

## “The Upward Call of God”

by Wayne Goff

***“I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” — Philippians 3:14, NKJV***

***“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” — Philippians 3:14, KJV.***

The apostle Paul affirms in this text that his goal is to reach heaven. Several interesting terms are found which help us to dwell more deeply on this goal of all Christians.

**“I press”** comes from a Greek word which is most often translated *“I persecute”* in the New Testament. The idea is *“to pursue”* or *“to press on”* (Phil. 3:12) or *“press toward”* (Phil. 3:14) one’s goal. The context uses the imagery of a runner stretching out for the goal line in an effort to win the prize. So with great effort Paul is striving to reach heaven. It takes single-mindedness and earnest endeavoring to reach.

**“Toward the goal”** translates two Greek words, one of which (*“goal,” “mark” [skopon]*) is only found here in the New Testament. It refers to *“a distant object on which the eye is kept fixed; a mark, goal”* [[Mounce Greek Dictionary](#)]. Yes, heaven may seem to be a *“distant object,”* but in another sense it is very real, very near and very visible!

**“For the prize”** continues the graphic imagery of a runner. Paul is stretching out to reach his goal so that he might win the *“prize.”* Found only here and 1 Corinthians 9:24 in the New Testament, it refers to *“a prize bestowed on victors in the public games, such as a crown, wreath, chaplet, garland, etc.”* [[ibid.](#)]. Imagine standing before the Judgment Seat of God in eternity and receiving the **“crown of life”** (Rev. 2:10)! Could anything be more exhilarating or precious to you! Paul is telling us that he keeps this thought foremost in his mind as he lives his life. He wants to go to heaven to be with Christ more than anything else in the world!

**“Of the upward call”** or **“high calling”** tells us something about the magnitude of the race, the goal and the prize! The KJV translates the Greek phrase as *“high calling,”* but it *literally* is an *“upward call.”* Both phrases suggest the idea of *“a calling which is from heaven and to heaven”* ([Marvin Vincent, Vincent’s Word Studies, III:450-451](#)). God *“calls”* us by the gospel (2 Thess. 2:14); *the prize (heaven)* is bound up with the calling. Mr. Robertson explains in his word studies that *“The goal continually moves forward as we press on, but yet never out of sight”* ([Word Pictures of the NT, IV:455](#)).

**“Of God in Christ Jesus”** identifies the Author and Director of our salvation. *“Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God”* (Hebrews 12:2). If we keep our *spiritual eye* on Jesus Christ through His instructions (New Testament), then we will follow Him and go where He is now — heaven!

The Hebrew writer impresses upon our minds the high priesthood of Jesus Christ, by which He enters into the Most Holy Place for us, and obtains there our eternal redemption. So the writer goes on to state: *“This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek”* (Hebrews 6:19-20). The picture is vivid; Jesus has gone through the *“veil”* of death into heaven, and as our great high priest has come before the throne of Almighty God to intercede on our behalf! We have right to the prize of eternal life because of what He has done for us. We will get there **IF** we follow Him!

Dear reader, don’t you want to make this your life’s goal?! You could choose nothing better or more enduring.

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