



The Upward Call of Christ

In Philippians 3:7-10 we learned how the apostle Paul sought to intimately know the Lord Jesus Christ, to share in His sufferings, and have a mind that was eternally focused on the goal of being resurrected from the dead. We also saw how important it is that we not only know the Lord, but that also the Lord know us.

...in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.
Philippians 3:11-14 NASB

Today we find both an encouraging and challenging passage of Scripture. In the context of attaining all that he just spoke of, Paul states that he has not already obtained it nor has already become perfect. The last part seems kind of obvious, as any honest Christian can admit that we are far from perfect or complete even after we are saved! But what did Paul mean when he said, "***not that I have already obtained it***"?

The Greek for *obtained* is *lambanō* and can also translated *received*. Is Paul indicating that he is not completely saved or has not fully received the gift of salvation? Not at all. As we read on a bit, we see that Paul explains this statement in more detail.

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Notice Paul's humility here. Even though he knows Christ, is confident in being known by Christ, and seeking to join in Christ's sufferings, Paul recognizes he must also *press on* that he ***may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus***. *Lay hold of* is from *katalambanō* and means to *seize* or *capture*. Paul sees that he must *press on* in his walk of faith as though in a battle both with his sinful nature and the world, and it is one he is not willing to lose. Again we see that our faith cannot be passive!

But a glorious promise is also embedded in this statement: ***for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus***. Paul recognizes that Christ has already seized or *laid hold* of him in the same way he is striving to seize or lay hold of Christ. So while Paul continues to press on in his faith every day, he still rests absolutely assured that Christ is sustaining his salvation with divine power. Psalm 54:4 reminds us, "***Behold, God is my helper; The Lord is the sustainer of my soul.***" And



as a side note here, this Psalm infers both God the Father and Christ the Messiah are actively working together to save our soul. So magnificent!

And now the heart of the message... Paul says, ***“but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”*** These are true words of wisdom from inspired Scripture. It is so easy to focus on the past, either the good or the bad. But here we are reminded by the humble words of the apostle to ***forget what lies behind***, and instead press on and ***reach forward to what lies ahead***. Spending too much time looking in life’s rearview mirror can hinder us from moving on to what God has for us down the road. No matter what we have in our personal history books, we can’t allow it to prevent us advancing in our walk with the Lord. It’s much more than simply not having regrets; those are a natural and even healthy consequence of poor choices. No doubt Paul had many regrets about some of the terrible things he did before he was saved (cf: 1 Tim 1:13), but he did not allow those to hold him back from accepting the fullness of Christ’s forgiveness.

And what lies ahead? ***The prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus***. Who’s *call* is it? God the Father’s. And Who is it *through*? Christ Jesus, the Son. Yet another example of the Godhead working in unity for the salvation of those who hear the beckon of the Spirit (cf: John 3:16, Acts 4:12, Eph 1:4-5, Rom 8:30).

The foremost goal of our lives should be loving the Lord with an unpretentious and penitent heart as we look forward to the greatest ***prize*** one could imagine – the day when our beautiful Savior arrives on the clouds to take us home (cf: Luke 21:27, Acts 1:11, Rev 14:14)! Let this be an encouragement that today is a new day, God’s mercy is afresh (cf: Lam 3:22-23), and the great and awesome upward call of God the Father in His blessed Son awaits!

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