

The Pursuit, The Promise and The Prize

I **press** toward the **mark** for the **prize** of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

– Philippians 3:14

This verse contains three key elements regarding the Christian life here on Earth. They are: the press, the mark and the prize. The apostle identifies these and makes a differentiation between them. Proper understanding of these will bring clarity of what the true purpose of our new life in Christ is.

Can two walk together, except they be agreed? – Amos 3:3

If we are going to walk with the Lord we must agree on the direction we are going. We may have a destination in mind that is different than His. This makes for a difficult and confusing journey.

Press

An alternate Strong's Concordance definition is "to pursue." From the Outline of Biblical Usage – to run swiftly in order to catch a person or thing, to run after, to press on: figuratively of one who in a race runs swiftly to reach the goal, to seek after eagerly, earnestly endeavour to acquire.

Mark

From Thayer's Greek Lexicon we find this further detail: the distant mark looked at, the goal or end one has in view.

Prize

Thayer's Greek Lexicon's exposition of this word includes "the award to the victor in the games, a prize." As well as metaphorically, "of the heavenly reward for Christian character", as found in I Corinthians 9:24, "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain."

The apostle Paul was in an earnest pursuit of a goal to obtain the award. In order to obtain the *prize* or the *award* we need to be perfectly clear on what the *goal* is? What is the mark that I am to be pressing toward? Whatever it is I don't want to miss the mark.

Missing the Mark

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; – Romans 3:23

The verb for sin in the Greek is *hamartano* this word is different than the noun for sin which is hamartia. Strong's Dictionary defines *hamartano* as "properly to *miss* the mark (and so *not share* in the prize)." Note how the same two words from the opening text are found in this definition: mark and prize. We see then that sinning is missing the mark. Again what is this mark?

The Rich Young Ruler

And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none *is* good, save one, *that is*, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich. – Luke 18:18-23

And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? – Mark 10:17

This well known story tells us of the man who had a goal, eternal life, but he had a sense that he was still missing something. He was correct. He was about to face the reality that his goal was not *the goal*. His *goal* in the eyes of Jesus was *the prize*. The Lord had a different goal. He had a different mark to reach for which was far beyond keeping commandments. The Lord gave him the one **ultimate mark** to attain when he said, "follow me."

Follow

Strong's Dictionary – properly to *be in the same way with*, that is, to *accompany* (specifically as a disciple): - follow, reach.

The Way

I am the way, the truth, and the life: – John 14:6

Bringing all of these concepts together shows us that we are to be pressing, reaching, following in the same way with the one who is *the way* that we may obtain the prize. Discipleship is the press. Jesus is the mark. Eternal life is the prize.

The rich, young ruler had the same misconception that many Christians do today. They think that Heaven is the goal. That may be their goal, but is certainly not God's goal for us. If that was His goal he would save us and take us. The Lord has a much greater goal for his people than just to make it to heaven.

For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For *as*

the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but **it shall accomplish that which I please**, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it. – Isaiah 55:8-11

God's thoughts and ways are higher. He has a goal for us that is high. He hasn't changed his mind about His goal for mankind. He had a goal from the beginning. He spoke that goal and it shall be accomplished.

The Image

So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. – Genesis 1:27

God made part of His creation in His own image and likeness. That was His goal for man from the beginning. He hasn't changed His mind about that goal. We could call this God's First Promise. The first Adam lost that likeness through sin. The last Adam came to restore that image. He did this not only for Himself, but for all humanity.

Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the **inheritance** of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins: Who is **the image** of the invisible God, **the firstborn** of every creature:
– Colossians 1:12-15

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate **to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.** – Romans 8:29

God is looking for and expecting **many** children that are in His image and likeness. This is the predestination – that God's children become like Him. This is the goal. This is the mark. This is the promise.

Grace and peace be multiplied unto you **through the knowledge** of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, **through the knowledge** of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious **promises**: that by these ye might **be partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. – II Peter 1:2-4

We need knowledge. We need the knowledge of Him who has called us. He has called us to embrace His promise and take on the divine nature. His promise is far beyond an entrance to

heaven even though that is part of the package.

And beside this, **giving all diligence**, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For **if these things be in you, and abound**, they make *you that ye shall* neither *be* barren nor unfruitful **in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ**. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to **make your calling and election sure**: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an **entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom** of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. – II Peter 1:5-11

Knowledge

The word knowledge in this verse is the Greek word *epignosis*. Strong's Dictionary defines this as: *recognition*, that is, (by implication) full *discernment, acknowledgement*. It comes from the word *epiginosko* defined as: **to know upon some mark**, that is, *recognise*; by implication to *become fully acquainted with, to acknowledge*. Here it is again – the mark. We must completely *discern, recognize, acknowledge and become fully acquainted with* the fact that to be like Jesus is the mark.

The ruler asked, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” We are to diligently *pursue* the full scope of all the attributes of the *promised* divine nature. If we do this we will never fall and we will obtain the prize of eternal life.

Asking the Right Question

Ask Christians from any denomination, including Apostolic Pentecostals, what their goal is in living for God. Most often you will get the answer to make it to heaven. The problem with that being the goal is that the requirements become vague. If we change the focus from making it to heaven to becoming like Jesus many “gray” areas disappear. What we should do or not do, say or not say becomes much more defined when viewed through the pursuit of the divine nature. Many times questions that sound like “what do I have to do or not do to make it to heaven” really imply “what can I get away with and still make it.” Trying to couch the question, “What can I get away with and still be like Jesus?” is almost absurd. This is because the true goal is not about doing it is about becoming.

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. **Beloved, now are we the sons of God**, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, **we shall be like him**; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. – I John 3:1-3

T.G. Wodoslawsky 11/5/19