

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

Philippians 3:14

Following the upward call through Philippians ...

Not There Yet

The apostle Paul had already stated to the Philippian brethren that it would be better for him to die than to remain on earth. "Yet," he said, "to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake" (Philippians 1:24). Because the Lord was not done with him in the time of his testing on the earth, the apostle would have to go through more persecutions and sufferings, more malicious gossip and more death threats, and more personal growth. All this, he said, will mean "fruitful labor for me" (Philippians 1:22). Hence it was that he willingly marched forward into the persecution that comes

with preaching the gospel, as he put it, "being conformed to His death." Jesus had said, "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's shall save it" (Mark 8:35). The apostle Paul still stands as a great example of someone who was willing to give up everything, ultimately including his earthly life, for the sake of Christ and His word.

▼ **Not obtained it** — Paul's expressed earnest desire was to attain to the resurrection from the dead. The secret to attaining that desire is to know Christ, and to remain faithful to Him. Thus, as the apostle contemplates the grand picture, he comments, "Not that I have already obtained it ..." (Philippians 3:12). He, like everyone sanctified through faith in Christ, had to keep moving forward until the Lord called him home. The "it" is his successful resurrection to life.

▼ **Become perfect** — There are three perfections that are considerations of the scriptures. The first is a *perfect conscience*, a clean conscience which is granted when the sinner's body is washed (Hebrews 10:22). The second is *perfect character*, which is the goal of the New Testament writings for each Christian, to be perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect (Matthew 5:48). The third is a *perfect body*, which is granted to those declared righteous at Jesus' second coming, like the body of Jesus' glory (Philippians 3:21). Paul says he has not already "obtained it" — referring to his resurrection body — which he then restates as "or have already become perfect" — referring likewise to receiving his perfect body in the resurrection on the last day.

▼ **Press on** — "Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow," said the Lord Jesus Christ, "for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matthew 6:34). The apostle Paul therefore had to take each day, one day at a time, until the time came for him to make his exit from this earth. Since he hadn't become "perfect" in his resurrection yet, he affirms that "I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:12). Christ, through the gospel, *calls* those whose names were written in the book of life of the Lamb before the foundation of the world. Rather than using the word "called," the apostle uses the expression that Christ "laid hold" of him. Paul likewise had an obligation every day to "lay hold" himself, to make his "calling and choosing" certain, that his name not be erased from the book of life.

God stripped the apostles of nearly every earthly thing, and implanted in them the desire for the resurrection of the dead, the one hope. "For I think," said Paul, "God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men" (1 Corinthians 4:9). Hungry, thirsty, homeless, poorly clothed, persecuted and slandered, these men labored and changed the world. But in them, as Paul so clearly stated, was the drive to "press on." "I exhort you therefore," comes the challenge that rings down through the centuries, "be imitators of me" (1 Corinthians 4:16). Because Dad says we're not there yet!

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**PAUL HAD AN OBLIGATION EVERY DAY
TO "LAY HOLD" TO
OBTAIN ETERNAL
LIFE.**