

THE PRIZE OF THE HIGH CALLING

*Not as though I had already attained, either were **already perfect**: but I follow after, **if that I may apprehend** that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, **I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling** of God in Christ Jesus.*

Philippians 3:12-14

There is something to press toward, *after* we have been born again. There is something to press toward, *after* we have been baptized in the Holy Spirit. There is something to press toward, *after* we have been given a ministry or a gift to edify the rest of the body. Paul calls it “the prize”. A prize is something that is won. This term prize, is the Greek word, “*brabeion*” (brab-i'-on). It means an award; and more particularly a prize won in public games. Paul uses this same word one other place:

*Know ye not that **they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize** (*brabeion*)? **So run, that ye may obtain**. And every man that **striveth for the mastery** is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; **but we an incorruptible**. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.*

I. Corinthians 9:24-27

As far as I can see, it's pretty clear that when Paul talked about believers “apprehending” the prize of the High Calling, he is saying that we must *strive* to apprehend this prize, much like professional runners must strive to apprehend the prize of a public race. No runner is automatically given the prize of a public race, just because he is a runner. In the same way, no Christian is going to be given the prize of the High Calling, just because they are a Christian! In both cases, the prize must be “obtained”. Athletes have to strive for the mastery, and so do we. Athletes must be temperate in all things, and so must we.

This is the folly of listening to the gospel that Evangelicals—both Fundamentalist and Pentecostal—have been preaching for centuries; long before the current apostasy ever started. For hundreds of years, God's people have been taught that being saved “*by grace*” means that we *automatically* receive the “prize” Paul referred to. But this is not only unscriptural; it's not even logical. If the prize of the High Calling is part of the “package deal” that is presented as salvation, then why was Paul trying to obtain that prize 30 years after he had been “saved by grace”?

The truth of what salvation actually is, has been totally misunderstood and misrepresented by religious leaders. Salvation has two main purposes. The first purpose is to save us *from* something. The second purpose is to save us *to* something.

We are saved *from* the wrath of God through forgiveness, justification and imputed righteousness. These things are the “free gift” all the evangelists and the missionaries preach about. They are not based on our own efforts or our own merits. We don’t “win” forgiveness; we don’t “obtain” justification; we don’t “apprehend” imputed righteousness. We receive them through faith and trust in the blood of Jesus.

Unfortunately, this is the only part of salvation that is ever preached. Few ministers go on to tell the people that *after* being saved from God’s wrath through faith in the blood of Christ, they then need to be saved *to* the goal of salvation; which is to come forth in the very image and likeness of Jesus. That is the purpose of *sanctification*. We don’t receive sanctification “by grace”. Sanctification is *a process* whereby the imputed righteous of Jesus becomes our own righteousness. It is a process whereby what is accounted to us legally, becomes a reality that we are actually living and walking in every day. What is true of us legally, in the spirit, becomes true of us in word and deed. We move from a place simply being *accounted* as righteous while we still *act* unrighteously, to a place where in fact become righteous in our every day conduct and life style. Actually becoming righteous is what we are saved *to*.

Preaching only the first part of salvation has produced, and will continue to produce, various kinds of believers who will experience different kinds resurrected states in the coming kingdom.

- ~ True Christians who will obtain the prize of the High Calling.
- ~ True Christians who will obtain *some* rewards, but not the prize of the High Calling.
- ~ True Christians who will lose all their rewards, but who will still be saved by fire.
- ~ True Christians who will lose *everything*, including their initial salvation.

*Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, **that I may win Christ**, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:*

Philippians 3:8-9

Paul tells us very clearly what the “prize” is, that he is talking about. Notice that he said he was trying to “win Christ”! Now, think about that statement for a minute. The greatest apostle of all time was trying to *win* Christ. What did he mean? How do we *win* Christ? Is he talking about winning the forgiveness of Christ? Can’t be; he already had that by faith. Is he talking about winning the justification of Christ? Can’t be—he already had that by faith. Is he talking about winning the imputed righteousness of Christ? Can’t be—he already had that by faith.

Anyone who has not been brainwashed by the errors of Evangelical Christianity would be able to see that Paul was trying to win *the image* of Christ. He was seeking to attain *full transformation* into His likeness. Full transformation into the image of Christ is *the goal* of the Christian race. It is the finish line that God

wants us all to cross—not after we die and go to heaven but in *this* life. Because of all the errors God’s people have been taught for centuries, few of them understand that transformation must be apprehended while we are alive in the flesh, and that it can only be apprehended by obedience and suffering.

