of earthly goods Paul could say, "for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Philippians 4:11); but when referring to his spiritual life he testified, "I press toward the mark" (3:14). "Thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee" (2 Timothy 1:6).¹⁷

2. Set your face like a flint toward a sweeping transformation of your life. Timid experimenters are tagged for failure before they start. We must throw our whole soul into our desire for God. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matthew 11:12).

3. Put yourself in the way of the blessing. It is a mistake to look for grace to visit us as a kind of benign magic, or to expect God's help to come as a windfall apart from conditions known and met. There are plainly marked paths which lead straight to the green pastures; let us walk in them. To desire revival, for instance, and at the same time to neglect prayer and devotion is to wish one way and walk another.

4. Do a thorough job of repenting. Do not hurry to get it over with. Hasty repentance means shallow spiritual experience and lack of certainty in the whole life. Let godly sorrow do her healing work. Until we allow the consciousness of sin to wound us, we will never develop a fear of evil. It is our wretched habit of tolerating sin that keeps us in our half-dead condition.

5. Make restitution whenever possible. If you owe a debt, pay it, or at least have a frank understanding with your creditor about your intention to pay, so your honesty will be above question. If you have quarreled with anyone, go as far as you can in an effort to achieve reconciliation. As fully as possible make the crooked things straight.¹⁸

6. Bring your life into accord with the Sermon on the Mount and such other New Testament Scriptures as are designed to instruct us in the way of righteousness. An honest man with an open Bible and a pad and pencil is sure to find out what is wrong with him very quickly. I recommend that the self-examination be made on our knees, rising to obey God's commandments as they are revealed to us from the Word. There is nothing romantic or colorful about this plain, downright way of dealing with ourselves, but it gets the work done. Isaac's workmen did not look like heroic figures as they dug in the valley, but they got the wells open, and that was what they had set out to do.

7. Be serious-minded. You can well afford to see fewer comedy shows on TV. Unless you break away from the funny boys, every spiritual impression will continue to be lost to your heart, and that right in your own living room. The people of the world used to go to the movies to escape serious thinking about God and religion. You would not join them there, but you now enjoy spiritual communion with them in your own home. The devil's ideals, moral standards and mental attitudes are being accepted by you without your knowing it. And you wonder why you can make no progress in your Christian life. Your interior climate is not favorable to the

growth of spiritual graces. There must be a radical change in your habits or there will not be any permanent improvement in your interior life.¹⁹

8. Deliberately narrow your interests. The jack-of-all-trades is the master of none. The Christian life requires that we be specialists. Too many projects use up time and energy without bringing us nearer to God.

If you will narrow your interests, God will enlarge your heart. "Jesus only" seems to the unconverted man to be the motto of death, but a great company of happy men and women can testify that it became to them a way into a world infinitely wider and richer than anything they had ever known before. Christ is the essence of all wisdom, beauty and virtue. To know Him in growing intimacy is to increase in appreciation of all things good and beautiful. The mansions of the heart will become larger when their doors are thrown open to Christ and closed against the world and sin. Try it.

9. Begin to witness. Find something to do for God and your fellow men. Refuse to rust out. Make yourself available to your pastor and do anything you are asked to do. Do not insist upon a place of leadership. Learn to obey. Take the low place until such time as God sees fit to set you in a higher one. Back your new intentions with your money and your gifts, such as they are.

10. Have faith in God. Begin to expect. Look up toward the throne where your Advocate sits at the right hand of God. All heaven is on your side. God will not disappoint you.

If you will follow these suggestions you will most surely experience revival in your own heart. And who can tell how far it may spread? God knows how desperately the church needs a spiritual resurrection. And it can only come through the revived individual.

TOWARD THE GOAL: kata skopon dioko (1SPA1):

- [Philippians 3 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

Toward the mark. "In the direction of the mark"

THE PURPOSEFUL LIFE EVER TOWARD THE GOAL

Toward ([2596](#)) (**kata**) literally means "down" so it could be translated "down upon the goal". Eadie says it means "in the direction of the mark".

What a powerful picture Paul paints - it's the idea of a runner straining every fiber **"bearing down upon"** the goal. Everyone has seen the Olympic sprinters bearing down as they near the tape seeking to edge out the competition. They run for an earthly goal and an earthly glory. Saints bear down on the goal which is Christ Jesus Himself, the One to Whom we must continually look to as we run (cf He 12:1, 2-see notes He 12:1; 12:2). The prize is Christ likeness. What a high calling and worthy goal God has given to His redeemed!

Mattoon - Paul was saying, "I continually bear down on the mark." This word **"mark"** is a very interesting word. It comes from the Greek word **skopos** (**skop-os'**) and forms our English word scope. The word means "the distant mark looked at, the goal or end one has in view." This meaning can be seen as Paul talks about our race for Christ.

Goal ([4649](#)) (**skopos** [**word study**] related to verb **skopeo** = direct one's attention upon a thing, either in order to obtain it, or because one has a peculiar interest in it, or a duty to fulfil toward it <> English **"scope"** as in microscope or telescope) refers to that on which the eye is fixed, the distant mark looked at, the goal or end that one has in view. **Skopos** was used to refer to a target for shooting and in the present context refers to a moral and spiritual target. It is that mark at which the archer aimed to hit.

Skopos is the first word in the Greek sentence which emphasizes its importance.

Skopos is found **only here** in the NT but is used **21** times in the **Septuagint (LXX)** where it is often translated as an **observer** or **watchman**. Indeed, the **man of God** should be a **watchman for God!**

Skopos in **Septuagint (LXX)** -

Lv 26:1; 1Sa 14:16; 2Sa 13:34; 18:24, 25, 26; 2Ki. 9:17, 18, 20; Job 16:12; Is 21:6; Je 6:17; La 3:12; Ezek 3:17; 33:2, 6, 7; Ho 9:8, 10; Nah 3:12

Job 16:12 I was at ease, but He shattered me, And He has grasped me by the neck and shaken me to pieces; He has also set me up as His **target** (Lxx = skopos).

Lam 3:12 He bent His bow and set me as a **target** (Lxx = skopos) for the arrow.

Vincent writes that **skopos** was...

Used in the classics of a mark for shooting at, or as a moral or intellectual end. A somewhat similar figure occurs 1Ti 1:6; 6:21; 2Ti 2:18 (note), in the verb *stocheo* to miss the aim or the shot. A. V., swerved and erred...

"He who pursues sees nothing but that toward which he is hastening, and passes by all things, the dearest and the most necessary" (Theoph.)

Hughes adds that **skopos** "The noun refers to that on which one fixes one's gaze, whether it be a target at which an archer may shoot, metaphorically a goal or marker that controls a person's life, or as here the marker at the conclusion of the race upon which the runner fixes his gaze. (Hughes, R. K: The Fellowship of the Gospel. Preaching the Word. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books)

Hendriksen - By derivation, the word translated **goal** is that on which one fixes his eyes. Throughout the race the sight of that pillar at the end of the track encouraged the contestant to redouble his exertions. He was ever running goal-ward, that is, *in accordance with* the line from his eyes to the goal. In the spiritual race that goal is Christ, that is, ethical-spiritual perfection in him (see Phil. 3:8, 12). With all his heart the apostle desired to be completely raised above sin. He sought eagerly to promote the glory of God by every tool at his disposal, particularly by being a witness to all men (Acts 22:15, 21; 26:16-18), that he might by all means save some (1 Cor. 9:22)...Is there a real difference between **goal** and **prize**? In a sense they are the same. Both indicate *Christ, perfection in him*. Nevertheless, *goal* and *prize* represent different aspects of the same perfection; as follows, a. When this perfection is called *goal*, it is viewed as the object of human striving. When it is called *prize* it is viewed as the gift of God's sovereign grace. God imparts everlasting life to those who accept Christ by living faith (John 3:16). He imparts perfection to those who strive to attain it. Though it is true that this believing and this striving are from start to finish completely dependent on God's grace, nevertheless it is *we* who must embrace Christ and salvation in him. It is *we* who must strive to enter in. God does not do this believing and striving for us! b. The *goal* rivets the attention on the race that *is being run* or *was run*; the *prize* upon the glory that *will begin* in the new heaven and earth. Thus, bringing sinners to Christ, and doing this with *perfect* devotion, pertains to the *goal*. *Perfect* fellowship with these saved ones on and after the day of the great consummation pertains to the *prize*. Hence, it is correct to distinguish between goal and prize, as Paul also does both here and, by implication, in II Tim. 4:7, 8. With this glorious prize in mind—namely, the blessings of everlasting life; such as *perfect* wisdom, joy, holiness, peace, fellowship, all enjoyed *to the glory of God*, in a marvelously restored universe, and in the company of Christ and of all the saints—Paul is pressing on toward the goal. (Baker New Testament Commentary – Exposition of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon)

Using a similar athletic metaphor in 1Co 9:26-note, Paul declares that because of the the glorious truth that Christian racers will receive an imperishable wreath (crown),

I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air (like a serious athlete in training for the Olympic prize, Paul is focused on the goal, single minded, desiring every action to count toward that specific goal). (1Co 9:26-note)

Paul is drawing a picture in the reader's mind of the Olympic runners flying toward the finish each one seeking to be the first to break the tape and win the coveted (but perishable) wreath (which was associated with great honor and financial reward in the racer's home city state).

Spurgeon writes...

"This one thing I do," as if he had given up all else, and addicted himself to one sole object — to aim to be like Jesus Christ. There were many other things Paul might have attempted, but he says, "this one thing I do." ... he had more than enough to do, but all these were a part of his pursuit of the one thing, he was laboring perfectly to serve his Master, and to render himself up as a whole burnt-offering unto God. I invite every soul that has been saved by the precious blood of Christ, to gather up all its strength for this one thing, to cultivate a passion for grace, and an intense longing after holiness. Ah, if we could but serve God as God should be served, and be such manner of people as we ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness, we should see a new era in the church. The greatest want of the church at this day is holiness...

Moreover, the apostle saw his crown, the crown of life that fadeth not away, hanging bright before his eyes. What, said he, shall tempt me from that path of which yon crown is the end? Let the golden apples be thrown in my way; I cannot even look at them, nor stay to spurn them with my feet. Let the sirens sing on either side,

and seek to charm me with their evil beauty, to leave the holy road; but I must not, and I will not. Heaven! Heaven! Heaven! is not this enough to make a man dash forward in the road thither? The end is glorious, what if the running be laborious? When there is such a prize to be had, who will grudge a struggle? Paul pressed forward towards the mark for the prize of his high calling in Christ Jesus. He felt he was a saved man, and he meant through the same grace to be a holy man. He longed to grasp the crown, and hear the "Well done, good and faithful servant," which his Master would award him at the end of his course. Brethren and sisters, I wish I could stir myself and stir you to a passionate longing after a gracious, consistent, godly life, yea, for an eminently, solidly, thoroughly devoted and consecrated life. You will grieve the Spirit if you walk inconsistently; you will dishonor the Lord that bought you; you will weaken the church; you will bring shame upon yourself. Even though you be "saved so as by fire," it will be an evil and a bitter thing to have in any measure departed from God. But to be always going onward, to be never self-satisfied, to be always laboring to be better Christians, to be aiming at the rarest sanctity, this shall be your honored the church's comfort, and the glory of God. May the Lord help you to perfect holiness in the fear of God. Amen.

