

What does it mean, 'to be saved'?
THE PRICELESS PRIZE (PHIL. 3:8)

What does it mean, 'to be saved'? Look where we have come from ... look where we began. Such a vast subject to consider, What does it mean, 'to be saved'? ... The Bible sets out what it truly means,

- * To recognise the holiness of God
- * To understand the character of sin
- * To accept the only way of salvation
- * To seek to turn our back on sin and to forsake it

What else is a clear Biblical benchmark on the road to what it means to be saved? You see, it's not a matter of muttering a simple prayer, - it's a whole new way of life. **Let's read Phil. 3:1-21.**

... **that I may win Christ.** This is THE CHRISTIAN'S AMBITION

- * Paul uses language the people can understand; yes, I know Peter said about him, **II Pet. 3: 15 even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; 16 As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood,** but when it comes to the plain, simple presentation of the Gospel Paul uses the language people can understand.
- * He uses the same words and terms that would have been familiar to the athlete at the Olympic games.
- * The language he uses draws the picture of the competitor straining every muscle and every nerve and every sinew to reach the winning line.
- * Even if he was to fall exhausted on completing the task how happy he would be ... crossing the line.
- * And Paul shows how much he values living for the Lord Jesus that he speaks about Him as the Prize he panted to win.
- * It often amazes me how the goalkeeper in a game of football throws himself down at his opponent's football boots regardless of the danger to himself, ... just as long as he saves the goal.
- * You see, when Paul says, **that I may win Christ,** it was the very ultimate in His desires. More than anything else he sought after Christ. Look where it took him,
 - * He was opposed from many inside the church as well as outside it, - some thought he was old-fashioned and irrelevant, some thought he was too hard and not compromising enough, some thought he was a fool.

- * II Cor. 11:23 in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. 24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. 25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.
- * It was Paul's driving force, **that I may win Christ**. That was what pushed him on. That was what motivated him from he got up in the morning until he laid his head down on the pillow at night.
- * You see, this teaches me what it means to be saved ... what is **the Christian's ambition**.
- * How I would love to see this church filled! How I would love to see every believer in it walking before God as they ought to!
- * But I've got to examine what are my own ambitions, ... are they so **that I may win Christ**?
- * Is that what I am serving Him for? ... so that I may win Him?
- * I know that whenever the earthly breath goes out of this body I will see Him; I know for certain that He has washed me with the cleansing blood that flowed from Calvary and I know He has saved me and there's nothing I need to do to add to His work, but I want to be like Him ... so **that I may win Christ**.
- * And I know you don't stop running, ... not even when you're tired, not even when your pulse is beating fast; as a believer in the Lord Jesus you don't stop, here's what you do, **v.13 this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.**
- * That's **the Christian's ambition**, that's what it means to be saved ... to pursue **the priceless Prize that I may win Christ**.
- * Let's develop the picture a little ...
- * As the athlete is out on the course and as he is running with all his might ... can you see the people watching him?
- * **There are those there who are encouraging him.**
- * They want to see him win the prize, they want to see him reach the finishing line and lifting up the trophy.
- * They want to see the smile on his face, the satisfaction, the joy.

- * They have watched this young athlete since he began to run on the track and they have seen him perfect his technique,
- * They have seen how hard he trained, they have seen the preparations he made, they have seen how running and winning the race was of the greatest importance.
- * You see, when you begin to run in the race all that matters is winning the prize.
- * When you become a Christian all that matters is that you learn more of Christ, - if you say you've become a Christian and you don't have that desire, then I doubt very much the decision you made because you will want to run to the best of your ability ... and you will want to run better today than you did yesterday!
- * And you will hear too the shouting and cheers of those around you as they encourage you on to win **the priceless prize**.
- * You'll hear them above all the other noises that are being shouted at you ... and they'll spur you on.
- * Isn't that right? Don't we encourage each other in this race?
 - * We wouldn't do anything to slow our brothers and sisters down in the race.
 - * We wouldn't put anything in their way, or laden them down with weights that would hinder them running towards the prize.
- * We thank God for those who encourage us to run the race *that [we] may win Christ*.
- * As the athlete is out on the course and as he is running with all his might ... there is another group of people watching ... **Those who aren't particularly interested in him**.
- * They are just there! Not really interested on how well he does or doesn't do! ... They are there and they don't care less.
- * It's a sad fact that there are those among God's people who don't show any particular interest in how well the Christian is running the race.
- * In these marathons you see some people out of the crowd handing a wet piece of cloth to the athlete to cool themselves down, or you see someone giving them a drink of water ...
- * But this group we are talking about now really **aren't particularly interested**. They couldn't care less!
- * Christian, you used to run so well, you used to put everything into running towards the prize ... but you have slacked off;

- * and in fact you have slacked off that much you have slowed down, ...
- * and in fact you have slowed down that much you have well nigh stopped altogether!
- * You know what it's like, you've been running hard and you stopped for a rest ... but you've never got going again!
- * What does it mean to be saved? ... it means running towards **the prize**. It means keeping on running and not giving up.
- * Watching the young athlete running the race were those **who weren't particularly interested in him**; if that describes you, it's time you did get interested the way you used to be.
- * ... And here is another group, **Those who are waiting for him to trip up and fall**.
- * Some of them have tried the race but couldn't stand the pace,
- * Some of them have tried the race but didn't consider it worth the trouble.
- * ... and they are now just standing on the sidelines wishing for the athlete to fall ... in just the same way they did.
- * You always get folk like this, - you tell them you have become a Christian and they mock you, "Wait to you see how long he'll keep it! They'll be back at the pub in no time. They'll be back to the old dirty stories ... just you wait and see!"
- * But when Christ saves you He is the Prize before you and you run with all the vigour and strength towards Him.
- * It's worth winning the prize; ... here's another picture,
 - * You see the child who's starting to take his first steps, and he's all excited and he sees the delight on your face too,
 - * You see his eyes all lit up as the wee child waddles towards you ... and you stretch out your arms, and he knows all he has got to do is do his very best to come running up to you ... and you'll catch him in your arms ... *he knows that!*
- * As sure as anything, there are always those who want to see you trip up ... but remember the outstretched arms of the Lord Jesus Christ as He urges you on in your walk with Him.
- * ... And there is another group watching on as you run the race, - they are a sad group because they are wishing that they were also out on the track running in the race along with you ... but **they are too scared to try!**

- * They are afraid of making fools of themselves. They respect you for making a decision for the Lord Jesus Christ and they wish they could too but they are too scared of what their friends might say.
- * If you're not saved, is it because of your friends and because of what they might say?
- * Well, don't you worry about them, ... run towards the Saviour.
- * Don't you worry about all those who will throw the insults at you, ... you run towards the Lord Jesus and be saved.
- * He's waiting for you. Invite Him into your life and start out on this race Paul is speaking about.

CONCLUSION.

- * Are you running in this race today? Do you have **the Christian's Ambition** to win **the Priceless Prize**?
- * You're not saved, well ... you invite the Lord Jesus into your heart and you can start running.
- * Christian, are you healthy *spiritually*, are you running faithfully; you know, no athlete worth his salt stands still!
- * There is a prize to be won and it will only be won by those who persevere in the faith.
- * There is no prize for anyone who puts on the athlete's clothes, walks up to the starting line but never goes any further than a few yards!
- * Look at how Paul emphasises it ... and emphasises it again,
 - * 7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.
 - * 8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: ... and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,
 - * 10 That I may know him,
 - * 13 ... but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.
- * As we look at this subject, what more do we see that it means to be saved? ... it means to have the desire inside that pushes us on towards **the priceless Prize** so that *[we]* may win Christ.