



The President's Perspective



Pursuit

It's hard to believe, but 2005 is now in the books. Betsy and I were talking recently and she commented that it seems like only yesterday that we were beginning 2005. Yet, here we are on the precipice of another new year. The goals, plans, ideas and improvements that we intended to accomplish in 2005, whether achieved or not, are now a thing of the past. A fresh year is before us with all its untainted opportunities. Have you set goals (spiritually, physically, mentally) for the coming year? I am amazed at how few Christians "resolve" to do anything different or to change anything from one year to the next. With the passing of time, it seems that too many become discouraged with past failures and resolutions broken to attempt anything different. The Apostle Paul was certainly not such a man. Even though he was advancing in years, he purposed and prayed for growth and change in his life. In Philippians 3, Paul repeatedly uses the word "dioko" (Gk.) throughout the chapter. The word means "to pursue." The full idea behind the word is "to pursue to the point of exhaustion" or even "to persecute."

In chapter 3, verse 6, Paul states that, prior to his conversion, his "pursuit" was the church ("concerning zeal, persecuting ("dioko") the church"). He pursued them in an attempt to exterminate them and cause their testimony to cease. His pursuit of the church culminated in his oversight of Stephen's execution. However, on his way to Damascus to further persecute the church, he was arrested by the Lord Jesus and dramatically converted.

After his life-altering encounter with the risen Christ, Paul's "pursuits" were forever changed. In Philippians 3:8, Paul boldly states that he is now pursuing the PERSON OF CHRIST ("and do count all things but dung, that I may win ("dioko") Christ"). The "all things" to which Paul was referring were his pedigree, prominence and past accomplishments (vs. 4-6). All that Paul was, is and ever will be is now submitted to the Captivating One who has captured him. In 2006, have you made preparation to pursue the Person of Christ? Do you long to know Him better? Have you set clearly defined goals for your walk with the Lord? Is your private, personal time with the Lord at the top of your resolution list for the coming year? I trust that Paul's pursuit will become yours.

In chapter 3, verse 12, Paul uses the word "dioko" again when he says, "But I follow after ("dioko"), if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." What was the purpose for which he had been apprehended of Christ? It is the same purpose for which all believers have been apprehended by Christ. I heard a

very distinguished and godly preacher say, "God loves us so much that He spends the rest of our lives, after salvation, making us look like His Son." In other words, Paul is pursuing the PICTURE OF CHRISTLIKENESS that was God's design for him when he first received Jesus. Our growth in grace is a growth whose end result is looking like Jesus, the One Who redeemed us. Many years ago, I was asked, along with numerous other students, the question, "What is that which is most important in the Christian life?" After hearing responses that included DISCIPLINE, LOVE, OBEDIENCE, FAITHFULNESS, TRUTH, HOLINESS, etc., the speaker simply stated, "That which is most important in the Christian life is CHRIST!" He is our Savior, and looking like Him ought to be one of our primary pursuits.

One last time Paul mentions the word "dioko" in 3:13-14. "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press ("dioko") toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." That is, Paul is pursuing the PRIZE OF HIS CALLING. The imagery here is that of a runner who is rounding the last turn and heading for the finish line. With the tape in view, he pushes himself, straining every muscle to reach the finish line first in order that he may receive the victor's prize. The "high" (literally "upward") calling of God in Christ is the rapture of His church. That is our finish line.

May we heed Paul's example. May his "pursuits" become ours as we enter 2006. And should this be the year in which He returns, may we not only rejoice that we are home in heaven, but may we be rewarded, as Paul was assured that he would be, for our diligent and faithful service.

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