Harry Ironside writes that...

The calling of God on high (Philippians 3:14) is that heavenly calling which is characteristic of the present dispensation of grace. Christ is no longer on earth and His world-kingdom has not yet been set up. But believers are linked with Him as the glorified Man at God's right hand, and they are called to represent Him on earth. The prize is the reward He will confer at the end of the race. Toward that end Paul was pressing on, counting as refuse all that would hinder his progress. (Philippians Commentary)

Dwight Pentecost commenting on **the goal** notes that...

Often **failure** in the Christian race comes because we forget what the **goal** is. That is the danger the Philippians face. They have as the goal of their lives the approval of the company of saints with whom they live. That goal is difficult to attain but not impossible. They have forgotten that the goal of the believer's life is not to please men. The goal of the believer's life is to please the Lord Jesus Christ... We know from Scripture that perfect conformity to Jesus Christ awaits our translation into His glorious presence. Until that moment there is a race to be run. There is no room for laxity, carelessness, indifference, or laziness... so that I might attain the prize that there is in the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. The high calling of God is to be like His Son. In Php 3:14 the apostle is not speaking of the prize that God gives the believer as the victor and overcomer in the race. Other passages of Scripture teach that. Paul says,

"For me there is a prize in the high calling that God gave us in Christ. **It is to be like Him.**"

And as the charioteer drives his horses to overextend themselves to reach the goal, Paul drives himself because he wants to accomplish that purpose Christ had for him when He saved him, and separated him to Himself. (Pentecost, J. D. The joy of living : A Study of Philippians. Page 150. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications) (Bolding added)

Contemplate for a moment the vanity of your past achievements as compared to the weight of future glory. There is simply no comparison beloved! And remember Jesus' words that assure "maximum productivity" in Christ...

I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing. (John 15:5)

By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. (John 15:8)

In his excellent series, Preaching the Word, **R Kent Hughes** has is a wonderful illustration of **forgetting** what lies behind and **pressing on toward the goal**...

The year was 1923, and the competing track teams of Scotland and France were neck and neck. But among the events remaining was the 440. As the runners, clad in traditional 1920s white, came to the first turn, they were bunched tight, shoulder to shoulder, when one of them was pushed to the ground and off the track. For a second he was down—and then up again, running (though twenty meters behind), his knees high, his head back—flying. And as the leaders sprinted to the finish line, he emerged ahead to win! It was a famous win, immortalized in the movie Chariots of Fire.

What would most runners have done? Most would have waved a fist, dusted themselves off, and watched the outcome. Perhaps there would have been a few words exchanged after the race. But the athlete in question was beyond the ordinary. It was as if he had been reading this passage—forgetting what is behind and

straining forward to what lies ahead, I focus all my energy on the race; and seeing the goal, I fly to the finish. (Hughes, R. K: The Fellowship of the Gospel. Preaching the Word. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books)

Matthew Henry comments that Paul...

pressed towards the mark. As he who runs a race never takes up short of the end, but is still making forwards as fast as he can, so those who have heaven in their eye must still be pressing forward to it in holy desires and hopes, and constant endeavours and preparations. The fitter we grow for heaven the faster we must press towards it. Heaven is called here the mark, because it is that which every good Christian has in his eye; as the archer has his eye fixed upon the mark he designs to hit. For the prize of the high calling. Observe, A Christian's calling is a high calling: it is from heaven, as its original; and it is to heaven in its tendency. Heaven is the prize of the high calling; to brabeion-the prize we fight for, and run for, and wrestle for, what we aim at in all we do, and what will reward all our pains. It is of great use in the Christian course to keep our eye upon heaven. This is proper to give us measures in all our service, and to quicken us every step we take; and it is of God, from whom we are to expect it. Eternal life is the gift of God (see note Romans 6:23), but it is in Christ Jesus; through his hand it must come to us, as it is procured for us by him. There is no getting to heaven as our home but by Christ as our way.

In his last recorded message to Timothy, Paul used this same athletic metaphor describing the fact that he had crossed the finish line and was awaiting his prize, declaring...

"I have fought the good fight, **I have finished the course (race)**, I have kept the faith in the future there is laid up for me the crown (stephanos) of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing." (2Ti 4:7, 8-see notes 2Ti 4:7 4:8)

ILLUSTRATION - Looking through a peephole is no way to stay motivated when you're moving toward a goal. The big view is important. It takes big dreams—big goals—big rewards—big faith—to keep us moving through obstacles and fatigue and discouragement. To maintain momentum requires constantly reminding ourselves what we are working toward. —Charles Paul Conn in Making It Happen.

ILLUSTRATION - Years ago, a group of Englishmen tried to conquer Mt. Everest. They pressed on against cold, wind, blizzards, and avalanches. When they came within 2,000 feet of the peak, they set up camp. Two men, Mallory and Irvine, eagerly pressed on, expecting to return in about 16 hours. They never came back. The official record said simply: "When last seen, they were heading toward the summit." Whatever the obstacles, let's keep pressing on in the upward call of God, trusting in Him and not ourselves. At life's end, may it be said of us, "When last seen, they were heading toward the summit!" ([Our Daily Bread](#))

When the pathway seems long,
When temptation is strong,
When your strength's almost gone—
That's the time to press on. —Hess

When the pressure is on, press on!
(Keep heading to the "Summit")

The Resolutions of Jonathan Edward's (Written before age 20)

Being sensible that I am unable to do anything without God's help, I do humbly entreat Him, by His grace, to enable me to keep these Resolutions, so far as they are agreeable to His will.'

1 - Resolved, that I will do whatsoever I think to be most to the glory of God, and my own good, profit, and pleasure... To do whatever I think to be my duty... for the good and advantage of mankind in general. "

4 - Resolved, Never to do any manner of thing, whether in soul or body less or more, but what tends to the glory of God... '

5 - Resolved, Never to lose one moment of time, but to improve it in the most profitable way I possibly can.

6 - Resolved, To live with all my might, while I do live.

7 - Resolved, Never to do anything, which I should be afraid to do if it were the last hour of my life.

28 - Resolved, To study the Scriptures so steadily, constantly, and frequently, as that I may find, and plainly perceive, myself to grow in the knowledge of the same.

43 - Resolved, Never, henceforward, till I die, to act as if I were any way my own, but entirely and altogether God's.

46 - Resolved, Never to allow the least measure of any fretting or uneasiness at my father or mother.

70 - Resolved, (That) there be something of benevolence in all I speak. - (Edwards resolved to read these resolutions over once a week!).

Jonathan Edwards writes...

we should make the perfection of heaven our mark. We should rest in nothing short of this, but be pressing towards this mark, and laboring continually to be coming nearer and nearer to it.

All other concerns of life ought to be entirely subordinate to this. As when a man is on a journey, all the steps that he takes are in order to further him on his journey; and subordinate to that aim of getting to his journey's end. And if he carries money or provision with him, it is to supply him in his journey. So we ought wholly to subordinate all our other business, and all our temporal enjoyments to this affair of travelling to heaven. Journeying towards heaven, ought to be our only work and business, so that all we have and do, should be in order to that. When we have worldly enjoyments we should be ready to part with them, whenever they are in the way of our going toward heaven. We should sell all this world for heaven. When once any thing we have becomes a clog and hinderance [sic] to us, in the way heavenward, we should quit it immediately. When we use our worldly enjoyments and possessions, it should be with such a view and in such a manner as to further us in our way heavenward. Thus we should eat, and drink, and clothe ourselves. And this should we improve the conversation and enjoyment of friends.

And whatever business we are setting about; whatever design we are engaged in, we should inquire with ourselves, whether this business or undertaking will forward us in our way to heaven? And if not, we should quit our design.

We ought to make use of worldly enjoyments, and pursue worldly business in such a degree and manner as shall have the best tendency to forward our journey heavenward, and no otherwise...

Let Christians help one another in going this journey.

There are many ways that Christians might greatly help and forward one another in their way to heaven, by religious conference, and otherwise. And persons greatly need help in this way, which is, as I have observed, a difficult way.

Let Christians be exhorted to go this journey, as it were in company, conversing together while their journey shall end, and assisting one another. Company is very desirable in a journey, but in none so much as in this.

Let Christians go united, and not fall out by the way, which would be the way to hinder one another; but use all means they can to help one another up the hill.

This is the way to be more successful in travelling, and to have the more joyful meeting at their Father's house in glory. (Jonathan Edward's Notes on Scriptures)

Alan Carr - Notice that Paul refers to the prize as a "**high calling**". I want you to know that God did not save us so that we could continue to live like the world! He saved us that we might follow after Him and strive to be like Him in every detail of life. Don't cheapen your salvation by running after the flesh, the world or the devil! Treat your relationship with the Lord like the precious thing it is, by striving to live up to a "**high calling**."

If we are to succeed in the Christian life and honor God by the lives we live, then we are going to have to run the race His way. We will have to run with our eyes upon Him. We will have to learn to turn a blind eye to the allurements of the world and a deaf ear to the siren song of compromise. If we will attain the prize of Christlikeness, then we will have to pay the price of dedication and struggle. It will be a hard fought victory, but in the end, when we see His face, it will be worth it all!

How well are you running this evening? Are you eyes on Jesus alone? There is a song we sing from time to time that has a part that goes like this, "Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace." How true! Getting your focus solely on Jesus will give you the direction you need to successfully run the race

for His glory and your eternal benefit as you run for the prize!

Joel Gregory gives the following **illustration** of pressing on toward the goal...

Great herds of caribou, 400,000 strong, leave one part of northeastern Canada every year and by instinct make their way across barren land and rushing rivers all the way from Labrador to Hudson Bay to reach their winter grazing grounds. Those people who have seen it say it is one of the awesome spectacles in the natural world. [One] year, though, an unusual thing happened. The huge herd of caribou came to one of the great rivers of Canada and found it swollen over its banks. To swim it was to court almost certain death. Instead of turning back or trying a more indirect route, the whole herd plunged straight ahead toward their goal. Over 9,000 didn't make it across. Their bodies were a mute testimony to the inner drive moving the 400,000 toward their goal. They would allow nothing to keep them from reaching the mark. (Joel Gregory, *Growing Pains of the Soul*. Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1987, p. 98)

Our Daily Bread gives us the following **illustrations** regarding what it means to **press on** toward one's goal...

