

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 #3.

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The Upward Call

I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward [ano] call of God in Christ Jesus.
(Philippians 3:14 NASB)

The last issue concluded with the thought that the upward call of God in Christ Jesus is not about "going to heaven" but rather about standing up from among the rest of the dead. The upward call is upward out of the grave when the trump of God sounds and the Lord shouts: "Come forth!"

Frankly, I had never thought of it this way until I was writing the last few sentences of the last issue. It sort of just sprung forth from my mind and into print. However, the question is: Was Paul trying to convey this image of rising up when he penned the words *upward call*? Or, was he simply denoting the source of the call as upward or heavenly?

I know I must sound like a broken record, but I want to be clear that I am positive that Paul was not referring to "dying and going to heaven."

Let us consider the term *upward call* by starting with the word *call* or *calling*, as used in some translations.

The Greek word translated as *call* is *klesis*, which means "invitation or calling," and appears in the New Testament eleven times as a noun. Here are most of them:

For the gifts and the *calling* of God are irrevocable. (Romans 11:29 NASB)

For consider your *calling*, brethren... (1 Corinthians 1:26 NASB)

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His *calling*, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints... (Ephesians 1:18 NASB)

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the *calling* with which you have been called... (Ephesians 4:1 NASB)

To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your *calling* ... (2 Thessalonians 1:11 NASB)

Who has saved us and called us with a holy *calling*, not according to our works... (2 Timothy 1:9 NASB)

Therefore, holy brethren, sharers with others in a heavenly *invitation*... (Hebrews 3:1 WNT)

(10) Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His *calling* and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble, (11) for in this way the entrance into the eternal [eonian] kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you. (2 Peter 1:10-11 NASB [CV])

In particular, take note that Paul and even Peter placed a high value on this calling. We are exhorted to consider it, that is, not take it lightly but to walk in a manner worthy of this calling so that God will count us worthy of it. It is His calling, that is, the Father's holy and heavenly invitation, both of which speak of the character and source of the calling. But what is the Father inviting us to or into? Peter tells us it is the eonian kingdom of our Lord, which refers to the millennial kingdom of Christ in the next eon [age].

I submit that the holy and heavenly invitation is an invitation to reign with Christ as He sits upon Mount Zion (i.e., His throne) and establishes His kingdom of righteousness and peace on earth over the next one thousand years that commences with the conclusion of our present eon. But how do we get there, especially if we die before the Lord comes? The answer is in the upward call.

Now, many translations use the phrase *high calling* rather than *upward call* as do the CEV, NASB, and NKJV. Either phrase seems appropriate; however, when the Lord broke into my life 30 years ago, it was as if the Holy Spirit wrote *upward call* on my heart, and Philippians 3:14 has been my signature verse ever since.

The word *upward* is derived from the Greek word *ano*, which means "above, upward, high." *Ano* comes from the root word *anti*, which denotes contrast, that is, something opposite to something else. In English, the word *upward* denotes "to or toward a higher place or position," or "to or toward the source, center, interior, etc."

The Greek word *ano*, which is an adverb, is used nine times in the New Testament. In case you have forgotten your grammar, an *adverb* is "a word that modifies a verb by expressing time, place, manner, degree, cause, etc." In the case of upward [above], it expresses something about the call of God.

Jesus said: "**You are from beneath; I am from above** [ano]" (John 8:23). Peter quoted Joel: **And I will grant wonders in the sky above** [ano] (Acts 2:19). Paul used it to encourage the saints that **Jerusalem which is above** [ano] **is free** (Galatians 4:26), and that we should **seek those things which are above** [ano], **setting your affection on things above** [ano] (Colossians 3:1, 2).

In these verses, it is clear that *ano* is used to convey the thought of above or heaven where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God (Colossians 3:1; Psalm 110:1).

Given all that is taught in our day about "going to heaven," it is not surprising that many would see these verses as proof that when believers die, they go immediately to heaven, even if in some intermediary state while they wait for a new body. But Paul's emphasis on above always seems to be in light of the fact that we are waiting for the Son to come from heaven (1 Thessalonians 1:10; 4:16; Philippians 3:20) and our immortal body or dwelling comes from heaven (2 Corinthians 5:2). In this context, the word *above* denotes source, not so much movement. Again, we need to be reminded that the snatching away is to **meet the Lord in air** (1 Thessalonians 4:17), and the kings and priests of God will **reign upon the earth** (Revelation 5:10).

However, there is one place where the word *ano* or *above* is used to denote some type of movement. When Jesus prayed to His Father in the account of Lazarus being raised up from the dead, it is said that He raised or lifted up [ano] His eyes (John 11:41). I find it sort of interesting that the only place the word *ano* is used to denote motion is in reference to a resurrection (not unto immortality, for Lazarus later died again).

Well, I am sure you are wondering where this is leading and what the point is.

Simply, I believe a case could be made for the *upward call* denoting two things, but not about "going to heaven."

First, it denotes both the source and nature of the call. Its source is out of heaven, for it is the call of God, and God is in heaven where Christ is. It is holy, for the Father is the Holy God.

Second, it denotes movement from the earth below to the air above to meet the Lord, which occurs for those who will be counted worthy to attain to the *out-resurrection*. Thus, the upward call refers to the first or better resurrection that Paul sought and fought to gain in the day of Christ. Paul will be raised up from among the dead by the power of the Spirit of holiness.

Let us **walk in a manner worthy of the God who is inviting [calling] you into His own kingdom and glory** (1 Thessalonians 2:12)! Paul did!