



I press on
toward the goal to
win the prize for
which God has
called me
heavenward
in Christ
Jesus.

Philippians 3:14

Following the upward call through Philipians ...

No Reason for Alarm

The angels, clearly created beings, were around before the foundation of the world. But evil was found in the covering cherub, who would be known as Satan, and rebellion occurred in heaven itself as some of the angels joined with the prince of darkness. "Angels who did not keep their own domain but abandoned their proper abode," commented Jude, brother of James, elder of the church in Jerusalem, "He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day" (Jude 1:6). This rebellion then spread to earth as the devil coerced mankind to join with him and

the demons as enemies of God. The great adversary, then, opposed Jesus when He set foot on this planet, and continues to foment opposition against the Lord's church and against the gospel.

- ◆ **Opponents** — Gravity and resistance are part of nature, and have to be factored into the calculations of every move. Similarly, in the spiritual realm, there is a downward force emanating from Satan, and resistance on the part of fleshly man to every positive spiritual move. Saints should not be surprised or taken off guard by such resistance and hostility; it is part of the spiritual landscape. The apostle thusly appeals to the brethren in Philippi to stand "firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel." While focusing on their forward movement, the saints are also being taught how to handle resistance, "in no way alarmed by your opponents," adverts the apostle Paul, "which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God" (Philippians 1:28). The key to handling the onslaught from the forces of darkness is to view things from the throne of God. Opposition to the gospel is a to be seen as a marker that labels the perpetrators as on their way to destruction, and as another signal of encouragement indicating that the saint is on the right path. The view from the throne is the correct one, and God is the One who will destroy the opposers of the gospel, and reward the faithful saints with the salvation or resurrection of their bodies at Jesus' second coming.

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- ◆ **Granted** — The All Powerful God did not have to save anyone; it was simply out of His great mercy that He set in motion a means by which all could be saved who would obey the gospel of Christ. The faithful followers of Christ are grateful that the grace of God has come to them through message of Christ, and are appreciative of the circumstances which the immortal, invisible God orchestrated to bring them in contact with the unadulterated preaching of Christ. "For to you it has been granted, for Christ's sake," asseverates the apostle, "not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Philippians 1:29). The perspective which would have the Christian fall on his face and thank the Father for His great mercy and grace would have that same Christian fall on His face and thank the Father for the opportunity of suffering for the cause of the gospel!
- ◆ **Experience** — Paul had wonderful and intimate fellowship with Christ and, through Christ, with the Father. He wanted the brethren in Philippi to be able to have that same wonderful and intimate fellowship, "experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me" (Philippians 1:30). Christ suffered at the hands of Satan-formented opposition, Paul suffered at the hands of the same type of opposition, and faithful saints will suffer similarly. "And indeed," stated the apostle in his second recorded epistle to Timothy, "all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Timothy 3:12).

The saint should not be surprised nor alarmed at opposition and persecution. "If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you," said Jesus (John 15:19). When those things come for the sake of the gospel, the brother or sister in Christ just needs to remember that they are a sign of destruction at the hand of God for the opponents, and a sign of the ultimate salvation of the saint.

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