Determination and tenacity are requirements for success in almost any worthwhile endeavor. Note how a hungry cheetah displays such single-mindedness when he chooses one specific animal in a herd of deer or antelope and goes after it. Ignoring others less desirable, which might easily be caught, the swift predator has been clocked at nearly seventy miles per hour in his hot and unrelenting pursuit of his intended prey.

Think of the many scientists who, in spite of discouraging setbacks and negative attitudes on the part of their fellow workers, have persisted year after year in carrying on research in order to find a vaccine for some specific disease. Such tenacity of purpose is highly commendable. What boy has not thrilled to the popular tale of the western rancher who, having set his mind upon capturing a certain wild stallion, did not give up until he had corralled and trained the creature? To attain success, both determination and perseverance are necessary!

In like manner, to live a victorious spiritual life, a steadfast resolve and a constancy of purpose are needed. The apostle Paul declared that a desire to experience the fullness of Christ's resurrection power so gripped him that it became the controlling factor in his life. His words "I press toward the mark" describe a runner racing hard with his head forward, body bent and angled, and eyes on nothing but the final tape. Such was Paul's zealous attitude in reaching out toward the spiritual goals of service and blessing. If we would show the same oneness of purpose, we would likewise be filled with joy, experience victory over sin, and possess a deeper sense of God's constant presence. Let us press toward "the prize of the high calling of God"!

I'm pressing on the upward way,
New heights I'm gaining ev'ry day;
Still praying as I onward bound,
"Lord, plant my feet on higher ground." —J. Oatman, Jr.

**Sanctification is much like riding a bicycle —
either you keep moving forward, or you fall down.**

Stephen Olford writes that this verse teaches "that the responsibilities of every Christian involve righteous living in the present day. This is "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Php 3:14). This "high calling" is also termed "a holy calling" (2Ti 1:9-note). Such a quality of life demands separation and consecration worked out in everyday experience. This means following the Lord Jesus, whatever the cost. This righteous living is crowned with rewarded living in the future day. There is a "prize" to win in that future day. How we live here on earth will determine our status and authority in a coming day, when Jesus shall reign undisputed over the universe. The Bible tells us that "if we suffer we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us" (2Ti 2:12-note). It is a solemn fact to contemplate that throughout eternity we will carry with us the evidences of having been faithful or unfaithful here upon earth. It is important to foresee what is before us, if we would live righteously and rewardingly. (Olford, S. F. Vol. 2: Institutes of Biblical preaching)

A W Tozer writes...

I want deliberately to encourage this mighty longing after God. The lack of it has brought us to our present low estate. The stiff and wooden quality about our religious lives is a result of our **lack of holy desire.** **Complacency is a deadly foe of all spiritual growth Acute desire must be present or there will be no**

manifestation of Christ to His people. He waits to be wanted. Too bad that with many of us He waits so long, so very long, in vain.

Every age has its own characteristics. Right now we are in an age of religious complexity. **The simplicity which is in Christ is rarely found among us.** In its stead are programs, methods, organizations and a world of nervous activities which occupy time and attention but can never satisfy the longing of the heart. The shallowness of our inner experience, the hollowness of our worship, and that servile imitation of the world which marks our promotional methods all testify that we, in this day, know God only imperfectly, and the peace of God scarcely at all.

If we would find God amid all the religious externals, we must first determine to find Him, and then proceed in the way of simplicity. Now, as always, God discovers Himself to "babes" and hides Himself in thick darkness from the wise and the prudent. We must simplify our approach to Him. We must strip down to essentials (and they will be found to be blessedly few). We must put away all effort to impress, and come with the guileless candor of childhood. If we do this, without doubt God will quickly respond. ([The Pursuit of God](#)) (Bolding added)

God puts within us the impulse to pursue Him. It is our job to do the pursuing.

You cannot know someone personally and intimately through one visit. Too many Christians stop at their initial finding and have no knowledge of intimacy. (Pursuit of God Study Guide)

Clarke records an interesting secular parallel...

When it was said to Diogenes, the cynic, "Thou art now an old man, rest from thy labors;" to this he answered: "If I have run long in the race, will it become me to slacken my pace when come near the end; should I not rather stretch forward?" Diog. Laert., lib. vi. cap. 2. sec. 6.

FOR THE PRIZE: eis to brabeion tes ano kleseos tou theou en Christo lesou:

- Related Resource - Athlete - Metaphor
- [Philippians 3 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

Prize (1017) (**brabeion** from **brabeus** = assign the prize in a public game) refers to a gift received as a prize or reward as result of having won in competition. It is a prize such as a wreath or garland bestowed on victors in the contests of the Greeks.

However **Vincent** says brabeion is

not used technically of the prize in the games, the technical word being athlon. ([A Critical and Exegetical Commentary](#))

The kindred verb **brabeuo** which means to be umpire (as one would when deciding an athletic contest), occurs once, in Col 3:15 (note). (cp kindred verb **katabrabeuo** = defrauding in Col 2:18-note)

The only other use of **brabeion** in Scripture is

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the **prize**? Run in such a way that you may win. (1Co 9:24-note)

Do you want to win the race and set before you?

Then check your direction and make sure you are moving in God's direction. Everyone goes somewhere in life.

Where will you be when you get where you are going?

Barnes writes that...

The prize of the racer was a crown or garland of olive, laurel, pine, or apple. The prize of the Christian is the crown that is incorruptible in heaven. (Albert Barnes. Barnes NT Commentary).

Vine differs from Pentecost (see his comment above) writing that...

The "prize" is a metaphor for the reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ. (2Ti 4:7, 8-notes 2 Ti 4:7, 8; Re 2:10-

[note](#)) (see notes Judgment Seat = Bema)

On the other hand **John MacArthur** interprets the **prize** as

To be made like Christ... What's going to happen when that upward call comes? You're going to be like... Christ. The goal is the **prize**, the **prize** is the goal. So Paul says, "Look, the goal of my life is to be like Christ and that's also the reward of my race"... some day I will be like Christ, that's the **prize** that God gives to the one who runs the race. The goal is to be like Christ, perfection in Christ. The **prize** is to be like Christ, perfection in Christ. Some day we'll be like Him for we shall see Him as He is" (1Jn 3:2,3) ([MacArthur, J. Philipians. Chicago: Moody Press or Logos](#))

Vincent has this note on the **prize**...

Be temperate as God's athlete. The prize is incorruption and eternal life" (to Polycarp, 2). **Chrysostom** says

He that runs looks not at the spectators, but at the prize. Whether they be rich or poor, if one mock them, applaud them, insult them, throw stones at them—if one plunder their house, if they see children or wife or anything whatsoever—the runner is not turned aside, but is concerned only with his running and winning the prize. He that runneth stoppeth nowhere; since, if he be a little remiss, all is lost. He that runneth relaxeth in no respect before the end, but then, most of all, stretcheth over the course. ([Philippians 3: Greek Word Studies](#))

Eadie writes that...

The prize is to be found only at the goal and to that goal the racer ever strives. If he move away from the course prescribed, he misses the mark, and loses the garland: for racing is not recreation, where one may turn aside as fancy leads him; the path is chalked out, the law of the course must be observed, and the aim and effort must always be *kata skopon*. While this phrase marks the aim of the race, the words *epi to brabeion* express the final object, the coveted crown. "Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown." The prize is certainly eternal perfection and blessedness -- "an incorruptible crown." It is to be enjoyed only at the termination of the course. And surely it is sufficient to stimulate ardor, and sustain energy, since it is the realization of man's highest destiny -- the woe and sin of the fall not merely neutralized, but a higher glory conferred than the first man of our race originally enjoyed; not the first Adam, but the second Adam being the type as well as the author of the new life with its glory. For the prize is that of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. ([A Commentary on the Greek text of Philipians](#))

John MacArthur says the prize refers to...

Christlikeness with all its eternal benefits... believers will not receive the prize until the upward (literally "above," denoting both the source of the call and to where it leads) call... ushers them into God's glorious presence in heaven. ([MacArthur, J. Philipians. Chicago: Moody Press or Logos](#))

David Guzik offers an interesting interpretation for **prize** asking...

What is the **prize** Paul speaks of? The **prize** is the upward call of God. The **prize** is the call itself, not the benefits that come from the call or any other thing. The **prize** is being able to run the race at all, working with God as a partner to do the work of His kingdom. As everything else, this **upward call of God** is only in Christ Jesus. The legalists might say they followed the upward call of God, but they certainly didn't do it in Christ Jesus, they did it in the efforts of their own flesh. ([Notes](#))

The ESV Study Bible writes that "The prize is the fullness of blessings and rewards in the age to come, most especially being in perfect fellowship with Christ forever." ([ESV Online Study Bible Crossway](#))

Stephen Olford observes that...

The picture is still that of the runner whose eyes are on the finish line. No one can ever make a success of life without having a goal before him. Someone has said that 'if you aim at nothing, you are sure to hit it.'

The apostle Paul points out that the goal of every Christian should be "**the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.**" Without doubt, the prize is the reward at the judgment seat of Christ. What greater achievement in life can any believer foresee than that of being crowned that day! The great apostle could say as he neared the end of his race: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me

at that day: and not to me only but unto all them also that love his appearing" (see notes 2 Timothy 4:7; 4:8).
(Olford, S. F. Vol. 2: Institutes of Biblical preaching)

IF YOU WOULD PLANT...

... If you would plant for a year
Plant grain;
Yours will be an ear
Of grain.

If you would plant for a decade
Plant trees;
Yours shall be olives and shade
And ease.

To plant for eternity
Plant men:
Eternal harvest shall be
Yours then.

Ralph Keesar

OF THE UPWARD CALL OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS: tes ano kleseos tou theou en Christo Iesou

- Ro 8:28, 29, 30-notes; Ro 9:23, 24-notes; 1Th 2:12-note; 2Th 2:13, 14; He 3:1-note; 1Pe 1:3, 4-note; 1Pe 1:13-note; 1Pe 5:10-note; 2Pe 1:3-note
- [Philippians 3 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

The **writer of Hebrews** has a phrase similar to **upward call** in his exhortation writing...

Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, **consider** (katanoeo; aorist imperative - Command to do this now, do it effectively, don't delay) Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession. (He 3:1-note)

What the Bible teaches – The prize, I would suggest, is not **the high calling of God**, but rather, that which is associated with the high calling. The preposition eis should be translated "unto" and not "for" as in the AV. The prize looks on to reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ (see 2 Tim 4:8). The high calling is indeed the heavenly calling (Heb 3:1) and all saints share in it. It is spoken of as a holy calling (2 Tim 1:9). It has very practical implications in the present (2 Pet 1:10; Eph 4:1), so we may suggest it looks back to conversion, demands consecration, and it will be consummated at the Bema.