*That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and **the fellowship of his sufferings**, being made conformable **unto his death**;*
Philippians 3:10

The great cry of Paul’s heart and the thing that motivated him in everything he did was: “...that I might know Him”. He said, I want to know Jesus so intimately, so fully, that I am changed into His very likeness. Once again, transformation into the image of Jesus is not an endowment, automatically bestowed upon us by unmerited favor (*grace*); it’s a *reward* that we must obtain. It’s a race that we must win. It’s something that must be “apprehended”. It’s something that we must press towards, in this life, after we have been born again and filled with the Spirit. This is our time to run the race and win Christ. However, in order to win Him we must co-operate with the Holy Spirit. We must surrender our lives to Him 100%. If we do, He will begin to lead us into a crucified life.

*And they that are Christ's **have crucified the flesh** with the affections [passions] and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also **walk in the Spirit**.*
Galatians 5:24-25

*For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye **through the Spirit** do **mortify the deeds of the body**, ye shall live.*
Romans 8:13

If we, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, we will come into more of the life of Jesus. This requires an act on our part. We must make ourselves of no reputation. We must deny ourselves when our flesh cries out to be spoiled and pampered. We must accept rigorous discipline and keep our body under subjection to the Spirit of God in our new man.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.
Romans 8:14

Mortify [put to death] therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate [unnatural] affection, evil concupiscence [desires], and covetousness, which is idolatry.
Colossians 3:5

As we are led by the Spirit to put our members that sin to death, the actual character of God begins to come forth in us. Paul knew this; that’s why he said: “*I die daily*” (*I. Cor. 5:31*) Putting to death the old, Adamic nature allows the new nature of Christ to come forth in us. This is also why he said we must be made conformable unto His death. Being born again and filled with the Spirit does not win us Christ. Being

anointed with gifts and ministries does not win us Christ. Acquiring all knowledge and learning all mysteries does not equal running a good race. Casting out devils will never earn us the prize. Being a great soul winner will never cause us to hit that mark. We have to die in order to have Christ come forth.

Jesus said: “*Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit*” (John 12:24). He was speaking of His own death of course. But we can apply the same principle to ourselves. If we, through the Spirit, put our flesh life to death, we will bear much fruit. But if we do not die, we (ie: our flesh natures) will abide alone. The Lord also said: “*He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life, in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal*” (John 12:25). We are to put off the old man with his deeds and put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him. (Col. 3:9-10) This is all part of coming to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. It is part of the race each of us must run if we want to hit the mark.

But Paul went on to describe another part of this same race; and very few Christians have any understanding of what he was talking about. He goes on to say: “*If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead*” (Phil. 3:11). Now we need to stop and consider carefully what Paul is saying here. He makes this statement in the context of entering into the fellowship of Christ's sufferings so he would be made conformable unto His death, in order to experience the power of His resurrection life. The process is clearly stated: as our old Adamic life (ie: the flesh nature) is put to death, the life of Christ comes forth in us. But in the middle of all this he starts talking about “attaining unto the resurrection from the dead”.

Now what does being made conformable unto the death of Christ, so that the life of Christ can come forth in us, have to do with attaining to the resurrection of the dead? Exactly what kind of resurrection is Paul talking about here? Is he talking about attaining a *spiritual* resurrection or a *physical* resurrection? I don't believe Paul is talking about a spiritual resurrection because the Scripture says very clearly that being raised *spiritually* is something that happens to us when we are born again.

*Even when we were dead in sins, **hath quickened us together with Christ,** (by grace ye are saved;) And **hath raised us up together,** and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:*

Ephesians 2:5-6

*In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: **Buried with him in baptism,** wherein also **ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.** And you, **being dead** in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, **hath he quickened together with him,** having forgiven you all trespasses...If ye then **be risen with Christ,** seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.*

Colossians 2:11-13 & 3:1-3

*Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were **baptized into his death**? Therefore we **are buried** with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

Romans 6:3-4

So when Paul talks about attaining to “the resurrection” in Philippians 3:11, he is not referring to a spiritual resurrection. We have *already* been raised spiritually. Just as we were dead *spiritually* in our sins before we came to Christ, so we were resurrected (raised) *spiritually* when we were born again. Since we have already been resurrected spiritually, Paul admonishes us in Colossians to seek those things which are above and set our affections on things from above. And in Romans he says that since we have already been resurrected spiritually, we should walk in “newness of life.

Another reason we can be sure Paul was talking about a *physical* resurrection is because of the term he used here—which is a form of the Greek word, “*anastasis*” (an-as'-tas-is). The term, *anastasis* means, ““a standing up again” (ie: from death). Nearly every reference to resurrection in the New Testament is this word. But the term Paul uses in Phil. 3:11 is, “*exanastasis*” (ex-an-as'-tas-is). It’s the same exact Greek term, except that he added the Greek prefix “*ex*”—which means “out from”. This is the only place in the entire Bible that the term is found. What it means is a physical resurrection “out from among” the general resurrection which is to take place at the end of the Millennium.

