

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

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THAT GOD MAY BE ALL IN ALL #6

Up to this point, I have not specifically referred to the signature verse in which Paul declares **that God may be All in all**. So, it is time to consider it in this and the remaining issues.

1 Corinthians 15 is one of the greatest chapters in all Scripture, for it is here that Paul defends the resurrection of Christ and, ultimately, the resurrection into life of all mankind, and it is here that we discover the purpose of the eons.

If we are having an expectation in Christ in this life only, more forlorn than all men are we. (Yet now Christ has been roused from among the dead, the Firstfruit of those who are reposing. For since, in fact, through a man came death, through a Man, also, comes the resurrection of the dead. For even as, in Adam, all are dying, thus also, in Christ, shall all be vivified. Yet each in his own class: the Firstfruit, Christ [lit. a first fruit anointed]; thereupon those who are Christ's in His presence; thereafter the consummation, whenever He may be giving up the kingdom to His God and Father, whenever He should be nullifying all sovereignty and all authority and power. For He must be reigning until He should be placing all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy is being abolished: death. For He subjects all under His feet. Now whenever He may be saying that all is subject, it is evident that it is outside of Him Who subjects all to Him. Now, whenever all may be subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also shall be subjected to Him Who subjects all to Him, that God may be All in all.) (1 Corinthians 15.19-28 CV)

And each in his proper order, a first-fruit Christ, afterwards those who are the Christ's, in his presence, then [afterwards]—the end, when he may deliver up the reign to God, even the Father, when he may have made useless all rule, and all authority and power.... (1 Corinthians 15.23-24 YLT [REB])

In this set of verses, Paul establishes that in reference to being resurrected from the state of death, there are several classes of people and each class will be raised in its own respective order. Christ stands alone in His own class as the first in all things, including resurrection from the dead.

When Christ was raised from among the dead, He became the **Firstfruit** of all the dead. Christ was raised from all the dead and is now immortal, for death has no more power over Him. Further, Christ is the **Firstborn** from among the dead so that He might have the preeminence or first place in all things (Colossians 1.18). Essentially, Christ is first in everything, including being the first to be born again through resurrection from among all the dead that lie in the earth, and, as such, Christ is in a class all by Himself. We could say that He is the first class in all things.

Then, Paul states the same verity that he wrote in Romans 5 that death came through one man but life or resurrection of the dead comes through a Man as well. We should not overlook the import of Paul's reference that the resurrection of the dead comes through Christ. There is a difference between being resurrected from the dead and the resurrection of the dead. The former means that many remain in the state of death, whereas the latter means no one remains in the state of death. Resurrection of the dead speaks of all the dead rising out of the state of death.

Paul once again establishes the equation I referred to in the last issue. I don't see how Paul could have stated it any clearer: **in Adam, all are dying**. Again, here is the word *all*. Can anyone dispute that all born of Adam's race, whether one believes in Christ or not, will die one day, unless one happens to be in the company of believers alive on earth when He comes the second time? **In Adam, all are dying!** Paul makes no exceptions to this death sentence. Notice that Paul does not say all who are in Adam or the lost in Adam. He simply states that in Adam, all are dying, just as through one man death came to all men (see Romans 5.12). The fact that all die a physical death places all in Adam in respect to death.

Next, Paul states that **in Christ, shall all be vivified or made alive**. Again, here is the word *all*. Who are we to exclude from this *all*? Paul makes no distinction between a believer and an unbeliever. There are no exclusions in this *all*. If all are *in Adam*, does it not follow that all must be *in Christ*, eventually, as well? Of course, logic dictates that it follows. This is God's "life sentence" for all!

Now, here is an important key in understanding what Paul has left us to understand—mankind will be resurrected according to their order or rank. Paul makes an important distinction that all will not be made alive at the same time but each in their own order, class, or troop. In the Greek, the word for *proper order* is *tagma*, which refers to "something orderly in arrangement (a troop), that is, (figuratively) a series or succession:- order."

In his defense of the resurrection, not only of Christ but of all mankind, Paul likens it to a harvest of crops. Let us be clear that according to the context of 1 Corinthians 15, the resurrection that Paul had in view is the resurrection unto immortality, when the dead will be raised imperishable, that is, the perishable or corruptible puts on the imperishable or incorruptible, and this mortal puts on immortality (see 15.50-57). This is the hope of mankind, and it will come about for all mankind eventually, for Christ must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet and abolished the last enemy, death, which must refer to all kinds of death, whether it is the first or second death. If it is not this way, then I contend that the cross is a failure, for the sacrificial death and resurrection of the Son of God is unable to undo all that Adam's one transgression brought upon his race.

But the good news is that just as a farmer harvests different kinds of crops at different times of the harvest season, so will God harvest mankind through resurrection. Consequently, troops or classes of people are raised in order, the first being a firstfruit, which is similar to a barley harvest, or what could be called the cream of the crop, followed by a more general harvest, which is similar to a wheat harvest, and concluding with the final harvest of all that is left, which is the grape harvest.

To reiterate, Christ is in a class or order all by Himself. He is the Firstfruit and the Firstborn and, as such, no one else is included with Him. His resurrection is unique in the sense that He is the first Man to put off mortality and put on immortality. As Paul wrote to Timothy: He is **the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone possesses immortality** (1 Timothy 6.15-16).

Moving along in his defense of the resurrection, in 1 Corinthians 15.22-23, Paul declares that just as Christ was made alive, so will all be made alive but each in his own order. Essentially, he declared this same verity to Timothy: **Christ Jesus, Who is giving Himself a correspondent Ransom for all (the testimony in its own eras)** (1 Timothy 2.5-6 CV). *Eras* refer to different periods of time, which correspond to the different harvests. Paul then lists the first group as **the firstfruit Christ**. At first glance, it might appear that Paul is simply repeating the fact that Christ is the first in the order, but this cannot be the proper understanding, for he first establishes Christ's unique place and then he takes up all being made alive. Follow Paul's logic and you will see that *each in his own order* refers back to *in Christ shall all be made alive*. In other words, it refers to all mankind that die, not to Christ Himself.

With this basic understanding of Paul's order, we can move on to the identity of each troop or class.