The upward call of God - The calling is of God, because God is the author and "in Christ Jesus" as the sphere or element in which it is issued and prosecuted. For the expression "called in Christ Jesus" compare 1Co 7:22, 1Pe 5:10. Eadie adds that the call...

is from God -- a Divine summons that pierces the spirit and ensures compliance, but it is in Christ, for it is a call which the blood of Christ consecrates and to which His grace gives effect.

Upward (507) (**ano**) means above or in a higher place (Ga 4:26). Ano also means "upwards" (Jn 11:41, He 12:15). The idea of "a calling which is **from** heaven and **to** heaven." The direction is away from the world and self (flesh) and toward new heights of spiritual attainment.

The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek NT adds that **ano**...

could be an adverb telling where the calling comes from, or it could point to the direction in which the calling leads: upward, heavenward

Call (2821) (**klesis** see also kletos) means a call and was used for an invitation to a banquet (the act of calling). In the NT the word is used metaphorically of the call or invitation to come into the kingdom of God with all its privileges. For example in 2Pe 1:10 (note) **klesis** refers to the divine call by which Christians are introduced into the privileges of the gospel. God's invitation (**klesis**) to man to accept the benefits of His salvation is what this calling is all about, particularly in the gospels. It is God's first act in the application of redemption according to His eternal purpose (Ro 8:28-note).

I'm pressing on the upward way,
New heights I'm gaining every day;

Still praying as I onward bound,
Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.
Lord, lift me up and let me stand,
By faith, on heaven's table-land,
A higher plane than I have found;
Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.

Expositor's Greek NT writes that...

Klesis is the technical word in the Epistles for that decisive appeal of God to the soul which is made in Jesus Christ: the offer of salvation. Those who listen are designated **kletoi** (cp Ro 8:30-note). This call is not merely to the "inheritance of the saints in light". Its effect must be seen in the sanctification of the believer's life on earth. But here the addition of **ano** (upward) suggests that the Apostle has before him the final issue of the calling which belongs to those who have endured to the end, who have run with patience the race set before them.

Greg Herrick on the upward call of God in Christ Jesus- This phrase has been interpreted along various lines:

(1) the "**upward call of God**" is the "prize" about which Paul speaks. This is unlikely since Paul generally uses the term "call" to refer to God's initial act of calling someone to salvation. It is not a process per se nor does it focus solely on the end, but rather on the beginning of salvation (though it has an eschatological intent; see Ro 11:29; 1 Cor 1:26; 7:20; Eph 1:18; 4:1, 4; 2 Thess 1:11; 2 Tim 1:9);

(2) the "**call**" refers to the call of the president of the games to the victorious athlete to step up onto the podium and receive his prize. Once again, while this picks up on certain cultural clues, it is probably not the image Paul intends here since in this interpretation "call" is being defined as something occurring after the race has been won. In contrast, Paul generally uses it to refer to God's call to salvation when an individual is first saved (cf. Rom 8:30);

(3) the term "**call**" refers to that initial salvific call of God to Paul on the Damascus Road. It was an upward (ano) call in that it had heaven as its immediate and ultimate goal (its eschatological end) and, it is the call of God since He was the One doing the calling.

The reference to **in Christ Jesus** signifies the grounds and sphere in which the call was given. It also conveys the sphere in which the apostle experienced the immediate blessings of that call, including forgiveness, grace, and union with Christ. The third interpretation seems better on the whole, though there is much overlap between the various renderings. According to this reading of the text, then, the prize, refers to final and complete salvation in the eternal state, defined as knowing Christ perfectly and intimately without any hindrances. This is what Paul has his eyes focused on and that for which he runs with such discipline.

Daniel Akin - What's the "**prize**"? What goal is Paul pursuing? Based on the previous passage, it's a fuller knowledge of Christ. It involves gaining Christ. That's what Paul wants—to know Christ more and more; and in knowing Him more, he will become more like Him. This pursuit is a lifetime adventure. To illustrate this pursuit, Paul uses athletic imagery to convey his passion for the Savior. (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary – Exalting Jesus in Philippians)

Warren Wiersbe - Toward what **goal** is the runner pressing with such spiritual determination? "**The prize of the high [upward] calling of God in Christ Jesus**" (Phil. 3:14). When he reaches the **goal** he will receive the reward! Again, Paul is not suggesting that we attain to heaven by our own efforts. He is simply saying that just as the athlete is rewarded for his performance, so the faithful believer will be crowned when Jesus Christ returns. (See 1 Cor. 9:24-27 for a parallel, and note that while only *one* athlete may receive a prize, *all* Christians may receive the reward. Furthermore, the laurel wreath of the Olympic Games will fade, but the crown Christ gives will never fade.) The important thing is that we reach the **goal** He has established for us. No matter how successful we may be in the eyes of men, we cannot be rewarded unless we "take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of [us]" (Phil. 3:12NIV). (The Bible Exposition Commentary)

Kenneth Wuest - The mark (goal) is Christlikeness. What a goal for a Christian! Contrast this with Omar Khayyam, "The stars are setting and the caravan starts for the dawn of nothing." The words "the high calling" have the idea of "a calling which is from heaven and to heaven." The word is not to be construed as meaning "a calling in life," but "a call from heaven to which the apostle must ever give heed."

New American Commentary – It seems best to take it as the call associated with the resurrection. At that day there will be a call to heaven. Further, in Php 3:21, Paul mentioned the resurrection and the transformation that will occur then. He lived for the day

when the heavenward call would come, like a victory in a race. Rather than slack off, as some were prone to do, the thought of it motivated him to further purity and service. He would get to know every dimension of Christ (reign and suffering), through every means. The joy of the process kept him going, but he realized that the ultimate joy was the completion of God's work in his life.

William MacDonald - **The goal** is the finish line at the end of the race track. **The prize** is the award presented to the winner. Here **the goal** would be the finish of life's race, and perhaps more particularly the Judgment Seat of Christ. **The prize** would be the crown of righteousness which Paul elsewhere describes as the prize for those who have run well (2 Ti 4:8). (Believer's Bible Commentary)

Ray Pritchard - "One thing I do." In his case, it meant looking to the heavenly goal of winning the prize. That phrase covers all that God has for us when we finally stand before Jesus Christ and hear him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of the Lord."...Keep on the path. Keep your eyes on the prize. Find some good examples and follow them. And don't forget that someone is following you as you follow others who are following Jesus Christ. Don't let that someone down.

Lehman Strauss on the **prize** - Christlikeness is the ultimate in our redemption. At His appearing the goal will have been reached for every Christian (1 John 3:2), but the garland or crown for which we run will not be won by all. Only those who have pressed on toward the goal of perfection will be awarded the prize. Paul was paying a price for his faith in Christ as he penned this Epistle, but with persistency of purpose he keeps pressing toward the mark that he might win. The prize is before him. There is no higher honor than to achieve it since there is no higher calling than "the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."....Some years ago I heard Dr. Samuel M. Zwemer say that "the smaller the circumference of my thinking, the shorter the diameter of my mistakes." Now here is a bit of sound scriptural philosophy. Narrow down your thinking so as to concentrate more on Christ and less upon the things of this world, and you cannot lose. No higher honor can be achieved by any man than the distinction of hearing the Lord say: "Well done!"

ESV Study Bible - **Goal** (Gk. skopos) could also refer to the finish line in a race or an archery target. Paul's life is purposeful, for he constantly aims toward a heavenly goal. **The prize** is the fullness of blessings and rewards in the age to come, most especially being in perfect fellowship with Christ forever.

HCSB Study Bible - "**The prize**" is **God's heavenly call** (to heaven), like a referee calling a winner to the platform to receive the prize.

MacArthur Study Bible on the **goal** - Christlikeness here and now (see Php 3:12).

MacArthur Study Bible on the **goal** - Christlikeness in heaven (cf. Php 3:20, 21; 1Jn 3:1, 2). **the upward call of God**. The time when God calls each believer up to heaven and into His presence will be the moment of receiving the prize which has been an unattainable goal in earthly life.

John MacArthur - That **prize** was what motivated him to run to win (1 Cor. 9:24). Believers will not receive the **prize** (Christlikeness, with all its eternal benefits) until **the upward** (lit. "above," denoting both the source of the call and to where it leads) **call of God in Christ Jesus** ushers them into God's glorious presence in heaven. As noted above, perfection is not attainable in this life. The finish line is the threshold of heaven, where the rewards will be handed out (cf. Matt. 5:12; Luke 6:23; 1 Cor. 3:12-15). It is not until Christ "appears, [that] we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is" (1 John 3:2). Like a runner triumphantly pumping his fist in the air as he approaches the finish line, Paul declared at the end of his life, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day" (2 Tim. 4:7-8). Only "in the future" in heaven would Paul receive "the crown of righteousness" (Christ's righteousness perfected in him); only then would he receive the **prize** which he so diligently pursued. (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Philippians)

Bible Knowledge Commentary - Vigorously and with concentration Paul sought to **win the prize** to which God had **called** him **heavenward** (Phil 3:14). Again the Greek games must have been on his mind as he wrote of the prize. The winner in those games was called to the place where the judge sat in order to receive his prize. Paul may have referred to ultimate salvation in God's presence, or to receiving rewards at "the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Cor. 5:10).

Hampton Keathley - "**Prize**" is the Greek, brabeion, which refers to "the award given to the victor in the ancient Greek games." In this context, may I suggest that it refers to two things: (1) primarily, Paul's focus is on the return of Christ for the church because that will mean (a) glorification and translation into heaven either by resurrection for believers who have died, or transfiguration of those believers who are alive at that time (1 Thess. 4:13-18), (b) examination before the Bema for eternal rewards (1 Cor. 3:12-15; 2 Cor. 5:9-10), and (c) compensation, the bestowal of the rewards that await believers for faithful service. "The upward call of God in Christ Jesus" further defines the goal which is also the prize. But I believe this upward call also includes (2) the heavenly reward of Christlike character, transformed lives. In other words, living in anticipation of the awesome event, or with this as the focus of life, should have a transforming impact on the way we live moment by moment (see also 1 Cor. 9:24-27). (ABC's for Christian Growth)

Thomas Constable - **The prize** would come at the end of the race, when he had attained the goal, but not before then.

Therefore "the prize of the upward call" probably does not refer to the Rapture. There is another reason this is not a proper identification. The Rapture is not a reward. God will catch up (rapture) into heaven every Christian regardless of how he or she has run the race (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17). The prize probably refers to the reward faithful believers will receive at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10). God has called every believer to salvation so we may obtain that prize. However only those who run the race as Paul did, namely, to gain an ever increasing experiential knowledge of Christ, will obtain it (1 Corinthians 9:24). The TNIV translation gives the sense: "I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

Mattoon - Paul was pressing for the prize of the high calling of God. At the end of the race the successful runner was called up from the floor to the elevated bema seat where he was rewarded by the judge. I believe Paul was looking forward to the Lord's "Well Done!" Are you? In a small church yard at the foot of a Swiss mountain, the body of a young English climber was buried. On the tombstone under his name and date were these words, "He Died Climbing." When you die one day, will you be climbing for Christ when that time comes? God help us all to be pressing for the prize.

