

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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Risen and Exalted Faith

June 24, 2009

“This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.” (Acts 2:32 NASB)

“Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.” (Acts 2:33 NASB)

“Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.” (Acts 2:36 NASB)

“He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” (Acts 5:31 NASB)

Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. (Acts 2:43 NASB)

In issue #03-09133, June 17, 2009, *What Does This Mean?*, I wrote of the testimony of the embryonic ecclesia that came forth on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon the 120 waiting in the upper room. Their testimony to the Jewish and Roman world of that day was **This Jesus God raised up**. It was an irrefutable fact to them that God had raised up His Son from among the dead.

To provide proof of this glorious event, the spirit of God manifested many signs and wonders. These things were a living proof that the Living One that died now lives forevermore.

This is the whole foundation of our faith. **If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless** (1 Corinthians 15:17). Based on the verses above, I would call this type of faith risen and exalted faith.

Today, faith has come to mean many things to believers. On one end of the spectrum, faith simply means that one believes in Jesus. On the other end of the spectrum, faith has become a means to get things one wants. As the teaching goes, if you have enough faith and apply it correctly, such as by giving large sums of money to a man's ministry, then you will get what you want. Faith becomes more like a formula for success that is based on your measure of faith. If you apply the right formula, according to the right faith, then you force (demand) God to give you what you want. If the formula does not work, then it is your own fault because you lacked either sufficient faith or the right type of faith. I see this as more like extortion than faith. In the end, the “ministry” gets what it wants while the giver may or may not get what he or she wants or expects. Of course, there are many permutations of this, such as the teaching that all one must do is by faith visualize or speak into being what one wants.

Well, it is not my purpose to dwell on the many teachings and, I might add, distortions of the meaning and application of faith in our day. What is on my heart is an encouraging word for those that might have what could be called struggling faith in this day of tumult and shaking. I can testify that many of the Lord's people find themselves in rather strange or difficult situations today.

Let's face it; the early ecclesia was given a mighty powerful spiritual boost on the day of Pentecost. I am not saying that their life was easier than ours, but they had something that we do not have; the near proximity to the historical event of our Lord's crucifixion and exaltation. They were there, a living part of the history of that day that has forever changed the world whether the world is willing to admit it or not. They knew that Jesus had been raised, with over 500 people testifying to this fact (1 Corinthians 15:6). On top of this, the Holy Spirit was offering proof of this fact through many signs and wonders. No wonder their testimony was so powerful and would even lead many down the path of martyrdom. They knew that they knew, and no one or thing could change their minds or their hearts on the matter. They

were totally immersed in the fact that this Jesus has been raised up. They were a living testimony of the risen and exalted Christ. This was their testimony and their faith. They had risen and exalted faith!

Is it any wonder that over the last 100-plus years many Christians have eagerly sought for a repeat of the day of Pentecost? I have news for you; something greater is coming, and it is the week of Tabernacles with the last day, the eighth day, being the great day. This is an exciting topic unto itself that I have mentioned in other writings, so I will leave it for now.

Let's face another fact; this type of faith did not continue unabated over the next 2,000 years. It ebbed and it flowed.

But what about in our own lives? I remember when the Lord first broke into my life and the faith that I had that was even accompanied with wonders. When we first come into a living union with Christ, it is easy and quite natural to proclaim that He is risen, that He is real, and that He lives. It is as if we want the world to know that Jesus is exalted, Jesus is Lord, Jesus lives. We could say that this is our first testimony of faith.

But it is also a fact that after many years of union with Christ, the spontaneity of our risen and exalted faith seems to fade, especially as we find ourselves in more and more struggles as life tries to overtake us. The trials and tribulations of life come our way, and all of a sudden things are not quite as rosy as life becomes more and more difficult. We might be challenged on fronts that were never an issue with us before. We even find ourselves in the various trials that James mentioned (James 1:2), the fiery ordeals that Peter mentioned (1 Peter 4:12), or the sufferings of Christ that both Peter and Paul mentioned and experienced themselves (1 Peter 4:13; Philippians 3:10).

If we listen to some ministries that teach Christians are not to experience such things and, if they do, it is because of lack of faith; our faith might begin to falter and our testimony of the risen and exalted Jesus wane. We might ask: What is wrong with me? Why is this happening to me? Is the Lord with me, or has He left me to fend for myself? We know that He will never leave us nor forsake us, but we still have this lingering doubt. If the trial gets too severe, we might be tempted to think that He is not risen at all but that it is all a bad dream or a sick joke on us.

I realize that some might retort that this never could happen to them and that doubts of this sort would never enter their minds. Are you so sure of yourself? If we are honest with ourselves, we have had moments of doubt, even if they are fleeting doubts.

What is the answer? The answer is not in what could be called feeling faith, emotional faith, seeing faith, demanding faith, seed faith, results faith, or many other types of faith that seem to be taught in our day. The answer is in what could be called raw, blind faith. After all, Paul tells us that **we walk by faith not by sight** (2 Corinthians 5:7), and I am sure that if he walked this earth today, Paul would tell many in the so-called church that their idea of faith is not faith at all.

As we pass through trials and tribulations, which I believe are going to become more prevalent, even severe, leading up to the day of Christ, we must hold to the truth that we know, and that is Christ is risen, exalted, and glorified. He is alive and seated on the throne reigning, and He is returning to this earth to establish His kingdom over the nations. This is our testimony of faith.

We must not expect that we will have proof of this fact through the manifestation of signs and wonders in all that comes our way. We must hold to the fact that He is risen and exalted in spite of all that is transpiring around us or in our lives, even if, and especially if, everything seems contrary to this truth. Many are emphasizing signs and wonders, but do not put your hope in these things. Our testimony must not be based on outward things but on the truth, especially in the absence of outward proof. It must be naked, raw faith. Let us regain our testimony before the world and let them know that this Jesus God raised up; He is exalted and is coming again to reign over the earth. Until then, let us not forget: **For yet in a very little while, He that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry. But my righteous one shall live by faith** (Hebrews 10:37-38 ASV; see Habakkuk 2:4).