

Pursue the Prize!

Ponder: Is the prize worth the effort?

Scripture: “I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14, NKJV).

Why do Olympic runners put so much effort into the race? Think of all the training, all the discipline, all the sacrifice – and it’s all for what? They’re giving it all they have, and their focus is on the finish line. Reaching that goal ahead of the pack means receiving the prize: the Gold Medal, and all the benefits that go along with it!

A prize infinitely superior to an Olympic Gold Medal awaits every faithful Christian. Paul wanted that prize. So should you and I. In Philippians 3:12, Paul wrote, “I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.” His word for “press on” is the same as we have seen elsewhere translated “pursue.”

What was it that Paul was pursuing? He said he wanted to lay hold of something – what was it? Paul says it was the same thing for which Christ Jesus had laid hold of him. Backing up one verse, we see what the prize is: “if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead” (3:11).

Jesus taught that everyone, good or evil, will be raised from the dead, “those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:28, 29). Certainly Paul was not hoping for the resurrection to condemnation, but the resurrection to life. Jesus hadn’t laid hold of Paul in order to condemn him, but to save him.

That’s why Paul “pressed toward the goal” (Philippians 3:14). Again, “pressed toward” is the word for “pursued.” He could not afford to look back at the past, whether it was the proud record he had in Judaism or his shameful conduct as a persecutor of the church. All that mattered now was reaching the goal, for only there would he receive the prize.

So it is with us as well. Pursue the prize!