

Greetings from God the Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and from the Holy Spirit. Amen

The Goal, The Prize

Philippians 3:4b–14

The Book of Concord, in the Formula of Concord, states *In the third place, a disputation has arisen as to whether good works preserve salvation or are necessary to preserve faith, righteousness, and salvation. This, of course, is a serious and important question since only he who endures to the end will be saved (Matt. 24:13) and “We share in Christ only if we hold our first confidence firm to the end” (Heb. 3:14). For this reason it is important to declare well and in detail how righteousness and salvation are preserved in us so that we do not lose them again. (Formula: SD, art. iv, par. 30, page 555-556, Book of Concord)*

Paul states in the letter to the Philippians: ***If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor***

of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith. Paul is telling you today

that the goal is to keep faith in the Jesus Christ and the Prize is eternal life in heaven with Christ. Paul is stating the same thing as the Formula of Concord that ALL THINGS other than faith in Christ is counted as rubbish to obtain eternal life. Faith in Christ, God has given you righteousness in Christ. God has declared you right in His eyes because of faith in Christ because Christ has fulfilled the Law perfectly for you. Paul mentions boasting because we all do boasting of some type or another. Sure you are not standing in the aisles boasting aloud but you may be thinking in your mind that "I'm doing better than that person." And in looking at another person for comparison you are not boasting in Christ. You are boasting in yourself. It is a sin. ONLY BECAUSE OF CHRIST YOU ARE RIGHT. No matter how small that comparison is to another person, it is boasting and it

is a sin. Another form boasting is a sin, when it takes the form of “I am right with God” because I put in all those hours in my younger years. The reverse boasting is a sin. Reverse boasting is “I am not right with God” because I cannot do anything for the Lord. The boasting, reverse boasting is a sin also because you are not placing your trust and hope in grace alone, faith alone, for Christ’s sake alone. Paul is saying keep focused on Christ! Keep focused on Christ keep in God’s Word and Sacraments. God will strengthen and sustain your faith by His Word and Sacraments that is what it is to keep running the race as Paul states in 1Cor 9:24

- ***Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it.*** You keep in the race because Christ keeps you in the race, and He strengthens you by the His Sacraments and by His Word. Christ has run the race for you already. Paul writes in the first chapter of the Epistle to you and the readers in Philippi,

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. (Phil 1:7). Paul is sure that He (God) will bring to completion the good work that He started in you. The Start is baptism, the good work in you is God’s Good Work, that is faith placed in you, poured into you by God. Paul writes in our text today - ***Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on***

to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I

do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies

ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of

God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way,

and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to

you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained. The ***upward call***

of God in Christ Jesus is that Jesus has sought you out, has called you

by name and made you His own by His Word and Sacraments, and He will

sustain your faith by His strength and power and by His works. The prize,

eternal life, you possess it but have not fully obtained it. You will be given it

if you have faith in Christ when you are called from this world. Before you

are called from this world you are victorious in Christ already because He is

victorious. For you are bound to Him in His death and resurrection. 1Peter

5:10-11 ***And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace,***

who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore,

confirm, strengthen, and establish you. And we are victorious, we are

more than conquerors in Christ because God works all things to good for the

ones who love Him, (Romans 8:28-30) ***And we know that for those who***

love God all things work together for good, for those who are called

according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. God is working all things for your good. Let us boast in the Lord and Rejoice in Him for Christ has declared you His Own to His Father in Heaven, You are His! Christ shows His nail marks in His feet and in His hands and His pierced side to His Father and tells all, I have purchased you with my suffering and shedding of My blood upon the cross! You are His! **YOU HAVE THE PRIZE BECAUSE OF CHRIST, FOR YOU ARE FOUND IN HIM. YOU WILL KEEP THE GOAL, FOR HE HAS PLACED YOU IN HIMSELF ... AND YOU WILL BE WHERE HE HIMSELF HAS GONE.**

And may the peace of God, which is beyond all human comprehension, keep your hearts and minds through your faith in Christ Jesus. Amen