Harold Hoehner - Continuing the athletic imagery, Paul said, "I press on to reach the end of the race" (3:14). According to the Greek, "the end [of the race]" is skopos. In this context, it denotes the finish line of the race on which the athlete focuses throughout the course of the race (Pfitzner 1967:139-141). As such, the next Greek word, diōkō, must mean "I run." So, Paul was speaking of running toward the goal, the finish line. His aim in so doing was to win the prize (brabeion), "a term that is taken directly from the athletic imagery of the games" (O'Brien 1991:429). The prize is then defined as the "heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us." Paul may have been alluding to the practice in the Greek games of when the victor's name would be announced, along with his father's name and country; and then the athlete would come and receive a palm branch in his hands. As such, Paul was saying that his prize came from God the Father and his prize was heavenly. Aside from the athletic imagery, Paul was saying he had answered God's call to pursue Christ. The goal of that pursuit is to know Christ fully, and the prize is to come into the full reality of that knowledge—a reality that will not come into being until the eschaton. (Cornerstone Biblical Commentary)

G. Walter Hansen on goal, prize, call - The word *goal* simply means the "mark" or "target." The runner keeps looking at the goal, concentrates on the goal, and disregards everything else but the goal. Although the actual content of the goal is not specifically defined by Paul, the image of the goal carries forward the thrust of Paul's point: running the race of faith in Christ demands concentration on the finish line. Whether the finish line is being with Christ at death, as Paul contemplates in 1:23 (*to depart and be with Christ*), or the return of Christ from heaven, as Paul envisions in 3:20 (*we eagerly await a Savior from there*), Paul is determined to run the race well all the way to the finish line. Again, the imagery implies that Paul has not yet completed the race; there are still more laps to run before he reaches the finish line. At the same time, however, the imagery of concentrating on the finish line emphasizes that faith in Christ demands the constant discipline of keeping our eyes on the completion of the race. Running half the race and then sitting on the sidelines to watch others run is not an option.

The reason for running this race of faith in Christ is *to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus*. In the Hellenistic games, the *prize* was "an award for exceptional performance." This image of running to win a prize appears in Paul's challenge to the Corinthian believers: "Do you not know that in the race all runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize" (1 Cor 9:24). Paul precludes any illusion that his own performance merits *the prize* by asserting that *God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus*. All of Paul's strenuous effort responds to and is empowered by the gracious initiative of God's call. A precise explanation of the connection between *the prize* and *the call of God* confronts the difficulty of defining the genitive case of *the call* as it relates to *the prize* ("the prize of the upward call of God"). If this is a genitive of apposition, then the prize is the upward call of God. The difficulty with this definition of call is that it places the reception of the call in the future. But Paul uses the word *call* as a technical term to refer to the act of God that "brings the one called into fellowship with Christ (1 Cor 1:9) and at the same time into fellowship with other members of his body." The call of God stands at the beginning, not the end, of the race that Paul runs.

Another way of relating *the prize* and *the call* draws from the imagery of the Hellenistic games, where the judge would call the winner up to receive a prize. But this definition of *call* overstates its cultural connotations and understates its theological content in Paul's letters. Although Paul employs the imagery of running in the Olympic games, his language conveys his theological perspective: God's call initiates the relationship of believers in Christ, beginning with conversion and continuing to the future communion with Christ after death. The attainment of the prize of being with Christ at the end of the race is the fulfillment of God's call at the beginning of the race.

If God's call is the invitation to press on toward the prize of communion with Christ, then the genitive case of *call* is a subjective genitive: God's call gives believers the promise of the prize. This interpretation fits well with Paul's use of the term *call* as the "effectual, efficient divine calling which now takes place through the gospel and by which God has called the church to faith itself as well as to the whole of the new life of faith." God's call draws men and women into relationship with his Son through the preaching of the gospel and gives them the experience and the prospect of living and growing *in Christ Jesus*. God's call unites believers with

Christ and the members of the body of Christ; "the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" points to the relationship Paul already enjoys, and *the prize*, the continuation of the relationship that he anticipates. The word *heavenward* indicates both the direction of the call and the origin of the call. God's call is a calling from above and a calling to a heavenly reward. In his encounter with the risen Christ, Paul experienced God's call from above. As a result he pressed on all his life with the eager anticipation of the future prize of being with Christ and knowing Christ in the heavenly realm, free from all earthly limitations.

The future goal of winning the prize captured Paul's complete attention, set him free from the tyranny of the past, and filled his present life with the incentive to press on to take hold of all that Christ had called him to be and do. *Forgetting what is behind*, Paul is *straining toward what is ahead* in order to know Christ. (Pillar New Testament Commentary – The Letter to the Philippians)

"Do not fear, For you will forget the shame of your youth" (Isaiah 54:4)

Two men walking down a country road decided to take a shortcut home. They passed through a field where a number of cattle were grazing. Deeply engrossed in conversation when they reached the other side of the pasture, they forgot to shut the gate behind them. A few minutes later one of them noticed the oversight and ran back to close the gate. As he did, he remembered the last words of an old friend who summoned all his children to his bedside and gave them this wise counsel: "As you travel down life's pathway, remember to close the gates behind you."

The man knew that problems, difficult situations, heartbreaks, and failures were inevitable, but he wanted his children to know that they didn't have to allow those things to follow them through life. This is especially true for believers. Once we have confessed a sin and have done what we can to right the wrong, we must put the incident behind us. The apostle Paul told us to forget the things of the past that will hinder us and to reach forward to those things which are ahead. Then we will be better able to "press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14). When it comes to the failures of the past, we can always close the gate behind us. —R.W.D. **We invite defeat when we remember what we should forget**

Phil 3:14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God.

A man came to the studio of British artist Gabriel Rossetti (1828—1882) with samples of his drawings and asked for a candid opinion of their quality. Looking them over, Rossetti saw that they had little value, and in a kind way he let his visitor know that he lacked any real talent. The man then took from under his coat another set of sketches, saying that they were the work of a young student. The master artist immediately recognized that they displayed a remarkable talent. He predicted that without a doubt the youth would soon distinguish himself. With a look of regret, the man said, "Sir, I was that student. I failed to persevere in my work because my teacher seemed so demanding. You are right in your estimation of my latest drawings. As I feared, they are of little or no value." There is a spiritual lesson in that sad incident. Once we have received salvation, we must not drift along but "press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God" (Phil. 3:14). There are lofty goals to reach! Let's keep pressing on! —H. G. B.

WHEN NOTHING IS GAINED, SOMETHING IS LOST.

Kangaroos And Emus

Forgetting those things which are behind . . . I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. — Philippians 3:13-14

Two of Australia's indigenous creatures, kangaroos and emus, have something in common—they seldom move backward. Kangaroos, because of the shape of their body and the length of their strong tail, can bounce along with forward movement, but they cannot shift easily into reverse. Emus can run fast on their strong legs, but the joints in their knees seem to make backward movement difficult. Both animals appear on Australia's coat of arms as a symbol that the nation is to be ever moving forward and making progress.

The apostle Paul called for a similar approach to the life of faith in his letter to the Philippians: "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" (3:13-14).

While it is wise to learn from the past, we shouldn't live in the past. We cannot redo or undo the past, but by God's grace we can press forward and serve God faithfully today and in the future. The life of faith is a journey forward as we become like Christ. — Bill Crowder

I'm pressing on the upward way,
New heights I'm gaining every day;
Still praying as I'm onward bound,
"Lord, plant my feet on higher ground." — Oatman

I will go anywhere—provided it is forward.

I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Php 3:14

In World War I, the American 308th regiment was surrounded by enemy forces. Casualties were heavy and supplies were short. The unbearable situation intensified when American artillery began shelling the sector where the 308th had dug in. The only communication was by carrier pigeon. In desperation, a sergeant released the last bird with a note pleading for the Americans to hold their fire.

As soon as the pigeon lifted off, a stray bullet grazed the side of his head and tore out his left eye. Then a piece of shrapnel hit his chest, shattering his breastbone. But his homing instinct was strong and he struggled onward. Somewhere in the flight another piece of shrapnel tore off his left leg, leaving the message cannister dangling from torn ligaments. The pigeon made it to his loft, however, and the order went out immediately to stop shelling. The 308th survived.

Facing incredible, life-threatening obstacles, the apostle Paul carried the gospel to a dying world. But he was able to continue because he kept the goal of "the upward call of God" ever before him.—D. C. Egner.

THE GAINS OF HEAVEN WILL MORE THAN COMPENSATE FOR THE LOSSES OF EARTH.

Bernard of Clairvaux wrote

Jesus, our only joy be Thou,
As Thou our prize wilt be;
Jesus, be Thou our glory now
And through eternity.

[\(Play hymn\)](#)

Test Your Calling:
Is it a "High Calling"?

**"Has it ennobled your heart, and set it upon heavenly things?
Has it elevated your hopes, your tastes, your desires?
Has it upraised the constant tenor of your life,
so that you spend it with God and for God?"**

-- C H Spurgeon in Morning and evening, October 11 Evening

F B Meyer - The Christian Ideal - "I said, What shall I do, Lord?"-- Acts 22:10. "Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on toward the goal."-- Phil 3:12-14.

WHEN THE Apostle Paul was suddenly brought into the presence of the Eternal, the whole course of his life was changed. In that flash of Light he saw the exalted Saviour, and learnt that he was antagonizing the purposes of redeeming grace, and that vision altered the whole of his purposes and actions. From that great hour he forgot the things that were behind, and endeavored to apprehend that for which he had been apprehended by Christ Jesus. It was his ambition to build his life on the pattern shown him on the mount.

Years after, as he reviewed his life-work, the churches he had founded, the cities he had evangelized, the epistles he had written, surely he might have reckoned that he had apprehended; but ever as he climbed, he envisaged heights beckoning beyond his attainments. Is not that the case with us, as we compare the vision of God's purpose with what we have realised? Oh, give us back the years that have gone, that we may do better, be more accurate and successful in the transmission to living fact of those fair ideals, which called to us years ago! The vision in the sanctuary may never be perfectly realised by these bungling apprentice-hands. Yet God accepts and forgives the mistakes, as the mother accepts the cobbled stitches of her little girl who tries to help her with her sewing. "Not that we have already attained, or are already perfect, but we follow on," and God forgives and accepts our poor patchwork!

