

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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Sons of God #3

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As I have listened to preaching over the years, especially among certain groups of Christians, I have seldom heard much on suffering and, in particular, suffering as a necessity to be placed as a son to reign with Christ in His coming millennial kingdom. It is as if suffering is something of the past that has been replaced either with “we are saved and going to heaven when we die, and the rest are going to hell when they die,” or “we are in the victory now; we must seize everything the world has to offer now.” The first group has not progressed beyond a vision of Passover, and the second group has not progressed beyond a vision of Pentecost. Most who hold such views seem to have little to no understanding of the matter of sonship and being placed as a son in the coming kingdom through the experience of Tabernacles. In other words, they have no vision of Tabernacles and the first resurrection, which is about the redemption of our mortal bodies, receiving immortal, glorified bodies in the image of Christ.

I probably sound like a broken record on the matter, but a large part of the problem comes from the traditions of men that uphold a heaven and hell (eternal torture) gospel. If you do not know what I am talking about, all I can do is encourage you to do a search of my writings and read what I have said about this topic.

We need vision of Tabernacles if we are to understand the whole matter of being placed as sons. This is beyond the scope of this series; I will attempt to explain it in other issues.

To close out this short series, I want to bring in one more set of verses to prove the point about suffering. Again, let us consider the Thessalonians who were eagerly awaiting the Son to come from heaven.

(3) We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater; (4) therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. (5) This is a plain indication of God’s righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. (2 Thessalonians 1:3-5 NASB)

The Thessalonians were being persecuted and afflicted for their faith in Christ and their obedience to His word (law), and, I believe, their expectation of His second coming. They were enduring through these sufferings of Christ. According to Paul’s gospel, this was a sure sign that they were on the right road to the kingdom and that they would be vindicated one day by being considered worthy of the kingdom of God, that is, worthy to be placed as sons. These are the sons, the saints in whom Christ will be glorified, for they did not merely believe His gospel, they obeyed it and even suffered on account of it (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10). Not everyone who believes in Jesus obeys the gospel.

Now, let us return to Paul’s Romans epistle and add to what has been presented so far. As a reminder, the Greek word *teknon* means “children,” the word *huios* means “son,” and the word *huiiothesia* means “adopting or placing a son.”

(19) For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing [apocalupsis; manifestation or unveiling] of the sons [huios] of God. (20) For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope (21) that the creation

itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children [teknon] of God. (22) For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. (23) And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons [huiothesia], the redemption of our body. (24) For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? (25) But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it. (Romans 8:19-25 NASB)

First, we need to note that creation itself groans and suffers as if a child is being born. The whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth.

Second, creation was subjected to futility, not on its own accord but because of God Himself. The word *futile* is defined as “applied to that which fails completely of the desired end or is incapable of producing any result.” In other words, creation cannot achieve God’s purpose for bringing it into being in the first place. All is vanity. It is as if it is striving to be what God intended it to be, but it cannot get there, so it groans and travails as if it has a child within that must come forth.

Third, God has intimately joined His creation to mankind, specifically the sons of God. In other words, creation was not called forth to be something separate or apart from the sons of God. If we go back to the first restoration of the earth, Elohim created man (i.e., Adam) and gave him dominion over all that God had created on earth. Adam was the first king of the earth and would have continued as such forever if he had not transgressed God’s one command. However, when he sinned, all of creation began to groan along with all of mankind, for the curse of death had come upon man and creation. Death means corruption, and creation itself was brought into slavery to corruption. Death permeated creation, and creation became its slave, along with mankind.

Fourth, creation will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. Some translations use the expression *glorious liberty of the children*. In this verse, Paul used the word *teknon*, which rightfully refers to children. The children of God, that is, those that are in Christ, are free indeed. **“So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed”** (John 8:36 NASB).

Fifth, however, death or mortality continues to be the enemy of man, including the children of God, for all physically die. We all are destined to die as long as we occupy bodies of death, that is, bodies that are subject to corruption. We need a change of bodies; we need immortal bodies. Just as creation groans, so do all of us who are eagerly awaiting our adoption as sons.

Sixth, our placing as sons only comes about with the redemption of our bodies, which only comes about through resurrection. It does not come about when we die and supposedly go to heaven, as some erroneously teach. Sonship is directly related to resurrection and immortality. In fact, it is only possible through resurrection. We need to be clothed with immortality and the glory Jesus manifested on the high mount (Matthew 17:2). We need to have the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:19).

Seventh, creation itself has an anxious longing to be set free, and this longing pertains to the sons of God: **For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing** [apocalupsis; manifestation or unveiling] **of the sons [huios] of God.** In other words, creation is set free only when the sons of God are revealed or manifested, and this begins with the first resurrection. Consequently, we need to strive to be counted worthy of the kingdom of God so that we will be included in the out-resurrection and enter the coming kingdom age to reign with Christ as sons, heirs with Christ.

Dear brethren, we need to be manifested as sons; it has not happened yet. Creation longs for and groans for the manifestation of the sons. Do you long for it? Are you groaning along with creation? Is this your expectation (hope)? Let us with perseverance wait eagerly for it!