

# The Only Prize Worth Winning

But one thing I do:  
Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,  
I press on toward the goal to win the prize  
for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:13-14 (NIV)

**A**s you walk through a fair, it is interesting to see people carrying prizes won at games of chance. Perhaps it is a big stuffed toy Panda bear or some stuffed cartoon character the happy person carries along. Winning a prize can be a very exciting moment in life even if the prize is something small, with little monetary value. Just the excitement of trying to win the game and then collecting a prize can make the day for certain people.

I well remember being in a Bible knowledge contest when I was 7 years old. My godly mother had faithfully taught me the Bible as soon as I learned to speak, and helped me memorize long passages of Scripture as soon as I could read. So I had a lot of the Bible in my young mind.

I was up against children 10-12 years old and I took first prize in two contests that day. Over 60 years later I gave those prizes to my oldest sons. Those treasures stayed with me all that time. I often took pleasure in opening the prized Bible or Bible story book won that day and reading the dedications written in them. The date was January 1,

1949 and the town was Stratford, Ontario where the Bible knowledge contest was held at a youth rally. That contest encouraged me to pursue a lifetime of biblical studies.

Paul the Apostle wrote the words of our verse for today to a church that brought him much joy in Christ. They were his spiritual children and he loved them greatly. In the context of the verses for today Paul is speaking of what he prized in the past and how it is as nothing compared to his knowledge and experience of Christ in the present.

He formerly took much pride in his personal good works and spiritual pedigree. But those things he had formerly been so proud about were now but garbage compared to knowing Jesus. Paul speaks of forgetting what was in the past and “straining” to obtain what lay ahead of him. All of Paul’s energy was focused on the future and not on the past.

How often I have tried to help people who will not let go of the past. They cling to memories instead of looking forward

to the things that are eternal and priceless—compared to anything of this life. No amount of persuasion will pull certain individuals free from their memories and longing for things long gone. Such efforts to reach into the past to reclaim what is lost, has always been a worthless activity.

Whatever you have lost in the past that you wish to have come back needs to be let go of in order to have your hands free to reach forward to the things that are eternal, and which you can keep forever. Of course the truly great treasure to take hold of is Christ Himself.

We should be like Paul, willing to let go of any temporary thing this life can give in order to take hold what is eternal. Christ is *the only Prize worth winning.*

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