What must we do to achieve our ideals? We must be more often in the sanctuary, in fellowship with Christ, to whose image we are to be conformed. With the Psalmist we must say: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none on the earth that I desire beside Thee." As we look on Him, we shall be changed into His likeness. As He is, so shall we become. Martyrs on the night before

their agony; reformers hesitating at their tasks; scholars wondering whether their long self-denial was worth while; fathers and mothers; teachers and workers; preachers and missionaries, all these have stood in the sanctuary of God, until they have seen the vision and ideal. Then they have reckoned that what God had taught them to long for, He was prepared to enable them to effect. "All things are possible to him that believeth."

PRAYER - Grant unto me grace, O Lord, that I may both perceive and know what things I ought to do, and may also have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same. AMEN.

J R Miller (1890) wrote in "The race!"

"I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."
Philippians 3:14

That Christian life which costs nothing—is worth nothing. There must be self-restraint, discipline, severe schooling. There must be struggle, and the agonizing effort. If you are to reach the goal and win the prize—you must put every energy of your life into the race. There must be a sacrifice of indolence and self-will and personal ease. Too much pampering, spoils many a promising Christian.

Every noble and godly life, is a struggle from beginning to end. Only those who toil and fight and overcome—are successful in life. This is true in every sphere—in business, in academics, and in spiritual life. Are we resisting sin, overcoming temptation, living victoriously in trial? If not—we are not living worthily. "To this end I labor, struggling with all His energy, which so powerfully works in me." Colossians 1:29-note

Seeing Or Remembering? - READ: Philippians 3:12-21 - There's a story about a man who was slowly losing his memory. After an examination, the doctor said that an operation on his brain might reverse his condition and restore his memory. However, the surgery would be so delicate that a nerve might be severed, causing total blindness.

"What would you rather have," asked the surgeon, "your sight or your memory?" The man pondered the question for a few moments and then replied, "My sight, because I would rather see where I am going than remember where I have been."

In Philippians 3 the apostle Paul made the same choice spiritually. His past, with its success and its shame, he chose to forget. What mattered to him most was keeping his eyes on the goal of gaining Christ's approval.

That kind of mindset is one sure mark of Christian maturity. It's what God is working to develop in our lives (Phil. 3:13, 14, 15). We can't forget our past, of course, but we don't have to live in it. Any good we may have done is from God, so we can only be thankful. When we confess our sins, they are buried in the deepest sea. Let's not keep dredging them up.

What do you choose? To see or to remember? — Dennis J. De Haan ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Onward and upward your course plan today,
Seeking new heights as you walk Jesus' way;
Heed not past failures, but strive for the prize,
Aiming for goals fit for His holy eyes. --Brandt

If you keep looking back, you can't make spiritual progress.

'Hurry Sickness' - READ: Philippians 3:7-16 -Hurry up!" "You're too slow!" "We're late!" How often do impatient words like these crop up in our speech, revealing our fast pace of life? If we're not careful, we become people living in the fast lane, demanding quick arrivals and instant results. Stress experts call this problem "hurry sickness."

In Philippians 3, the apostle Paul's testimony of lifelong growth reminds us that Christian maturity can be encouraged but not hurried. In his book *Overcomers Through The Cross*, Paul Billheimer says that just as God takes time to make an oak tree, He takes time to make a saint. Christian growth is a process.

Billheimer writes, "An unripe apple is not fit to eat, but we should not therefore condemn it. It is not yet ready for eating because God is not done making it. It is a phase of its career and good in its place."

Are you feeling impatient over your spiritual growth? Remember, God is not finished with you--nor does He expect to be until He calls you home. Only make sure that your goal is to know Christ and to become more like Him. Then slowly but surely, under blue skies and stormy, He will bring you to maturity. It's His sure cure for "hurry sickness." — Joanie Yoder ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

O God, make me one of those rarest souls
Who willingly wait for Thy time;
My impatient will must be lost in Thine own,
And Thy will forever be mine. --Bowser

There are no shortcuts to spiritual maturity

Key Pressing On - Many years ago, a promising Greek artist named Timanthes was under the instruction of a well-known tutor. After several years, the young painter created an exquisite portrait. He was so thrilled with what he had painted that he sat day after day gazing at his work.

One morning, however, he was horrified to discover that his teacher had deliberately ruined his painting. Angry and in tears, Timanthes ran to him and asked why he had destroyed his cherished possession. The wise man replied, "I did it for your own good. That painting was retarding your progress. It was an excellent piece of art, but it was not perfect. Start again and see if you can do even better." The student took his advice and produced a masterpiece called "Sacrifice of Iphigenia," regarded by some as one of the finest paintings of antiquity.

God never wants us to be content with our accomplishments. He wants us to reach even higher plateaus of service and Christlikeness. Paul recognized this, for even though he was a godly man and accomplished much, he admitted that he still needed to advance in holiness (Phil 3:12, 13, 14).

Child of God, don't be satisfied with your spiritual attainments. With His help, keep pressing on! — Henry G. Bosch ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

When you've reached a plateau,
And your strength's almost gone,
But the Lord still says, "Go,"
That's the time to press on. --Hess

If you think you've arrived, think again.

What Is My Purpose? - In Daniel Schaeffer's book on Esther, *Dancing With A Shadow*, he summarizes with a single sentence the lives of each of the main characters in that wonderful Old Testament book. For Ahasuerus, the powerful warrior king of Persia, it was: "Success in life is all in the planning." For the faithful Mordecai: "The price of obedience is never too high." And for Queen Esther: "What I am is more important than what I have." She proved it when she risked her crown (and life) to intercede with Ahasuerus on her people's behalf.

I was discussing these one-line descriptions with some co-workers who were also reading Schaeffer's book. Someone wondered how we might summarize in a single statement our purpose for living. One woman candidly admitted, "My only goal in life is to catch up." Sound familiar? For others it might be, "To have as little trouble in life as I can." Or you may say with Haman, "You can never have too much."

But as followers of Jesus Christ, we should be able to say with the apostle Paul, "One thing I do, ... I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13, 14).

Is that the purpose of your life? — David C. Egner ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Do you pursue a life of wealth and fame?
A mocking epitaph is all you'll claim;
Let God replace your vain and selfish aim
With lasting goals that glorify His name. --Gustafson

Moody's Nearly Fatal Voyage

D.L. Moody and his son Will boarded the ocean liner Spree at Southampton, England, on November 23, 1892. Moody had just finished revival meetings in London, including eight days of services in Spurgeon's Tabernacle, and now he was bound for New York. Foremost in his mind, besides seeing his family and students again, was the great campaign he was planning for the Chicago World's Exhibition the following year.

On the third morning of the trip, passengers were startled by a loud crash and a shock going through the ship. Will hurried out to the deck. He quickly returned to say that the shaft of the vessel was broken. "The ship's sinking, Father," he said.

The disabled ship, carrying hundreds of passengers, drifted helplessly away from the sea lanes. The vessel was taking on so much water that its pumps were useless. The crew prepared lifeboats and provisions, but they realized the small boats would soon perish in the rough seas. So they mustered passengers into a main saloon and waited, hoping to be discovered by a passing vessel.

On the second evening of their torturous wait, Moody led a prayer service that calmed many of the passengers, including himself. Although he was sure of heaven, the thought of his work ending and of never again seeing his family had unsettled him.

One biographer includes another angle to the incident. Prior to the trip, a doctor had found irregularities in Moody's heart and urged him to ease his schedule; if Moody did not, he would die early. Moody determined to slow down, and while sailing homeward, decided to scale down plans for the World's Fair campaign.

During the crisis at sea, however, Moody perceived that God confronted him with a decision: Would Moody press on with all his might to deliver the gospel or would he be cautious, allowing fear to diminish his fervor? Facing death, Moody decided that if God would spare his life, he would work with "all the power that He would give me." And if he should die this year or next, that was in God's hands.

The following morning, however, the steamer Lake Huron discovered the stranded ship and towed it one thousand miles to safety. D.L. Moody pressed on with his World's Fair campaign, six months of unceasing labor, from which, in Moody's estimate, "millions... heard the simple gospel" and "thousands [were] genuinely converted to Christ." Moody died in the midst of his work—seven years later. —Vinita Hampton, in *Christian History*, no. 25.

Look Back Or Ahead? - READ: Philippians 3:12-21 - The great American baseball player Satchel Paige once said in jest, "Don't look back—something may be gaining on you." In contrast, George Santayana, a Spanish thinker and writer, noted in 1905, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." So which is it? Do we move on, never looking back, or do we dwell on our past errors to avoid making them again? Scripture seems to indicate that we should do a little of both. We do need to think back on our lives and learn from our mistakes. That's part of the process when we confess our sins and ask God for forgiveness. We need to think about our disobedience long enough to seek God's mercy and then choose to "go and sin no more" (John 8:11). Forgiveness is God's way of clearing the slate, but it's our responsibility to depend on the strength of the Holy Spirit who lives within us to avoid repeating the errors of the past. The apostle Paul, for example, acknowledged his past mistakes, drew upon God's mercy, and then focused on becoming more like Christ (Philippians 3:13, 14). So, is it best for us to look back or to look ahead? We would be wise to do a little of both: We need to look back for forgiveness, then look ahead to make progress. — Dave Branon

More like the Master I would live and grow,
More of His love to others I would show;
More self-denial like His in Galilee,
More like the Master I long to ever be. —Gabriel

To grow spiritually, face up to your failures, then focus on Christ for the future.

Trampling Temptation - READ: Matthew 4:1-11 - I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. — Philippians 3:14

Ardent baseball fans will remember Kirby Puckett, who died suddenly in 2006. He had led the Minnesota Twins to championship victories in 1987 and 1991. Even though he was offered larger contracts by other teams, he stayed with the Twins for his entire career. When Puckett was diagnosed with glaucoma in 1996, his career ended abruptly.

During Puckett's induction into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 2001, he recalled the difficulties he had faced when growing up. His passion to become a professional baseball player was subject to temptation many times. Drug dealers and gang members repeatedly invited him to join in their destructive lifestyle. But whenever temptation enticed him, Kirby remembered that he had a higher calling—baseball.

Though we are urged to "walk worthy of the calling with which [we] were called" (Eph. 4:1), we live in a world where we face distracting enticements. Maybe we're offered a job that pays well but requires that we compromise biblical principles. Our calling is always to do God's will.

When we are confronted with a temptation to stray from God's way for our life, we must remember that we have a higher calling as servants of Jesus. — Vernon C. Grounds ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

When the powers of darkness come in like a flood,
The battle belongs to the Lord!
He's raised up a standard, the power of His blood—
The battle belongs to the Lord! —Owens-Collins

**To conquer sin,
nip it in the bud of temptation.**

Run With Horses - If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with horses? — Jeremiah 12:5.

In the Olympic Games, the greatest runners of the world compete for gold medals and laurel wreaths. Long before the final race, competitions are held in countries throughout the world to weed out those who are not fast enough to compete. At the Games, the fastest of the fast qualify for the final competition.

