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Philippians - Running to Win the Prize



By Steven J. Hogan

~ A Saturday Morning Post #237 ~

Most of the epistles contain verses or passages on end-time's prophecy, on the future God has for you and the church. Some epistles, like 1-2 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians, contain entire passages; others, like Ephesians, Philippians, and 1 Peter, have verses here and there, prophetic truths weaved in the fabric of the text, sovereignly and purposely placed there by God.

Many Christians read their Bible but skip over and ignore verses like these that speak of our future on earth and in heaven. Why? Maybe they don't know what they mean, or don't see how they fit in the context of the passage, or just don't think they are relevant. But these verses about our future are critically important for how we live our current life on earth. That's because a key ingredient for how we live in

the present is having hope for the future.

Life can be very difficult, stressful, and wearing, and hope helps you to be encouraged, energized, and to keep persevering. What does it mean to have hope? You are convinced that the best is yet to come; you believe that God has the most wonderful future planned out for you; you are expecting God to bless you, to pour out His goodness upon your life in the ages to come; you are looking forward to being in heaven with Jesus and fellow believers and in a new glorified body.

As a Christian, you need hope, you need something to look forward to. That's why God placed all these prophecy verses in His word, ones that enable you to see the future and that motivate you to keep living for Him. It's worth it to sacrifice your life for God, to carry out His work, for it brings glory to Him and results in you being rewarded in the future. Your life on earth has direction and a destiny, and hope keeps you hopeful, keeps you looking ahead to a much more glorious time.

I think of athletes running a race, and they are looking ahead. They are running for a reason. They have a goal, there's a finish line, an end to the race. They know there's a prize, a trophy, if they stay on track, if they compete *"according to the rules"* (2 Tim. 2:5), and win the race. Paul talks about this when he says, *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith. In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness."* 2 Tim. 4:7-8

So too, the Bible talks quite extensively about your life in the future, for God wants you to know how He will bless you for running *"the race that is set before us"* (Heb. 12:1). That's why it's necessary for you to understand prophecy passages and verses. Today, we will be looking at all the prophecy verses in Paul's letter to the Philippians, ones that I am sure will instruct and encourage you.

Philippians 1:6 – *“I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”* This gives the big picture of your salvation, that it began at a point in time (justified), and will be carried out, will be completed on the Day of Christ (glorified). When God saves, He justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies – He saves completely and eternally. Rom. 8:28-30

Philippians 1:9-11 – *“… so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ, having been filled with the fruit of righteousness…”* Living for God means being holy and making wise decisions, resulting in you being fruitful now, and being rewarded in the future, on the day of Christ. 2 Cor. 5:10

Philippians 1:20-23 – *“… to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better.”* There’s a spiritual tension you experience in life, continuing to live for Christ on earth, which means bearing fruit for Him, or wanting to be with Christ in heaven, which is better for you. Either way, whether you are on earth or in heaven, Christ will be exalted and you will be blessed.

Philippians 2:9-11 – *“For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.”* Jesus Christ is now exalted over all powers and beings, but only in the future will they all bow down to Christ and confess Him as Lord. This will take place during the millennial kingdom, when *“the Lord will be King over all the earth.”* Zech. 14:9

Philippians 2:14-16 – *“Do all things without grumbling or disputing so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation… so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain.”* We will know that our earthly work was successful on the day of Christ, that people we loved and influenced lived godly lives, and then we will rejoice.1 Cor. 15:58

Philippians 3:11 – *“… in order that I may attain to the resurrection of the dead.”* Paul was looking forward to the resurrection of the dead, which occurs on the day of Christ, for then he and all believers would be glorified, would become like Christ, and be with Christ. Phil. 3:20-21