Now the question nobody seems to ever ask when they read this passage is this: Why does Paul talk about “attaining” the resurrection of the body like it’s a prize that must be won? Certainly he knew that no one has to “attain” a physical resurrection. All you have to do to be raised physically is *die physically*. Everyone who dies physically will automatically experience a *physical* resurrection of some kind—whether it be a resurrection unto life, or a resurrection unto damnation (See: John 5:29).

Do we think that Paul wasn’t sure he would experience a *physical* resurrection with the rest of the saints if he died at that point? Do we imagine the man who wrote so much about the resurrection in his letters, was thinking he had to obtain a physical resurrection unto life through suffering and Adamic death? That’s absurd! If you are a genuine believer, whenever you die and however you die, you can be sure that at some point, you will be raised physically and spend eternity with the Lord. No Christian has to strive, or obtain, or win, a physical resurrection unto life.

Paul was not seeking to be conformed to Christ's death in order to apprehend a *general* physical resurrection, but a *special* physical resurrection called the “out-resurrection”. The out resurrection is a reference to the *first* resurrection. Qualifying for the first resurrection has nothing to do with being saved or lost. The resurrection that will determine the eternal fate of all mankind (except the Royal Priesthood) is the *second* resurrection, which takes place at the end of the Millennium. At this resurrection both Christians and non-Christians will come forth and be rewarded as God sees fit. The “out-resurrection” has to do with bringing together God’s firstfruits from all generations in order to rule and reign with Jesus. Attaining *this* physical resurrection, out from among the general resurrection, is part of the “prize” Paul was trying to attain because attaining this resurrection is a *reward*. It’s not an automatic thing that comes as part of the Evangelical package deal, they call “salvation by grace”. Attaining the first resurrection only comes through Adamic death. *Rotharham's Emphasized Bible* brings out the true meaning of this passage:

*To get to know him the power of his resurrection and fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death - if by any means **I may advance to the earlier resurrection, which is from among the dead**. Not that I have already received or have already reached perfection, but I am I am pressing on - if I may even lay hold of that for which I have also been laid hold of by Christ Jesus.*

I know that this view of that passage would be rejected by most of today's believers because they have been taught all their lives that the *first* resurrection is for the saved and the *second* resurrection is for the damned. I'm not going to go into all the reasons why that is an error, but I just want to point out a few things to you. First of all, Paul said we will reign with Christ IF we suffer. He also said we will be a joint-heir with Christ IF we suffer. Peter said we will be filled with joy when the Lord returns IF we partake of His sufferings now. Jesus said we will be given power over the nations, and will rule them with a rod of iron IF we overcome.

*Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: **If we suffer, we shall also reign with him**: if we deny him, he also will deny us:*

II. Timothy 2:10-12

*For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: **And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together**. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

Romans 8:15-18

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

I. Peter 4:12-13

*And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will **I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron**; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.*

Revelation 2:26-27

Now under normal circumstances, we all know what the word “IF” means, don’t we? It is a conditional term. If we suffer, we will reign with Christ when He returns. If we do not suffer, we will *not* reign with Christ when He returns. If we suffer, we be a joint-heir with Christ when He returns. If we do not suffer, we will *not* be a joint-heir with Christ when He returns. If we suffer, we be exceeding joyful when Christ returns. If we do not suffer, we will *not* be joyful when He returns. If we overcome, we will reign over the nations in the next age with Jesus. If we do not overcome, we will not reign with Him when he returns.

Okay? The meaning of these passages is very clear—unless you have already been brainwashed by the religious traditions of the Church System—in which case the word “if” means absolutely nothing! We will reign with Jesus, whether we overcome or not. We will be joyful when He returns, whether we suffer or not. We will be a joint-heirs with Him, whether we suffer or not.

So on one side of the theological pendulum we have *the majority* of the church saying that *everyone* who is really born again is going to rule and reign with Jesus when He returns, regardless of how faithful they were to Him in this life; regardless of whether or not they suffered for Him or not. Then there are those on the other side of the pendulum who would say that those who do not suffer will certainly be cast into eternal torment. But this is equally wrong. Consider the following scriptures:

*Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But **in a great house** there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and **some to honour, and some to dishonour**. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.*

II. Timothy 2:19-21

*Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, **he shall receive a reward**. If any man's work shall be burned, **he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved**; yet so as by fire.*

I. Corinthians 3:12-15

*Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, **of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?***

Romans 9:20-21

Clearly there is room in God's kingdom for people who do not obtain the "prize" of the High Calling. It's not a situation where God says to us: "It's either the High Calling or Hell for you". Those who obtain the prize will be those who are fanatically committed to Jesus. It will be those who are able to turn their backs on even the good and proper things this life has to offer. It will be people who are like Paul. This kind of walk is too hard for most of God's children to give themselves to, and God's not going to send them all to Hell if they can't walk like Paul walked.