The prophet Jeremiah was also involved in a fierce competition—but it was with idolaters and wicked priests. He was responding to the Lord's call to condemn Judah and to predict her downfall. He became so discouraged that he asked the Lord, "Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why are [they] happy?" (Je 12:1).

That's when God said to Jeremiah, in essence, "The competition has just begun. So far you've been dealing with minor issues (running with footmen). How will you handle it when the really tough stuff comes (contending with horses)?"

Perhaps you've run into some difficulties recently: your boss, an illness, conflicts in your church. You've pleaded with the Lord for relief. But He may have said in response, "Toughen up. Dig in. It may get worse." When He asks you to "run with horses," He will be with you to strengthen and sustain you. That's what God does. — David C. Egner ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater,
He sendeth more strength when the labors increase;
To added affliction He addeth His mercy,
To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace. —Flint
© Renewal 1969, Lillenas Publishing Co.

I press toward the goal for the prize
of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. —Philippians 3:14

Looking Ahead - READ: Philippians 3:7-14 The month of January is named after Janus, the Roman god of beginnings. He was symbolized as a man with two faces, one looking back and the other looking ahead.

Some people have trouble looking ahead with hope because they keep looking back and moping over the mistakes of the past. Their outlook for the future is dimmed, and their enthusiasm is dampened. But there is no use "crying over spilled milk." History is likely to repeat itself if they keep on brooding over failures of the old year, or continue complaining about the injustices they suffered during the last 12 months. Nothing is gained by continually grieving over the past.

On this day early in the new year, begin by confessing your sins to the Lord and accepting the gracious forgiveness He offers (1 John 1:9-10). Make right what needs correcting, and then, "forgetting those things which are behind," press onward with confidence and trust in your heavenly Father (Philippians 3:13-14). That was Paul's secret, and it worked.

Let's stop looking back and brooding over past failures. Rather, with a forward look, let's move ahead with hope and joy. — Richard

THINKING IT OVER

What mistakes of the past are still burdening you?

Have you confessed them to God and accepted His complete forgiveness? (1 John 1:9). When you do, your future will hold great promise.

**Instead of living in the shadows of yesterday,
walk in the light of today and the hope of tomorrow.**

Past, Present, Future - READ: Philippians 3:15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21 -In his painting "An Allegory of Prudence," the 16th-century Venetian artist Titian portrayed Prudence as a man with three heads. One head was of a youth facing the future, another of a mature man eyeing the present, and the third, a wise old man gazing at the past. Over their heads Titian wrote a Latin phrase that means, "From the example of the past, the man of the present acts prudently so as not to imperil the future."

We need that kind of wisdom to overcome the anxiety created by our past failures and the fear of repeating them in the future—an anxiety that can keep us from enjoying life to the fullest right now.

Paul was able to "forget" his past and anticipate his future (Phil. 3:13, 14). This doesn't mean that his memory was erased; it means that because God had forgiven him, Paul was free of any guilt or pride he may have felt from his past. As he lived in daily fellowship with Christ, trials could only make him more like his Savior. So he had one driving passion—to know Christ better.

As we close the chapter of 1994, let's rededicate ourselves to Christ in 1995 and follow Paul's example. Jesus will enable us to live fully in the present as we gain wisdom from the past and face the future with courage. — Dennis J. De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, I'm standing at the door
Of this new untarnished year;
Help me to live it all for Thee,
Use me in Thy service here. —McAllaster

Never let a bleak past cloud a bright future.

The Pudding Guy - READ: Philippians 3:7-14 - Reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal. -- Philippians 3:13-14

The airline industry referred to David Phillips as the "Pudding Guy." That's because he had made the most of an airline promotion that offered frequent-flyer miles for purchasing certain brand-name products. He quickly spent \$3,000 to buy 12,150 cups of pudding and, in the process, earned 1.25 million miles. For a time, it seemed as if his whole life revolved around getting frequent-flyer miles.

As people observe our lives, what do they see as being the most important thing in life to us? First-century friends of the apostle Paul had no trouble identifying the passion of his life. His walk matched his stated goal: "One thing I do, ... I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13, 14).

Even if "frequent-sailor miles" had existed in Paul's day, I doubt that he would have given them much thought on his missionary journeys to Asia. Christ alone was at the top of his priority list. Everything else was secondary, "that in all things He may have the preeminence" (Colossians 1:18).

Paul's example of single-minded devotion to Christ calls us to examine our own purpose and priorities in living. What is most important to us? For what are we spending our lives?

What place will we give Jesus in our hearts today? — David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Searching to know life's true meaning?
You'll find it in only one way:
Serving the Lord with commitment
And living for Him day by day. —Branon

Jesus gave His all to save us—are we giving our all to serve Him?

Pressing On - READ: Psalm 73:25-28 -It is good for me to draw near to God. —Psalm 73:28[note](#)

The psalmist kept things simple: “There is none upon earth that I desire besides You” (Psalm 73:25[note](#)). All progress in the spiritual life is marked by our movement toward that conclusion, the conviction that only one thing is necessary: God Himself.

All progress in the spiritual life is progress toward knowing God and loving Him—moving toward the point at which we say with Israel’s poet: “God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever” (Ps 73:26[note](#)).

That perspective changes the way we look at everything. Suffering and adversity become the means by which we’re made hungry and thirsty for God. Disappointments become the tools that wean us away from earthly occupations and move us toward a preoccupation with God alone. Even sin, when repented of, becomes a mechanism to push us closer to Him so that we can experience His love and forgiveness. All things become useful when viewed as the means to the highest good—drawing near to God.

Like Paul, we may say, “I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me” (Philippians 3:12). How do we press on? With a humble and grateful response to His love. But it all begins with God. He seeks us so that we may seek Him alone. — David H. Roper ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

I’m pressing on the upward way,
New heights I’m gaining every day—
Still praying as I’m onward bound,
“Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.” —Oatman

God loves us too much to let us stay as we are.

Keep The Prize In Mind - My son Steve wanted to get in shape for the upcoming cross-country season, and I wanted to keep from accumulating middle-age flab. So we started running each evening.

As we would begin our excursions, we were full of energy. But as we made our way through the designated route, we grew a bit weary. I decided we needed an incentive to keep us going. So each night, I thought of some kind of prize at the end—something to keep our minds off our bodies and on a reward.

One night it was pizza. Whenever Steve wanted to stop, I’d say, “Pizza!” And that kept us going. Another night, I thought of our plans to watch football on TV. So the key word was football. Each night a new prize spurred us on.

The believer can also grow weary in living for Christ. We can wonder why we keep going—why we keep pushing ourselves. Paul used an incentive for motivation a long time before I did. He said, “I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14).

When life’s race gets you down, remember, the greatest incentive you as a Christian have is awaiting you at the finish line—seeing Christ face-to-face and sharing in His eternal glory! Keep that prize in mind, and you’ll keep going. — Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

For every follower of Christ
There is a race to run;
And when we cross the finish line,
We’ll be with Christ, God’s Son. —Fitzhugh

In the race of life, it’s always too soon to quit.

Thomas Watson in his paper entitled [The Heavenly Race](#) writes...

Lastly, you must use all MEANS to help you in the heavenly race.

Run the right race. The Apostle calls it “the race which is set before us,” Hebrews 12:1 (note), that is, the race chalked out in the Word of God, the race of self-denial and sanctity. It is not any race—but the race set before

us—which we must run; which confutes the opinion that a man must be saved in any religion.

Fit yourselves for the heavenly race!

1. Diet yourselves. The racers in ancient times dieted themselves; they would not eat any fatty meat, nor yet a full meal, that they might be the more prepared for the race. Thus must Christians diet themselves by sobriety and mortification, that they may, by a well ordering of themselves, be more fit to run the race which is set before them. Paul beat down his body, 1Corinthians 9:27-note, that he might be more fit for his race.

2. Strip yourselves for the race. The runner in a race used to strip himself of all unnecessary clothing, and wear only a white garment, that he might be light and nimble. Just so, should Christians strip themselves of all conceits of merit—and only wear the white garment of Christ's righteousness!

3. Begin the race early. Ecclesiastes 12:1, "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth." Young ones think they may set upon the race too soon. Can a man be godly too soon? Can he run the race of repentance too soon? But suppose he might—it is still better to repent a year too soon—than an hour too late! Esau's tears as well as his venison—came too late, Genesis 27:33, 34. David would seek after God early, Psalm 36:1. Augustine, in his confessions, complained that he knew God no sooner. They will hardly be able to run the heavenly race—who have old age and old sins upon them!

4. Run the pathway, not the roadway. Hell's road is full of travelers; most go wrong. Exodus 23:2, "You shall not follow a multitude to do evil." The multitude does not consider what is best—but what is fastest. Our Savior has told us, "Narrow is the way which leads unto life," Matthew 7:14 (note). Run in the narrow way of self-denial and mortification!

5. Resolve to hold on in the race, notwithstanding dangers and difficulties. A godly man must be steeled with courage, and fired with zeal. It is probable there will be thorns and stones in the way of our race—therefore, we need to be well-shod. We must be shod with the gospel of peace, Ephesians 6:15 (note). He whose heart is filled with that peace which the Gospel brings, will be able to run over the hardest piece of religion, with ease.

We must be shod with endurance. Hebrews 12:1 (note), "Let us run with endurance, the race set before us." Endurance bears up the heart of a Christian and keeps him from tiring in the race. If this shoe of endurance is off, we shall soon halt and give up running.

6. Always keep your eye upon the right mark. The Grecians had a white line drawn at the end of the race—and the racer's eye was always upon it. Looking upon the prize quickens Christians in their race! Paul looked towards the mark, Philippians 3:14, as archers look at the bulls-eye, and racers at the prize. And Moses, Hebrews 11:26, "looked ahead to the great reward that God would give him!" He looked with one eye at God's glory—and with the other eye, at the prize!

7. Oh, run with delight! Psalm 119:47-note, "I will delight myself in Your commandments." Oil supple the joints and makes them agile and nimble. The oil of gladness makes Christians lively and fit to run the heavenly race! "The joy of the Lord is your strength," Nehemiah 8:10.

8. Run in the strength of Christ. Do not think you can, of yourselves, run the race. The Arminians talk of freewill, "but it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs," Romans 9:16. By nature we are blind, and lame; therefore, unfit to run a race. We run fastest when Christ takes us by the hand!

9. Be often in the exercise of grace. It is not enough to have grace in the heart—but it must be in the exercise. Such as run the heavenly race, must not only be living—but lively. They must have a flourishing faith and a flaming love! What is the meaning of the loins girt and the lamps burning, Luke 12:23—but grace in its activity? Without this, there can be no speed in the heavenly race!

If you would run hard—pray hard. Prayer helps us on in the race. Pray over that prayer, Song of Solomon 1:4,

"Draw me—and I will run after You."

