

Philippians 3:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (κατὰ σκοπὸν διώκω εἰς τὸ βραβεῖον τῆς ἄνω κλήσεως τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, kata skopon diōkō eis to brabeion tēs anō klēseōs tou theou en Christō Iēsou)—Kata skopon ("toward the mark/goal")—skopos is target/finish line. Diōkō ("I press, pursue") repeats v. 12—relentless pursuit. To brabeion ("the prize")—victor's crown in games. Tēs anō klēseōs ("of the upward calling")—anō ("upward, heavenly") indicates eschatological summons. Tou theou en Christō Iēsou ("of God in Christ Jesus")—calling originated with God, mediated through Christ. The prize isn't reward for works but fullness of salvation—glorification, resurrection-body (v. 21), Christ-likeness (1 John 3:2). Paul runs not to earn salvation but to fulfill calling already received.

Historical Context

Athletic victors received crowns (laurel, olive, pine) and public honor. Paul's 'prize' is imperishable crown (1 Cor 9:25)—eternal life's consummation. 'Upward calling' echoes OT prophetic summons (Isa 55:1-3) and Jesus's call to disciples (Mark 1:17). The metaphor combines athletic striving with divine calling—human effort enabled by divine grace. Greco-Roman games celebrated individual prowess; Paul runs for God's glory, not self-promotion.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What is 'the prize of the upward calling'—what are you pressing toward?
2. How does recognizing salvation as already-secured calling affect your pursuit of the prize?
3. What distractions keep you from pressing 'toward the mark' (kata skopon) with Paul's intensity?

Interlinear Text

κατὰ	σκοπὸν	διώκω	ἐπὶ	τὸ	βραβεῖον	τῆς	ἄνω
toward	the mark	I press	for	G3588	the prize	G3588	of the high
G2596	G4649	G1377	G1909		G1017		G507
κλήσεως	τοῦ	θεοῦ	ἐν	Χριστῷ	Ἰησοῦ		
calling	G3588	of God	in	Christ	Jesus		
G2821		G2316	G1722	G5547	G2424		

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 9:24 (Parallel theme): Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

1 Peter 5:10 (References Jesus): But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

Revelation 3:21 (Parallel theme): To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

1 Thessalonians 2:12 (References God): That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

2 Peter 1:3 (References God): 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:

Hebrews 3:1 (References Jesus): Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;

1 Peter 1:13 (References Jesus): Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

Hebrews 6:1 (References Christ): Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,

Luke 16:16 (References God): The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.