



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 Philippians ...

## "As Many as Are Perfect"

It has been said that the sincerest form of admiration is imitation. The apostle Paul twice appealed to the Corinthian brethren on this basis: "In Christ Jesus," said he, "I became your father through the gospel," as contrasted to those who were simply follow-up tutors. "I exhort you therefore, be imitators of me" (1 Corinthians 4:15,16). "Be imitators of me," he appealed also, "just as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). The exhortations for imitation ultimately point to Christ, the apostle and high priest of our confession. "The one who says he abides in Him," adds the apostle John, "ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked" (1 John 2:6). "Christ suffered for you," was Peter's contribution to the discussion, "leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth" (1 Peter 2:21,22). And if the exhortations of the apostles Paul, John, and Peter were not enough, Jesus Himself had stated, "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).

- **Perfection in Philippi** — The apostle Paul has written at length on the surpassing value of knowing Christ, and amplified his desire to participate in the positive resurrection from the dead that Christ offers to those declared righteous. "Let us therefore," he encourages the brethren, "as many as are perfect, have this attitude" (Philippians 3:15). Some of the brethren in Philippi were walking in the footsteps of Christ. This is significant because the charge is often made that no one can be an imitator of Christ. Some of the saints were, and had probably suffered much in their Christian walk so that the dross of their character had been purged in the refining fires of their persecutions; they also had to fight that good fight of faith every day.

- **God's working** — The all out drive of those who were of the similar mindset as Paul were pressing on toward upward call of God in Christ Jesus. "And if in anything you have a different attitude," appends the apostle, "God will reveal that also to you" (Philippians 3:15). "The Father of spirits," said Hebrews' writer, "disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness" (Hebrews 12:9,10). The goal of God is that disciples of Christ "be holy," as the Almighty stated it, "for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16). Hence it is that He has a disciplined program for each of His children of faith, and is working on His part to help them "be perfect" as he is perfect. So if there is any saint still short of that perfection, God will show him where he lacks through "the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing" (1 Peter 4:12). To the extent that any one had hit a series of days where they were being "imitators of God, as beloved children" (Ephesians 5:1), Paul encourages them with these words: "however, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained" (Philippians 3:16).

"Brethren," is Paul's sincere way of identifying with and appealing to the saints at Philippi, "join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us" (Philippians 3:17). Paul was an imitator Christ who unashamedly encouraged others to follow his example — this is certainly a victor in Christ, not one who cried out as a Christian, "Wretched man that I am!" (Romans 7:24). And it wasn't just Paul; there were others who could be pointed out as those who exhibited the character of Christ, and whose lives were worthy patterns for developing saints. "As He is," were the words of John as he described the positive picture of Christ in glory, "so also are we in this world" (1 John 4:18). Imitation is indeed the sincerest form of admiration. Let us admire the Jesus who is, and imitate His character!

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JAY WILSON