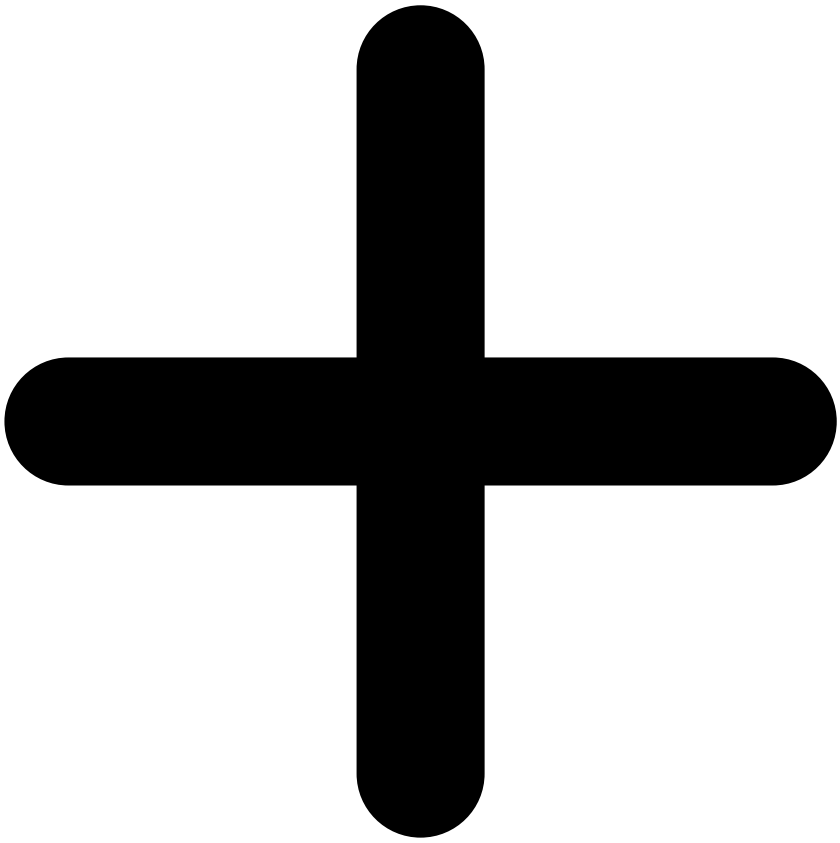
Philippians 3:14 – *“I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”* At some point in the future, God will call you home to heaven, either when you physically die or are raptured. You are to keep pressing ahead, to keep working for Christ until that time, knowing that it will be worth it, for then you will be supremely blessed and rewarded. 2 Tim. 4:6-8

Philippians 3:20-21 – *“Our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform the body of our humble state into conforming with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.”* You don’t know whether you will physically die and go to heaven or be raptured and go to heaven. Either way, at the coming of Christ, you and all believers from all time will be glorified, will receive brand-new bodies, ones like Christ’s. 1 Cor. 15:21-23, 40-42

Philippians 4:4 – *“The Lord is near.”* This can mean that the Lord is near in a spiritual sense, or that the Lord is near in a physical sense. That we now live in the end-times means both are true. We can say that Christ is near, and that the day of Christ is near. Amen! John 14:1-3, 16-17

Living for Christ (witnessing – Phil. 1:12-13, suffering – Phil. 1:29, serving – Phil. 2:3-4, being holy – Phil. 2:14-15, pouring out your life – Phil. 2:17, pressing on – Phil. 3:14, praying – Phil. 4:6, going hungry – Phil. 4:12) is to be done with hope in mind, in view of the fact that this part of your life will soon be over, that Christ will return, rapture the church, glorify the believers, give out rewards, judge the sinners, save a remnant of Jews, and begin reigning over the world with you. Hope needs to be an essential part of your daily thinking, for having hope will help you to truly live for Christ, bear fruit for Christ, and bring glory to Christ. Jude 24-25

P.S. Sad to say, but many Christians don't understand hope, and how successfully running the race for Christ relates directly to knowing the wonderful future God has in store for you. Might God increase your hope, and then you will have a more fruitful and God-glorifying life. Here are three good posts about hope – *"In a Wicked World, You have to Have Hope"* , *"Your Great Hope and Most Glorious Future"* and *"Hope: the Who, What, When, How, and Why*".



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