Pray that you may not mistake your way through error—nor stumble in it through offenses. In a word, let us pray for the Holy Spirit, who animates us in the race, and carries us above our own strength. God's Spirit breathed in us—keeps us in full breath for running the race! (Read the entire paper [The Heavenly Race](#))

ONWARDS AND UPWARDS

F B Meyer

Phil. 3:13-14

The Divine Call. That word calling frequently occurs in the Epistles--"Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise, not many mighty, are called." And again, "That ye may know what is the hope of His calling--the hope to which He calls you." And again, "Who hath called us with a holy calling." And again, "Partakers of a heavenly calling." And again, "Ye were called in one hope of your calling"--to which we have been called in the unity of the spirit. The wireless telegraphy of God's Spirit is ever bringing the Divine call to every soul. It is circling around you in the tremulous vibrating air. If only your ears were attuned to it, you would detect the low sweet voice of God, nearer, clearer, stronger, intenser, more thrilling, more eager. The voice of God calls, calls you.

The Glory to which God Calls. To what goal does God beckon us with the prize glittering in the sunlight above it, held before us by the pierced Hand? What is God's goal and mark? The Apostle, in his early life, was bent on becoming a Rabban, one of the elders of the people, the chief of the Pharisee party. He was filled with ideals and hopes, which he had long revolved in his eager mind; but as his palfrey bore him towards Damascus, suddenly he beheld an ideal, presented to him in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, before which all the former ones paled in their beauty, as the morning star pales before the sunrise. He saw the hollowness of being merely a Pharisee; the formality, the externalism, the inadequacy of the desire which had hitherto inspired his nature. Forthwith he became inspired with a new purpose, and set himself to aim at the spotless loveliness, the ideal of strength, sweetness, might, mercy, purity and gentleness combined in the character of Jesus, so that from that moment he cried, "I surrender everything; my hopes, aims, ambitions, ideals--I cast them all away, as man casts dross, and till I die, it shall be my passionate desire to realise in my own character, day by day, something of the beauty and glory which I have seen upon the face of the Man of Nazareth. This one thing I do: I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God."

God's Call to You. God's voice is calling you to-day to that, to be like Jesus; to know Him, to love Him better, to resemble Him more completely, to strike off from your character a little more of the encompassing stone, and to bring out some new line and lineament of the perfect statue.

It is a High Calling. It is a high calling because it comes from above, from God; the conception of it has emanated from His heart. It is a high calling because it is worthy of God. It is a high calling because it is so much above the ideals of men. Men strive to get money, forgetting that there are no pockets in a shroud; seek for pleasure, forgetting that the pleasures of this world are like the snow upon the river, "a moment white, then gone for ever"; strive after fame and supremacy, forgetting that there must come a moment when their remains will lie beneath the pall on which the crown and sceptre of empire rest, to be assumed by another. When once the eye has caught sight of this vision, it is attracted by a light above the brightness of the sun of wealth, above the brightness of the sun of fame, above the brightness of the sun of rank, above the brightness of the sun of worldly power. The lofty ideal glistens before each of us of becoming like our Master, knowing Him, feeling the power and fascination of His resurrection, tasting the fellowship of His sufferings, and being conformed to Him in His death, rising day by day higher and nearer to Him in His royal beauty, the Divine Man, God's ideal for us all.

A Calling Above Our Aspirations. It is also a high calling because always above our highest aspirations. How touching is that story told already of the great sculptor, who, after years of work, achieved a statue so perfectly fashioned that he could discover no line that needed to be retouched, no feature that needed to be remodeled. It stood there in absolute beauty, and a friend found him in tears beside it, as he said, "I shall never do anything better than that, it is the consummation of my ideal." Thank God, we may follow after the perfect beauty of Christ for untold ages, but shall never be found weeping because there are no more worlds to conquer. There will always be a new Alp rising above Alp, a beautiful and more beautiful conception calling us to leave that which we have already attained.

A Calling that Summons us Heavenwards. And then this is a high calling because it summons us to where Christ sits at the right hand of God. It compels us to look upward, and set our affections upon things above, not in things on the earth. "Alas," you say, "it is too great for me; remember what I am, poor dust and ashes, full of failure and infirmity; I have so often tried and succumbed; there can be no possible hope for me to realise it; it is but a mockery to incite me to this great quest." But remember, Paul started from a lower level than yours; he was a blasphemer, and had trampled under foot the Blood of Jesus. Remember also that this high calling is "in Christ," and if you are in Christ, you have got your foot upon the first rung of the ladder, upon the first step of the staircase. It is "in Christ." You cannot be in Christ without having Christ in you; and God has put the Spirit of His Son within you that you may evolve what is involved. God has consigned to your keeping His Beloved, that hour by hour you may strike away that which is of self and sin, that the beauty of Jesus Christ may become more conspicuous before the eyes of men.

HOW THIS IDEAL MAY BE REALISED

(1) **"This one thing I do."** The Apostle says we must be discontented with what we have attained, and intent on the one goal which lies before us. None of us can doubt that success in life is not attained by genius, but plodding industry. A man may be swift as Asahel, of fleetest foot, but if he does not set his mind upon a distinct goal he will be outstripped by a man of slower foot, but more resolute purpose. It is not the hare that runs and sleeps, but the tortoise that plods on towards a determined point that wins the race. It is so in business, in art, in war, and in love.

Abundant Help. Many men are born into the world who are clever at a number of things, but succeed in nothing. There are others who concentrate their minds upon one thing and succeed, though they have not half the genius of their competitors. And "the one thing" we must set our minds upon, and pursue with unremitting diligence, is God's ideal presented to us in Jesus Christ. And it is good to know that every incident in life may be made to conduce to our high purpose. As the bee will get honey from a thousand different flowers, so we can accumulate the honey of a holy character from every flower in the garden of our life. Every circumstance may be pressed into our service for the attainment of a more Christlike character.

The votary of pleasure must sometimes retire from the giddy whirl of amusement, to recruit exhausted energies. A London season only lasts for two or three months, and then the fashionable world must go to the country, or the seaside resort, to recuperate. The business man who never gets relief from its pressure will be unable to hold his own against commercial competition. So with the student: he works up for the examination, straining every nerve for it, and then lays aside his studies and goes off to mountain or shore.

Are Our Circumstances Co-operating? But everything in life may help you to be like Christ! In your moments of solitude you will most easily make headway; but the hours of conflict and temptation will be the times in which you will be able to achieve most of the likeness of Christ. When you lose the harvest of your toils; when the tongue of slander detracts from your good name; when you have to bear, day after day, the scornful and averted look of your fellows; when all your life is overcast by the shadow of death, and you have no more heart to live; in days of discouragement and disappointment spent in the solitude of your chamber; in days when you sit in the darkened room, where the beloved one is slowly passing from your embrace, and the precious life is ebbing from the heart drop by drop rain all these times, when you are made aware of something which is not as sweet, or beautiful, as it might be, you may take the opportunity of becoming more perfectly fashioned towards the likeness of your Lord.

The men who do one thing in the world are bound to succeed. Remember the story of the greatest of orators, Demosthenes, who set himself resolutely to cure a defect in his speech, by speaking, with pebbles in his mouth, against the roar of the sea. Men who are able to bend themselves upon one thing must be successful in its achievement. Oh, that we may say: "Come weal, come woe, prosperity or disappointment, sunshine or shadow, we will never rest, day nor night, but press towards the mark of increasing likeness to Christ, that men may be reminded in us of Him!"

THE DUTY OF FORGETTING

(2) **If we would press on, we must learn to forget.** We are all tempted to live in the past, to look up at the fading laurels which we have gained, as though they could never be equalled or surpassed; to say, "We shall never do anything so good as that again, never be able to reach quite so high, or realise quite so much; to paint so fair a picture, to execute so beautiful a statue." This is fatal. Never rest upon your past attainments; forget them. Forget the rapture of your first communion; the earliest addresses and sermons, which you used to feed and rest upon; the trophies which attended your earliest efforts; do not quote these things as your highest; do not look back, lest, like Lot's wife, you be petrified, and unable to advance.

Forget the innocence of your childhood. Do not say with Hood: I remember, I remember, The house where I was born and end by lamenting that you were nearer heaven when a boy than you are now. Innocence is good, but purity is better. The breath of a child's sleep is fragrant and soft; but give me the deep slumber of the man who rests after a well-fought field. Not untempted innocence, but the strength which comes of victorious conflict should be our aim.

No Morbid Dwelling on the Sinful Past. And do not dwell upon past sin. When a new boy comes to the philanthropist, a boy who has seen and known sin enough to blight his life for ever, the wise philanthropist says, "My boy, I want you to forget the past." He fits him out with new clothes, and tries to wipe out the memory of the degrading sins in which he has played a part. And the boy breaks from his past, and steps up into an entirely new life under that fostering care.

Remember God's Pardon. There may be things in our past of which we are ashamed, which might haunt us, which might cut the sinews of our strength. But if we have handed them over to God in confession and faith, He has put them away and forgotten them. Forget them, and, leaving the past attainments, the innocence of childhood, and the sin which has vitiated and blackened your record, reach forward to realise the beauty of Jesus. Do not be content with anything less. But it is important never to allow the imperfect and second-best to pass unconfessed. Too often we have done it, whispering: "Yes, I have failed, let it pass";

instead of confessing to God and man, and crying: "Never more; I will be Christlike, I will be pure with the purity of Jesus, I will be tender, sweet, and gentle as Christ was. My God, I hear Thee calling; I hear Thee calling, I will arise; Excelsior, excelsior, I will climb. Never a day shall pass that does not see some added beauty of Christ to my heart and life, through the power of Thy Holy Spirit."

There is a Prize. "I press toward the mark for the prize." What? Heaven? No, Heaven has been won by the merits of the Lord Jesus. A throne? A crown? No, for these are the gifts of free grace. What, then, is the prize?

God calls us to the goal, but there is a prize beyond and in addition to the goal. What? Blessedness! To be Christlike is to be blessed. When we have overcome some temptation there has been such a sense of blessedness. When we have gone through some awful hour of trial, and have come out unsoiled and unscathed, there has been such a rapture in our souls. When we have stepped up to higher things on our dead selves, there has been such peace. Do you know it? When you have accomplished something you did not think you could do; when you have made some sacrifice you thought you never could achieve; when you have done a noble thing--you have not thought about the nobility or loveliness of it, but there has been a delightful inner consciousness. One hardly knows what to call it. Bloom! The bloom of the flower! The light on the cloud! The hue of health on the face! The kiss of God! The "Well done, good and faithful servant!" That is worth living for. This prize may be won here, and not yonder only. Every night after a day spent like this it seems as though God puts into our hearts, as we lie down upon our pillow to sleep, a jewel, which is part of our prize, and the accumulation of the jewels will make the felicity of Paradise. (F. B. Meyer. The Epistle to the Philippians - A Devotional Commentary)