

## **Lenten Devotional March 3, 2022**

### **Scripture**

Philippians 3:12-21

12 Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13 Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let those of us then who are mature be of the same mind; and if you think differently about anything, this too God will reveal to you. 16 Only let us hold fast to what we have attained.

17 Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. 18 For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. 19 Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things. 20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. 21 He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself.

### **Devotional**

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Paul's language in this passage brings to mind the image of a race and of a competitor waiting for the starting gun to go off so they can go for the prize. I am not a racer, but I enjoy watching a lot of racing events. I am an Olympics junkie, and I am always tuned into the swimming, track and field, skiing, skating, and other events that involve striving for the gold, achieving the fastest time, or breaking world records. I love hearing about how the athletes prepare for their events and overcome obstacles that might interrupt the achievement of their goals. There are a number of reasons why individuals may enter a race. For many, their goal is to win and set records. Others race to achieve a personal best, or simply to be able to say they did it. What matters to some is not winning, but finishing.

Paul is not an athlete. He sees himself in a different kind of race, and he is in it to win it. He tells us in verses 13-14 of today's passage that he is "forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead." He is focused on the finish line. Paul presses on "toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." But what is his race? What is his goal? To answer this, we must look a few verses earlier in the chapter. Paul has given up everything in order to gain Christ and his righteousness, to know the power of his resurrection, to share in his suffering and resurrection (3:7-11). Then he invites us in 3:17 to join him, to imitate him in pursuit of this goal. And the prize is not earthly—it is heavenly.

The Lenten season is a time for each of us to reflect on our kingdom calling. What is it we are striving for? What is the goal we are straining to reach? Is it "the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" or something for our own glory? Are we looking behind or striving toward the prize? If we're not striving forward, how do we get into this race?

## **Prayer**

Lord God, there are so many things which can interrupt and keep us from reaching our goal to serve you. During this season, help us to reflect on our calling and strive to know you and the power of your resurrection more fully. In Jesus' name. Amen.