



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 ...

Holding Fast the Word of Life

"Once saved, always saved," is not a Biblical doctrine. The fact that millions of spiritual descendants of John Calvin believe it does not make it true. The doctrine of so-called "eternal security" is based on a more foundational false teaching entitled *total depravity*. The idea is that God is so holy and man, by contrast, is so corrupt from birth that man cannot even understand one word of the scripture or make a decision that would lead him in the direction of Christ. Hence, in this system of thought, God decides who is to be saved without participation by the individual. Since

the person could not make the decision to be saved in the first place, it follows that he cannot make a decision to be lost later. All this, of course, runs counter to the scriptures, which plainly teach that a person must make a decision to obey the gospel in the first place, and continue to make decisions that keep him focused on Christ and within the fold of the Great Shepherd.

- ◆ **The word of life** — The living God and loving Father desires that His children exhibit His character qualities to a world that is in darkness. Satan, the god of this world, is running every confusion and distraction tactic he can before the face of the saint, trying to get him to return to the ways and habits of unbelievers. The apostle Paul thus exhorts the brethren to be "holding fast the word of life ..." (Philippians 2:16). The teachings of the scripture are called the *word of life* in contrast to all else, which is *the way of death*. Consequently, that word of life is to be "held on to for dear life" by the saint!

- ◆ **Cause to glory** — The apostle labored all his life to seek and to save the lost, as well as laboring to keep the saints on track. He always gave credit to the Almighty for opening doors for the gospel, for giving him the grace to do what he did, and for the special powers he had as an apostle. But at the same time he invested his life in people, including the Philippians, and he understandably did not want that effort to be wasted. His encouragement for the brethren, therefore, is that they hold fast the word of life, "so that in the day of Christ I may have cause to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain." His glorying would of course be "glorying in the Lord."

- ◆ **Joy in it all** — The apostle looked forward to "the day of Christ," the day when his reward for toiling would be granted him. His joy and crown would be those whom he was able to influence so that they made their decisions to take up their crosses and follow Jesus. "But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering," he therefore writes, "upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all" (Philippians 2:17). What a picture! As the saints offered their bodies as living and holy sacrifices in service to the Lord, Paul portrays his possible physical death as a libation poured out on that fire, a special added flame ascending to the glory of God. With that picture, he could rejoice and share that joy with the brethren. "And you too," he invites, "rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me" (Philippians 2:17).

Earthly life is filled with many discouragements and disappointments. Jesus Himself is prophetically described as "a man of sorrows" as He experienced the challenges of the Jewish people's rejecting Him and the world's refusing to acknowledge Him. But the joy is there for those who seize it, and for those who have the opportunity as Paul did to see others seize it. That's why he held fast to the word of life, and encouraged others to do so too. The message is clear: hold on!

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JAY WILSON