

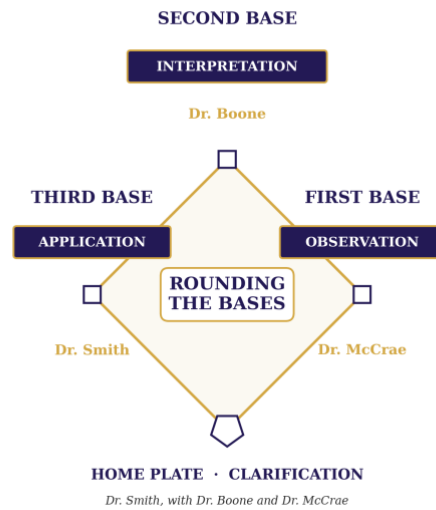


ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY · AUGUST BIBLE STUDY · WEEK 4 · AUGUST 26, 2026

UPWARD TRAJECTORY

“The Prize of the High Calling”: The Reward and the Summons

Not personal elevation. Spirit-led pursuit. · Not ambition. Alignment. · Not status. A summons.



THIS WEEK'S ROTATION

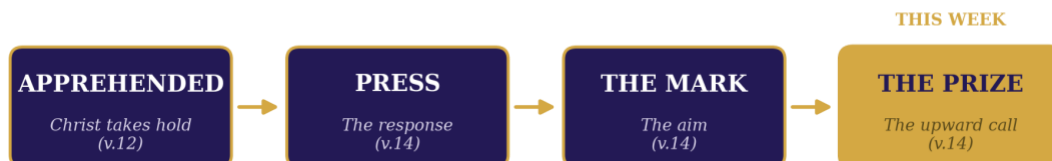
PRIMARY TEXT

Philippians 3:12-14 *The reward that reorders priority, and the summons that explains where the whole trajectory came from.*

Clause Focus: *“for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”*

“I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

PHILIPPIANS 3:14 · ESV



THE LOGIC OF THE PASSAGE, VERSE BY VERSE

The Prize: Brabeion

Athletes, not spectators, receive this word. The Greek behind “prize” is brabeion, the same term Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 9:24 for the wreath given to a winning runner. It is not a participation trophy. It is the reward reserved for the one who actually finished the race Paul has been describing since verse 12. You do not receive a brabeion for showing up. You receive it for finishing.

One Genitive, Two Words

Grammar carries theology here. “The prize of the high calling” is a single genitive phrase in the Greek, not two separate ideas awkwardly joined. The prize is the high calling, realized. Paul is not describing a reward attached to a calling. He is describing a calling whose full realization functions as the reward itself. Separate the two and you have manufactured a problem the grammar never had.

Where the Calling Language Comes From

This word has a resume of its own. “Calling,” klesis in Greek, is not casual vocabulary for Paul. It is the same word he uses for the church's calling as a whole (Eph 4:1, 4:4) and echoes the language of the prophets: “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee... I ordained thee a prophet” (Jeremiah 1:5). Notice the weight of the word before you shrink it to fit your own story.

The finish line was never the point. What waits at the finish line is.

Scriptures: Phil 3:14 (primary); 1 Corinthians 9:24; Ephesians 4:1, 4:4; Jeremiah 1:5.

Now that we've seen what the text says, let's discover what it means.

A prophetic word about identity does not need a pulpit to be true of you too.

The Prize Is Not What Christ Gives

Platform fades. Promotion expires. A Person remains. What you're chasing determines what you're willing to leave behind. Paul did not count his pedigree as loss for a blessing, a platform, or a promotion (Phil 3:7-8). He counted it as loss for a Person. If the prize was ever a thing instead of a Person, it was never actually the prize Paul described.

Calling Begins in God, Not in Us

Jeremiah did not apply for his assignment. He was appointed before he was formed. His office was specific to him as a prophet; the principle is not. Calling begins in God before it is ever revealed in us, and Romans 11:29 confirms it holds even when our pressing falters: “the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” The calling was settled before the resume started.

Psalm 32:8, In Full

A promise planted weeks ago finally opens all the way. Psalm 32:8 was planted in Week 2: “I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go.” Here it returns in full: “I will guide thee with mine eye.” The high calling only makes sense when it is a led calling. This is where August exhales directly into the year theme, Lead Me, Guide Me, without needing an announcement slide to explain the connection.

Calling begins in God before it is ever revealed in us.

Scriptures: Phil 3:14 (primary); Phil 3:7-8; Romans 11:29; Psalm 32:8 (full return).

Now that we understand what the passage means, let's discuss what we should do because of it.

Understanding your calling and walking in your calling are not the same accomplishment.

Release What You Mistook for the Prize

Name the substitute before you can release it. Identify whatever you have been quietly treating as the prize: a platform, a promotion, a title, an approval you have been chasing. Bring it honestly before God this week, not to feel guilty about wanting it, but to reorder it beneath the actual prize. You cannot hold the real prize with a hand still full of the substitute.

Walk in the Assignment, Not the Application

You did not apply. You were appointed. A career is chosen. A commission is assigned. This week, name one place where you have been treating your calling like a job application, something you keep proving you deserve, rather than a commission already settled in eternity. Stop interviewing for a position you already hold.

Close the Month the Way You Opened It: Led

Every clause this month pointed to the same hand. We press because Christ has already taken hold of us. We aim because God marked the way before we found it. We endure because Christ Himself is the prize. We rise because the call came from above. Let this be the sentence you carry into “Lead Me, Guide Me” for the whole year.

A career is chosen. A commission is assigned.

Scriptures: Jeremiah 1:5; Romans 11:29; Psalm 32:8.

HOME PLATE • CLARIFICATION *Dr. Smith, with Dr. Boone and Dr. McCrae. Open floor for questions on tonight's text before we close.*

KEY NUGGETS

- *The prize is not merely what Christ gives. The prize is Christ, fully known and fully gained.*
- *Calling begins in God before it is ever revealed in us.*
- *A career is chosen. A commission is assigned.*
- *The trajectory was never self-made. It was always led.*

Somewhere between the prize and the calling is the whole reason the climb was never yours to plan.

CLOSING PRAYER FOCUS

Lord, forgive us for chasing prizes that were never actually the prize, and for treating our calling like something we have to keep earning. Thank You that the prize is Christ Himself, fully known and fully gained, and that the calling was settled in You before we ever had a say. As this month closes, lead us the way You promised. Guide us with Your eye into whatever You have already appointed. We do not want a self-made trajectory. We want Yours.