

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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FORGETTING WHAT LIES BEHIND

[PART 2 – *THE GOAL (VISION)*]

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)

This series began with the word the Lord laid on my heart to forget the past, which is essentially what Paul wrote to the Philippians. For me, this is a good word, for I have seldom appreciated old things. Actually, I get depressed walking through antique stores. Of course, this is not quite what Paul had in mind. Nevertheless, I seem to be one who has been programmed to look ahead and not look back; successes that I had in my past have become less and less relevant to me as I have grown in Christ. I have come to see life as a series of chapters in a book; when one chapter ends, you just close it out and go on to the next until you reach the last chapter. I have been known to read a book by starting at the end to see how things turn out. Some would call this strange behavior, but is it? After all, Christians know, or at least should know, the ultimate end of the book, which is not really an end but a new beginning. Christ in you, the hope of glory! What a conclusion!

For Paul, there was one thing to do, and that was to forget what lies behind and to reach forward to what lies ahead. Notice that there are two parts to the one thing. First, it involves the past; and second, it involves the future. In other words, the two go together. Merely forgetting what lies behind leaves one in the present, but Paul was pressing through the present to what lies ahead. It wasn't that the past was of no value to Paul; rather, it was that the future or what lies ahead was of much greater value, and it was this value that caused him to forget what lies behind. Of course, Paul did not ignore the present, for as long as he remained in his earthly dwelling, he sought to exalt Christ in his body (Philippians 1.20).

On the road to Damascus, Saul, (later, Paul) was blinded by the risen and glorified Christ. He was given a vision of Christ that was so powerful that it literally blinded him. But what was of more significance was that, spiritually speaking, he had scales on his eyes that had to be removed so that he could have vision of Christ Jesus his Lord. This glorious vision of Christ grew until Paul's one passion was to know and to gain Christ, no matter what the cost, even if it meant a martyr's death, which is how he ultimately died. Truly, Paul desired above all things to live as if he were radiating the very life of Christ in his body, even in suffering and death. Through the many tribulations that he experienced as he sought to enter the coming kingdom of God (Acts 14.22) that will overtake this earth in the next eon, Paul wanted to know the power of the resurrection life of Christ. In other words, he desired to know the conquering life of Christ in every trial and tribulation that he experienced, which for Paul were many. Why? Because Paul saw a destiny in Christ that is reserved for all who overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loves us (Romans 8.37). Paul's goal was to enter the coming kingdom of God, which he called the celestial (heavenly) kingdom (2 Timothy 4.18 CV). He sought to receive an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ that is coming to this earth in the next eon. Paul saw himself in a race that had to be run in a certain way in order to complete the course to receive the prize. Paul ran to win! But what was he seeking to win? The answer is discovered in the *out-resurrection* from among the dead.

In order that I might come to know Him in an experiential way, and to come to know experientially the power of His resurrection and a joint-participation in His sufferings, being brought to the place where my life will radiate His likeness to His death, if by any means I might arrive at the goal, namely, the out-resurrection from among those who are dead. (Philippians 3.10-11 WAET)

For Paul, the prize was to arrive at what he called the *out-resurrection*, which comes from the Greek word *exanastasis*. This is the only place in Greek Scripture that this particular word is discovered. Unfortunately, practically all versions of Scripture simply translate it as *resurrection*. To understand what Paul meant, we need to understand that there are two future, major resurrections that occur 1,000 years apart: the out-resurrection, also called the first, former, select, or better resurrection (Hebrews 11.35; Revelation 20.4-6), that will occur at the end of our present wicked eon, which is reserved for the conquerors of Christ, and the general or second resurrection that will occur in conjunction with the great white throne judgment at the end of the 1,000-year reign of Christ that leads into God's day, the eon of the eons.

As a Jew, Paul knew that all mankind will be raised in the general resurrection when the great white throne is set for the great and the small (Revelation 20.11-15). This is called the resurrection of the dead (Matthew 22.31; Acts 17.32; 23.6; 24.21; Hebrews 6.2); but Paul sought the resurrection from among the dead (John 2.22; 12.1, 9; 21.14; Acts 3.15, 4.10, 13.30, 34; Romans 4.24; 6.4, 9; 7.4; 8.11; 10.9; 1 Corinthians 15.12, 20; Galatians 1.1; Ephesians 1.20; Colossians 2.12; 1 Thessalonians 1.10; 1 Peter 1.21). His goal was to receive the prize of attaining to the *out-resurrection* and entering the glory of Christ's kingdom in the oncoming eon [age].

Today, many evangelicals talk about "making it to heaven" or "going to heaven" when they die. It is as if the entire goal of a believer is to die and go to heaven to walk on streets of gold and live in eternal bliss. Strangely, we never read of such a hope in the epistles, especially in those written by Paul. If you have read my book on the purpose of the eons, especially volume 2, you will know that I do not share the evangelical view of going to heaven *in* death. Simply, death is death, not life.

Consider Paul's exhortation to the saints to run in a fashion to win the prize.

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. (1 Corinthians 9.24 NASB)

Let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith.... (Hebrews 12.1-2 NASB)

Paul's goal was to run the race to receive the prize of entering the coming kingdom of Christ through the out-resurrection from among the dead. It is the same resurrection that, according to Jesus, those who are considered worthy to attain to in the age to come will receive (Luke 20.34-36). If you still need further proof, then consider Paul's exhortations in 1 Corinthians 6.9-10, 10.1-13, Galatians 5.19-21, and Ephesians 5.5. Consequently, Paul was running the race to enter the coming kingdom of Christ, to enter the glory of His kingdom when He sums up all things in the heavens and on the earth (Ephesians 1.10). Paul sought an inheritance in the kingdom. He saw this as a reward for running the race in the right fashion (2 Timothy 2.5). At the end of his life, he had assurance that he had faithfully completed the race (2 Timothy 4.6-8) and the prize awaits him, the crown of righteousness that he will receive on what he called *that day* or *the day of Christ* (Philippians 1.6, 10; 2.16), a future day, one that is arrived at in resurrection life, not in death (2 Timothy 4.6-8). Running the race requires forgetting what lies behind and pressing on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus, and this only comes in the rising out from among the rest of the dead, the *out-resurrection*. Those not counted worthy will have to wait in death for another 1,000 years to receive their immortality. Let us run to win the prize!