

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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A BETTER COUNTRY [FATHERLAND]

By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. (Hebrews 11.8-10 NASB)

A letter just found its way into my email inbox that is attributed to one of the late-night talk show hosts. In this letter, this well-known host wondered why so many people in the US say they are so unhappy. He went on to recount how blessed Americans are and how many benefits we have compared to other parts of the world. In the end, he placed the blame for the unhappiness of 67% of Americans on the news media that defines and makes news based on bad things and not good things. I agree with his conclusion about the news media in general. America is a great place to live, and we who have been fortunate enough to live here should truly know how blessed we have been and give thanks to God who is full of mercy.

I state this to provide balance to what I have written of late. It is a balancing act to write about impending crises and what it might mean to all of us and not come across as doom and gloom. Let me be clear that I see the Stone Kingdom crushing mystery Babylon as the greatest thing that could and will happen to this earth, for it is the beginning of the emancipation of creation and all mankind into the liberty of the glory of God in His beloved Son. The shaking of things created is a good thing, for it will lead to the arrival of the kingdom of righteousness and peace that will never be shaken and that will have no end (Luke 1.32-33). The kingdoms of men rise and fall, even the good ones, but the kingdom of our Lord will never fall; it will only rise and continue to advance into every frontier in the heavens and on the earth. This is truly good news!

There is something glorious set before the Lord's people and, ultimately, all the nations that is much better than the greatest blessings we have experienced in the US or any other industrialized nation. Simply, there is a better country coming; it is the Father's country.

Hebrews 11 is one of the great chapters of Scripture as it recounts the faith of the saints of old who gained approval through their faith but did not receive what was promised. What was the promise? It is discovered in what they were looking for—a **better country, a heavenly one**. They were looking for a fatherland.

All these died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them from afar off and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and sojourners on the earth. For they who say such things shew clearly that they seek their country [*patris*; fatherland]. And if they had called to mind that from whence they went out, they had had opportunity to have returned; but now they seek a better, that is, a heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God; for he has prepared for them a city. (Hebrews 11.13-16 DNT)

The word *country* is translated from the Greek word *patris*, which means fatherland, that is, a native town. The Modern King James best captures the meaning of what the saints of faith desired. **But now they stretch forth to a better fatherland, that is, a heavenly one** (Hebrews 11.16a MKJV). The word

better means “nobler, stronger, even **the best.**” Once we realize what was in their heart, we come to realize that the fatherland they sought is the best country imaginable, for it is the kingdom of our heavenly Father; the country is **the kingdom of the heavens** and the city is **New Jerusalem**, the heavenly city of glory. The kingdom of the heavens is the Fatherland and the center of life is New Jerusalem.

However, we need to understand that the fatherland these saints were looking for is not in some distant galaxy far, far away. They were looking for God’s kingdom to come to earth and to manifest **God’s character** or nature in the nations of the earth. They were not looking to fly off into heaven on some good ol’ gospel ship. They were looking for the reign of God to take root in the earth and for the very character of God to reign in the people and among the nations. We do not know exactly what they thought it would look like, but I can assure you it was a heavenly expectation on earth, which, frankly, should be ours as well. You see, I believe they were looking for a fatherland that manifests the character of God the Father in the affairs of man. In their heart was the prayer **Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.** They were looking for **the reign of the heavens** to come to earth, and this is exactly what this earth is about to see once mystery Babylon has been crushed like chaff and carried away by the wind, never to be seen again (see Daniel 2.31-35). This is good news!

Oh, maybe some of us have experienced the good country, but it is nothing like the best country that is coming. We need to fix our eyes and our hearts on what lies ahead and press on toward it, not looking back but clinging to our Lord as He leads us into the best fatherland one could ever desire.

Can you imagine a country in which the norm of the day for the majority of people is to actually express love for one another; when people in need are not given handouts by the government but the people in their community pitch in to help them; when widows, orphans, and the poor are helped and treated with dignity?

Can you imagine a country in which righteousness dwells, or, to put it more succinctly, in which righteousness is the rule of the land? Transactions between citizens are done righteously without greed, malice, hate, or anything contrary to the character of God.

Can you imagine a country in which the moral law of God is the rule of the day and that love is known as the foundation of the Ten Commandments and the government does not shy away from stating so?

Can you imagine a country in which judges have the wisdom of God and know how to administer true justice based on God’s divine law?

Can you imagine a country in which every injustice is dealt with swiftly, and there are no prisons, for people are not incarcerated and punished for crimes but instead are required to make restitution for the damage they have done?

Can you imagine a country in which the murder rate drops to almost nil, and there are no more so-called hate crimes?

Can you imagine a country in which people are truly treated with equality, and there is no personal favoritism based on wealth, social status, color, race, or any other thing that divides people today?

Can you imagine a country where aliens or strangers are welcome to enter the country legally and are fed and clothed if they are in need?

Can you imagine a country in which peace reigns, one that dismantles its war machine and never goes to war again but rather puts its resources to use for national infrastructure?

Can you imagine a country in which the government does not tax its citizens at exorbitant, confiscatory rates, but at a rate that never exceeds 10-12% and is never based on a person’s labor?

Can you imagine a country in which loans are made without interest?

Can you imagine a country in which there is no bribery or lobbying for special interests at the expense of others?

Can you imagine a country in which there is never any inflation, deflation, recession, or depression?

Well, imagine no longer. The kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ is coming!