

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)

#05-1113

Press On Toward The Goal #1

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The last two issues have been about Paul's longing to be at home with the Lord, which comes about through resurrection. He was hard-pressed from both directions, to live or to die for Christ. Either way, it was gain for Christ, not for Paul. However, rather than desiring to remain alive for the service of the body of Christ or dying for the glory of Christ, Paul sought for the much better, that is, **the day of Christ** (Philippians 1:6, 10; 2:16) when this mortal puts on immortality through resurrection and transfiguration. Thus, he encouraged the saints in Christ in Philippi to eagerly wait for the Lord to come.

(20) For our citizenship is in heaven [citizens of heaven], **from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; (21) who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.** (Philippians 3:20-21 NASB)

The *Murdock New Testament* (MNT) states that **our concern is with heaven**. I believe this best captures Paul's thought, for truly our concern is **to wait for His Son from heaven** (1 Thessalonians 1:10). It is not about going to heaven but about the One who comes from heaven exerting His power to transform our mortal body into an immortal body, conformed to the body of His glory. When we have been conformed to the image of Christ, we will be free to traverse both the celestial (heaven, spirit) realm and the physical realm (earth). In other words, we will have access to God's entire creation because we are citizens of heaven. It will be as if we have Kingdom passports that allow us access to all of the Universal Kingdom of God, the heavens and earth, the visible and invisible.

Now, there is one other set of verses in the epistle to the Philippians that proves without a shadow of a doubt that Paul's longing and goal was the resurrection. However, it was not just any resurrection; he sought for the first or better resurrection (Revelation 20:5, 6; Hebrews 11:35) or, as the *Wuest New Testament* calls it, the *out-resurrection* (Philippians 3:11). See issue #03-09148, August 10, 2009, *Exanastasis, the Out-Resurrection*.

Nay, I even reckon all things as pure loss because of the priceless privilege of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. And for His sake I have suffered the loss of everything, and reckon it all as mere refuse, in order that I may win Christ and be found in union with Him... (Philippians 3:8-9a WNT)

I have chosen to quote from the *Weymouth* paraphrased translation because it seems to best capture Paul's heart in concert with his other epistles.

Paul's one driving passion was to know Christ Jesus his Lord. He used the term *Christ Jesus* because, as the verses reveal, he was referring to the crucified and risen Christ, not *Jesus Christ*, which refers to Christ before the cross. Paul did not know Jesus Christ when He walked the earth; he knew Christ Jesus after He had ascended into glory to sit at the right hand of the throne of God.

For Paul, knowing Christ was more than having knowledge of Him; Paul sought to be in union with Him, that is, to be bound to Him in every way. All that Paul lost in his pursuit of Christ, which was everything, was mere refuse to Paul. Simply, nothing was more important than to be united with Christ, even in His sufferings and in His death. Paul had no greater desire than to gain, to know, and to be found in Christ.

As to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. (Philippians 3:6 NASB)

Not having a righteousness of my own, derived from the Law, but that which arises from faith in Christ—the righteousness which comes from God through faith. (Philippians 3:9 WNT)

When it came to righteousness, Paul could claim that under the Law he was found blameless, meaning that no one could find fault with his practice of the Law and, we could say, his adherence to Judaism, which, as a Pharisee, he had zealously defended to the point of persecuting the ecclesia of God. He truly thought he was doing the work of God and was on the right side, until he met the risen Christ on the road to Damascus.

In that day and the years to follow, Paul came to realize that the Law, which he so vigorously defended, could never justify him before God, **for by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin** (Romans 3:20), **for we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law** (Romans 3:28), **through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified** (Galatians 2:16).

He sought for righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith in Christ.

In his Romans epistle, Paul had much to say about righteousness being credited or imputed to those who believe in Christ Jesus. Abraham believed God and **his faith was credited or imputed to him for righteousness** (Romans 4:5, 9-12, 22). In other words, God **calls into being the things that are not as if they were** (Romans 4:17). There is **none righteous, not even one** (Romans 3:10), in the sight of God, and yet, to the account of those who believe in His Son, God reckons or credits righteousness as if they were truly righteous.

(10) I long to know Christ and the power which is in His resurrection, and to share in His sufferings and die even as He died; (11) in the hope that [if by any means] I may attain to [arrive at] the resurrection [the out-resurrection] from among the dead. (Philippians 3:10-11 WNT [WAET])

Over the years, I have heard it taught that the resurrection Paul sought to attain was a spiritual one while in his mortal body, not the literal resurrection, that is, the redemption of the body (Romans 8:23) unto immortality. However, Paul never spiritualized the word *resurrection*, for the resurrection of Christ and, subsequently, of those who believe in Jesus is foundational to his evangel.

In his longing to know Christ, Paul sought to know the power which was in His resurrection. In other words, Paul wanted to know the power that raised Jesus from among the dead. What is this power? I believe Paul described it in the opening of his Romans epistle.

(3) Concerning His Son... (4) who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord... (Romans 1:3-4 NASB)

Verse 4 is translated a variety of ways and might seem a bit hard to put together; however, it seems to me that the power is associated with the Spirit of holiness. It was the Spirit of holiness that raised Jesus from the dead and declared Him to be the Son of God.

The Greek noun for *holiness* is *hagiosune*, which refers to "sacredness or being set apart unto God for divine service." It is derived from the adjective *hagios* or *holy*, which refers to "the purity of God that separates the Divine from the profane, or persons dedicated to the service of God and partaking of His holiness." Being set apart unto God requires obedience to God, as reflected in holy behavior.

(14) As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, (15) but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; (16) because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY." (1 Peter 1:14-16)

Jesus was **obedient to death, even death on a cross** (Philippians 2:8). This is the Spirit of holiness so that Jesus could not be held in the grave beyond three days. Paul sought to attain to the perfection of this Spirit, for he knew this was the only way to attain to the *out-resurrection*. This is the power of His resurrection; it is the power of holy obedience to the will of God. To be raised from among the dead as Jesus was raised requires a life not only dedicated or consecrated to God but also one that is holy in behavior, one that is obedient even to death. This describes the conquerors (Revelation 12:11); the ones who will have a part in the first resurrection (Revelation 20:4-6). Paul will be among them.