

The Prize

Philippians 3:10-16 (CEV)

¹⁰ All I want is to know Christ and the power that raised him to life. I want to suffer and die as he did, ¹¹ so that somehow, I also may be raised to life.

¹² I have not yet reached my goal, and I am not perfect. But Christ has taken hold of me. So I keep on running and struggling to take hold of the prize. ¹³ My friends, I don't feel I have already arrived. But I forget what is behind, and I struggle for what is ahead. ¹⁴ I run toward the goal, so I can win the prize of being called to heaven. This is the prize God offers because of what Christ Jesus has done. ¹⁵ All of us who are mature should think in this same way. And if any of you think differently, God will make it clear to you. ¹⁶ But we must keep going in the direction that we are now headed.

I. Introduction

A. Interest in Prizes

1. Prizes symbolize rewards, often earned.
2. Some prizes are given without being earned, like participation certificates.
3. Concerns about how children who receive participation certificates will fare in the real world.
4. Questioning if you've ever aimed to win something.
5. Achieving requires putting thoughts into action.
6. James Clear's quote from *Atomic Habits*: Improvements must become part of your identity.
7. Example: Deciding to run a marathon requires actually running.

B. Paul's Pursuit of a Valuable Prize

1. Paul's ultimate prize: a reward from Jesus, surpassing earthly rewards.
2. Success begins with proper goals; aim high.
3. Seek God's kingdom first (Matthew 6:33).
4. After setting a goal, focus on how to achieve it.
5. Paul likens life to a race with an eternal prize (1 Corinthians 9:24-25).

II. Paul's Drive for the Prize

A. Overcoming Past Hindrances

1. Many fail the Christian race before starting.
2. Dependence on changing mindset rather than heart.
3. Faith based on feelings instead of promises.
4. The past can be a significant barrier, causing guilt.
5. God's forgiveness is often overlooked.

6. Forgetting what's behind (v. 13) allows moving forward.
7. Paul's past was full of both regrets and accomplishments.
8. He disregarded both to focus on knowing Christ (v. 7-8).
9. The past should not dictate the future.

B. Passion and Focus

1. Struggle and stretch toward the future (v. 13).
2. Paul's passion for fulfilling God's will.
3. Admitted his imperfections and kept pressing forward.
4. Goals aligned with becoming more like Jesus.

C. Pressing Toward the Goal

1. Running towards the goal set by Jesus.
2. Life's purpose is to become like Christ (Romans 8:28-29).
3. The ultimate prize is received at Jesus' return.

III. The Outcome

A. Finishing the Race

1. Paul's confidence in having fought the good fight (2 Timothy 4:7-8).
2. Rejecting Christ results in losing the race; accepting Him leads to eternal rewards.
3. Spiritual treasures can be sent ahead to heaven (Matthew 6:20-21).
4. Building lives with care using valuable materials (1 Corinthians 3:12-14).

B. Reflection on Eternal Rewards

1. God's plan promises the best is yet to come.
2. Encouragement to focus on the heavenly prize.
3. Contemplation on the materials being sent to heaven.

Conclusion

1. Think about the focus of your life.
2. What kind of eternal rewards you are working towards?
3. Are your actions & goals aligned with the pursuit of the ultimate prize in Christ?