

# 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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## **Press On Toward The Goal #2**

January 14, 2011

**(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) if by any means I might arrive at the goal, namely, the out-resurrection from among those who are dead.** (Philippians 3:10 WNT; 3:11 WAET)

As stressed in the last issue, Paul sought for the power of God that raised Christ, the Son of God, from among the dead. I have often heard that Paul needed the power of His resurrection in order to suffer and die for Christ, but I do not believe this is what Paul is saying in this verse. He sought for the power of the Spirit of holiness that resurrected Jesus, for he knew that to be raised up in the *out*-resurrection requires obedience to the will of God, that is, holy behavior. One must be a conqueror through Christ.

To understand the goal that drove Paul, we need to be mindful that there are two resurrections. I have mentioned them many times in my writings, so I do not intend to go into them here in any detail. Nevertheless, we need to keep in mind that every believer is promised immortality. The issue is not if a believer will receive immortality but when, in the first or the second resurrection.

The Jews expected to be raised up on the last day in a general resurrection (Revelation 20:11-15), or what Jesus called **the resurrection of life** and **the resurrection of judgment** (John 5:28-29), and what Paul called **a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked** (Acts 24.15). Many assume these are separated by a thousand years, the first (life) and the second (judgment). But this cannot be what Jesus meant, for He said **an hour** is coming when **all** who are in the tombs will hear His voice.

John was given revelation that there is a first or former resurrection reserved for those who will reign with Christ for a thousand years because they overcame or conquered (Revelation 2-3; 20:4-6). They will come to life and reign with Christ. The first resurrection is described as "the resurrection from among the dead," meaning only some of the dead are resurrected when it occurs. Jesus' disciples were puzzled over this description when He first introduced it to them: **They seized upon the statement, discussing with one another what rising from among the dead meant** (Mark 9:10). It was a novel concept to them because the Jews expected only one resurrection.

However, according to the revelation given to John, the rest of the dead, that is, those not raised in the first resurrection, will not come to life until the thousand years are completed (Revelation 20:4-6) when all who are still in the tombs will hear His voice.

Now, returning to Paul, we need to understand that, as a Jew, at one time, he must have had the same understanding as the rest of the disciples about one resurrection, which means that, somewhere along the line, Paul's eyes were opened to this new truth, and this became his goal.

Again, let me stress that every believer will *not* have a part in the first resurrection. In fact, it is probably safe to assume that many will not. They will be **saved, yet so as through fire** (1 Corinthians 3:15).

With this in mind, Paul was willing to suffer and even die for Christ in order to attain to the resurrection from among the dead. This was Paul's goal, and it should be ours as well. Paul knew that, as a believer, the promise of immortality was his and could not be lost, but he sought for the goal of the prize of a better resurrection.

As if to stress that the first or better resurrection was in view in verse 3:11, Paul used the Greek word *exanastasis*, which is not used any other place in the Greek scriptures. *Exanastasis* is made up of two words. It is comprised of *anastasis*, which means "standing up again." This is the most common Greek word used to refer to the resurrection. However, Paul added the prefix *ex*, which "denotes origin or the

point from whence motion or action proceeds, or out of a place, time, or cause." It can mean "out among," which is the meaning Paul sought to convey. It is the *out*-resurrection.

Thus, Paul sought to stand up again from among the dead. In other words, Paul saw a resurrection in which only some will stand up; others will remain dead (prone in the grave). Obviously, this cannot refer to the general resurrection of the just (life) and the unjust (judgment), for they all will stand up at the same time, in the same hour.

The *exanastasis* was Paul's goal and the very reason for him longing to know the power of His resurrection. The Spirit of holiness raised Jesus, and it will take the same power for all who desire to be in the *out*-resurrection. It demands a life laid down for the service of God; it is the power of an overcoming life. For Paul, it was not simply about believing in Jesus; it was about pursuing with his whole life the very One who broke into his life and laid hold of it.

**I do not say that I have already won the race or have already reached perfection. But I am pressing on, striving to lay hold of the prize for which also Christ has laid hold of me.** (Philippians 3:12 WNT)

Paul saw himself in a race to the first or *out*-resurrection, and his goal was to win this race to earn the right to stand up from among the dead at the end of our present wicked eon, not to be raised with all the dead one thousand years later. This is the perfection or end that Paul sought.

Christ had laid hold of Paul for the very purpose of him laying hold of the prize. In other words, when Jesus broke into Paul's life on the road to Damascus, He laid hold of Paul so that he would win the race and lay hold of the prize.

Nevertheless, Paul always seemed to be in some level of tension as he was striving for or pursuing the goal. It was as if with every step taken he threw off some baggage that hindered him in the race (Hebrews 12:1). He kept running, pressing on, all the while forgetting what was behind him.

**(13) 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, (14) I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.** (Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

It might seem that he was in danger of not making it, but the fact of the matter is that he could not fail, for the Lord had called and chosen him to make it. This is what "Christ has laid hold of me" means. Christ had laid hold of Paul and would not let him go nor allow him to fail to reach the goal for the prize.

Now, what is the prize? Paul tells us in his last testament to his beloved Timothy.

**(7) I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; (8) in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.** (2 Timothy 4:7-8 NASB)

Paul testified that he had won the race, the goal of attaining to the future *exanastasis*, at which time, that is, in **the day of Christ** (Philippians 1:6, 10; 2:16), the prize of **the crown of righteousness** will be awarded to him, **for we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body** (2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:10). In that glorious day, no longer will he simply have righteousness imputed to him, but he will, in fact, be fully righteous in character, just as his Lord is righteous. I call it **manifested** or **perfected righteousness**. With his long journey of dying daily for the ecclesia coming to an end, Paul could take comfort that he had attained to all that he had pursued. Obviously, the Lord had given him the witness of this achievement.

Again, it must be stressed that his prize will be awarded in the future when the Lord appears. Paul never indicated this would occur in death. It is yet future at the time of the resurrection from among the dead. This is the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. It is not the hope of "going to heaven"; it is the hope of standing up from among the rest of the dead, to be raised by the power of the Spirit of holiness.

The upward call is upward out of the grave when the trump of God sounds and the Lord shouts: "Come forth!"