

WINNING HEAVEN'S GOLD MEDAL (Philippians 3:4-14)

I. Forget the past (vs. 13).

- A. Paul knew that he had tried to gain heaven by a number of ways that were all wrong.
- B. He tried to gain by physical things (vs. 5).
 - 1. Paul's problem wasn't the physical body, but physical birth.
 - 2. He had thought that because of who he was physically, he could win heaven's gold medal.
 - a. Circumcised the eighth day, not like Ishmael at 13 or an adult proselyte.
 - b. Of the stock of Israel - his bloodlines were pure.
 - c. Of the tribe of Benjamin - through Jacob's favorite wife Rachel and the first king's tribe.
 - d. Hebrew of the Hebrews - trained at the feet of Gamaliel, no doubts about his heritage.
 - 3. If anyone could be proud of his lineage it was Paul.
 - 4. Yet physical lineage isn't enough (Matthew 10:37-38).
- C. Religiously, Paul had been a Pharisee (vs 5).
 - 1. Acts 26:5.
 - 2. Pharisees always had confidence in their own righteousness.
 - 3. Paul had been a Pharisee but this would not save him (Matthew 5:20).
- D. He had tried to keep his religion pure (vs 6).
 - 1. Jesus had said the church would be persecuted (John 16:1-2).
 - 2. Saul had been its chief persecutor (Acts 7:58-8:1).
 - 3. He came to realize this was ignorance (1 Timothy 1:13).
- E. As a Jew he had been pure (vs 6).
 - 1. Saul had kept all the legal ordinances (Galatians 1:14).
 - 2. Perfection by Old Law doesn't save (Galatians 2:16).
- F. Saul had pride in these things and thought that combined they would save him (vs. 7).
- G. None of these things would save him, so he forgot the past.
- H. There are probably good religious things some of us, or all of us, have done in our past.
 - 1. We may have done things in the name of religion that were good but not right with God (Matthew 7:21).
 - 2. We have got to be like Paul and forget the past and now do what is right.

II. Plan for the present (vs 7-10).

- A. Any spiritual planning we do comes through the knowledge of Jesus.
 - 1. Christianity appeals to the mind (John 8:32; 17:17).
 - 2. To Paul, everything else was waste (vs 8).
 - 3. Paul's plan was God's plan now.
- B. He wanted to be found in Christ (vs 9).

1. This is vital because salvation is in Him (2 Timothy 2:10).
 2. This is the reason for baptism (Galatians 3:26-27).
 3. Paul constantly strived to be found in Him (1 Corinthians 9:27).
- C. He wanted to know Christ (vs 10).
1. Ask someone if they know Jesus - they often know about Him, but they don't know Him (John 17:3).
 2. To know Him is to love Him and to love Him is to obey Him.
 3. We might never miss a service, may hear His name often, but do we really know Him (John 14:8-9; Philippians 1:21)?
 4. Paul's life was totally consumed by Jesus.
- D. All of this caused Paul to be willing to die for Him.
1. Do we love Jesus enough to die for Him (Revelation 2:10; 12:11)?
 2. That day may be coming quicker than we would like.
 3. Paul was not only willing, but did die for Jesus.
 - a. Have you ever wondered what it would have been like to be with Paul when they took him from his cell that final time?
 - b. His closing words were clear (2 Timothy 4:6-8).
- E. This was a man who had a plan for the present.
- III. Focus on the future (vs. 11).**
- A. I don't believe there was anyone more focused than Paul.
- B. I saw an interview with Michael Phelps where he said that there was a list of goals on his night stand, that he wrote every year.
1. He said he had accomplished almost all of them every year.
 2. I believe this takes tremendous focus.
- C. Paul had that type focus.
1. He kept his eyes on the prize of heaven (2 Corinthians 4:18-5:1).
 2. It is easy to get sidetracked in life.
 3. Our goal is to stay focused on the prize.
 4. The only way to stay focused is to continue to grow.
- D. Paul was aware of the fact that one day he would come forth out of the grave with a new body (2 Thessalonians 4:16-17).
- E. Paul lived for that moment and he focused on it.
- F. On what is our focus?

From a sermon by Barry Grider