

# 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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## ***HIS BODY, WHICH IS THE ECCLESIA***

The revelation of the ecclesia truly was unfolded by Paul, as given to him by the Lord. Paul declared that what was entrusted to him was previously a secret that was concealed from the eons but was revealed.

**I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for you, and am filling up in my flesh, in His stead, the deficiencies of the afflictions of Christ, for His body, which is the ecclesia [*ekklesia*] of which I became a dispenser, in accord with the administration of God, which is granted to me for you, to complete the word of God—the secret which has been concealed from the eons and from the generations, yet now was made manifest to His saints....** (Colossians 1.24-26 CV)

In these verses, Paul referred to something that is quite profound: *His body, which is the ecclesia of which I became a dispenser*. Do you see the significance in what Paul wrote? Paul's emphasis was on the body, not on the ecclesia per se. We could restate his words: "I was given charge to dispense the secret of the body of Christ, which is an ecclesia." In other words, Paul was a dispenser of the ecclesia called His body or the body of Christ. He did not state that he became the dispenser of the ecclesia or the church. He became the dispenser of the body, and then he identified it as an ecclesia. In other words, according to Paul, *ecclesia* is a metonym for *His body*. They are one and the same.

As he began to take the revealed secret to the nations, Paul used the word *ecclesia* (*ekklesia*) exclusively to refer to the body of Christ either corporately and spiritually, or as a local assembly. Simply, there was no other ecclesia in view for Paul, the apostle of the nations. Interestingly, outside of Paul's epistles, the word *ecclesia* is used sparingly (Hebrews 2.12; 12.23; James 5.14; 1 Peter 5.13; 3 John 9, 10).

Notice that Paul states this revelation in two ways: *His body, which is the ecclesia* (Colossians 1.24), and *the ecclesia, which is His body* (Ephesians 1.22-23). The point is that the emphasis of Paul was not just on the word *ecclesia* but on the word *body*. We could call it the *ecclesia-body*, which is the *out-called body*, something presented by Paul alone.

**Now you are the body of Christ, and members of a part, whom also God, indeed, placed in the ecclesia....** (1 Corinthians 12.27-28a CV)

**For no one at any time hates his own flesh, but is nurturing and cherishing it, according as Christ also the ecclesia, for we are members of His body.** (Ephesians 5.29-30 CV)

Further, a body must have a head, otherwise it has no life; and Paul saw Christ as the Head of the *ecclesia*, which is His *body*. In other words, Paul was given revelation of a "called-out" people, Christ's body, who are joined to Christ the Head. This means that the body is vitally and essentially joined to Christ, and all that He is, so is the body. The life and mind of the body comes from the living Head, who is conforming His body into His own image as His complement, His likeness.

**And subjects all under His feet, and gives Him, as Head over all, to the ecclesia which is His body, the complement of the One completing the all in all.** (Ephesians 1.22-23 CV)

**And He is the Head of the body, the ecclesia, Who is Sovereign, Firstborn from among the dead, that in all He may be becoming first....** (Colossians 1.18 CV)

In Scripture, the Lord's own possession is described in many other ways, such as the one new man, the new creation, the holy nation, a royal priesthood, the wife of the Lamb, and the new Jerusalem, to name a few. Each of these descriptions speaks of relationship. They are not expressions of religion, of organization, or of institutions. They are expressions of ones who are intimately related to the One who declares: "**Behold, I am making all things new**" (Revelation 21.5).

Christ Jesus our Lord is doing a new thing. He did not come to this earth to die for the sin of the world to create another religion or even an organization with His name on it. Man creates religions and organizations; but the Son of God came to this earth to die in order to produce life and in this life to bring mankind into relationship with God. Christianity is not a religion; it is a relationship, and this is most clearly seen in His body, which is the ecclesia.

A body speaks of the most intimate of relationships. If we consider our human body, it is a marvel of relationship as everything in our body works together to maintain life, to grow, and to reproduce. The human body is a miracle of life, of many members all working together to form life. The body was not made to die, but to live. I saw this so clearly as I recently watched my mother of 87 years go through the process of dying. She wanted to live, but her body was failing her. She was in a coma and within hours of passing away, and I watched as her body gradually shut down until her breathing rhythmically slowed and then stopped. But as I watched, it was as if the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart and revealed to me that the human body was made to live, not to die. Death is an abnormality in God's creation. I cannot explain it clearly, but in those watchful hours, I could see that the human body does not want to die; it wants to live because it is made by the God of the living to be that way. Seeing this was a gift from the Lord and from my mother.

Jesus declared: **I am the Resurrection and the Life**. His resurrection life is manifested in His body, which is the ecclesia. Oh, we all face physical death until our beloved Lord returns to gather us all together unto Himself; but we can be assured that we have been brought into a living relationship with the One who is Resurrection Life, the One who was raised from among the dead. We have this life in us if we believe, and this life is a relational life with the living Head.

The human body is an *organism*, and so is the body of Christ. An *organism* is defined as "a living structure; living part or being." This is what humans are, along with all animated life. In fact, a living organism, like our bodies, is highly organized, so much so that scientists have yet to figure out all the intricacies of the human body. An organism's purpose is simply to live, and this is the very purpose of His body, which is the ecclesia. I doubt that any of us truly understands all the intricacies of the spiritual body of Christ. Of course, there are many things that the body can do and should do in this life, but the very core of the existence of the body is to live, especially to live in relationship with its Head. We need to be reminded of Jesus' words: **I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly** (John 10.10 NASB). John wrote: **He who has the Son has the life** (1 John 5.12).

As Christ's body, **we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love** (Ephesians 4.15-16 NASB). All who believe in Jesus are not only joined to the Head in a living relationship but also to each and every member of the body. We are all joined together in a living relationship that is bound together by the love of God that has been poured out within our hearts (Romans 5.5). We are to grow together, to live together, and to love one another until His body, which is a glorious dwelling of God *in spirit*, is fully matured into the image of the Son of God.