

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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MAY IT NOT BE COMING TO THAT!

All who believe in Jesus and His finished work and who are walking *in* spirit are under grace, the grace that super-exceeds and is lavished upon us in Christ (Ephesians 1-2). However, we do not have a license to sin or to allow our behavior to be like that of the world that is blinded by the god of this eon and that lies in the power of the wicked one. **May it not be coming to that!** We are to be different from those who do not have Christ, who are not under grace, and who have not been reconciled according to the word of the conciliation. Grace affords us great privilege as children of God, but it demands a life that reflects the royalty into which we have been called.

In reference to the operation of sin in our lives, Paul declared: **What, then, shall we declare? That we may be persisting in sin that grace should be increasing? May it not be coming to that! We, who died to sin, how shall we still be living in it? (Romans 6.1-2 CV). Yet where sin increases, grace superexceeds, that, even as Sin reigns in death, thus Grace also should be reigning through righteousness, for life eonian, through Jesus Christ, our Lord (Romans 5.20b-21 CV).**

In other words, Paul exhorted that just because we have grace that even super-exceeds sin, we must not persist in sin, for sin always leads to death. May we not continue to live in sin as if it does not matter because we think that grace will compensate for it! May it not be coming to that! Let us live by the grace that has been lavished on us in Christ. We have a way into eonian life, which is life in the oncoming eon of the Kingdom or Tabernacles, and the way is through grace.

Let us be clear that sin not repented of must be judged whether in this life or at the judgment seat of God. We need to learn to judge ourselves in this day and take whatever corrective action is needed. If we do not judge ourselves, then the Lord must judge us and take us through His discipline.

For if we adjudicated [judged] ourselves, we would not be judged. Yet, being judged, we are being disciplined by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. (1 Corinthians 11.31-32 CV)

Obviously, our deportment or behavior is important, if not vital, to our going on in the Lord and being counted worthy to be a son of the first or *out*-resurrection to enter the coming eon to reign with Christ. However, how are we to approach the matter of walking in a proper manner? It is very easy to put together a list of Scriptures that tell us what we are to do and what we are not to do; how we are to act and how we are not to act; what are good works and what are bad works. Anyone, even an unbeliever, can take such a list and try to live by it, and some, perhaps many, do. The fact of the matter is that many people see the Bible as a good book with many good lessons on how to live; to them, it is like a "how-to-book." After all, there are many outwardly righteous and so-called good people in the world that are not members of the body of Christ.

In his epistles, Paul used the word *walk* about twenty-three times to stress the need for proper deportment or behavior. As a father to his children, Paul encouraged the brethren from Thessalonica to Ephesus in the way to walk. **Walk in newness of life (Romans 6.4); walk according to the spirit (Romans 8.4; Galatians 5.16, 25); walk by faith (2 Corinthians 5.7); walk in love (Ephesians 5.2); walk as children of light (Ephesians 5.8); walk in Him (Colossians 2.6),** are some of the more notable encouragements.

Our lives are to be a reflection of what we believe according to the truth of God's word. Paul encouraged Timothy, his beloved son in the faith, to show himself an example of those who believe (1 Timothy 4.12). Paul was the example for the brethren of the way to walk. **Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us** (Philippians 3.17 NASB). Paul was able to cite himself as an example to follow because he had been given tremendous revelation, and he was living in light of this revelation. It became his vision, and he was not disobedient to this vision. He lived by it.

We too need vision, something that seems to be lacking in some believers today. Vision is not about dreams and apparitions that many are seeking today; it is about spiritual sight, seeing according to Scripture, and it being revealed in our heart by grace through faith. Once the eyes of our heart are opened to see what Christ has accomplished, not only for us but for all mankind, and once we see the purpose of the eons and our place in this purpose, it changes our whole way of thinking and how we view the world and all that is going on in the world today. Our perspective is radically altered. We become *Christ*-centered, and our walk before the world changes to reflect our vision. I might add; we become *love*-centered as well because God is love.

Paul's epistles have been given to us to enlighten the eyes of our heart to our celestial destiny in Christ. With this glorious destiny in view, we are to keep seeking above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Our minds are to be set on above, not on the earth. Why? It is because we who believe have died and our lives are hidden with Christ in God. When He is revealed, we will be revealed with Him in glory (see Colossians 3.1-4). Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Or, as the Concordant Version states: **For our realm is inherent in the heavens** (see Philippians 3.20).

This is truly good news to us who believe in this era, and we should live in light of the glory that is ours in Christ. Our lives are to be lived in such a way that they reflect our destiny and the new life that is within us. We must be examples of ones who believe, ones who walk in the light, ones who have expectation that the world does not have, ones who have a message of love and hope that man and his religions do not have, and ones who are ambassadors for Christ with the word of the conciliation written on our hearts. Our lives are to be a reflection of the One in whom we believe and trust. First and foremost, we are to reflect love, sacrificial love for our brethren and the world. But this kind of life can only be lived by walking *in* spirit, which is our only way to stay under grace.

Now I am saying, Walk in spirit, and you should under no circumstances be consummating the lust of the flesh. For the flesh is lusting against the spirit, yet the spirit against the flesh. Now these are opposing one another, lest you should be doing whatever you may want. Now, if you are led by spirit, you are not still under law.
(Galatians 5.16-18 CV)

Somewhere it has been stated: *the flesh acts, the spirit bears fruit*. Isn't this so true? Our flesh is ready to act over the least provocation, whether good or bad. We see something or hear something, and the flesh jumps into action without any deep thought or reasoning of the situation. May it not be coming to that in our lives! This is not the way the spirit operates, for the spirit operates on the principle of life and growth, just as fruit is grown in nature. As we walk *in* spirit, we will bear fruit, the fruit of the spirit. How will we know that we are walking *in* spirit? We will know because we will bear that sweet fruit expressed as **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control** (Galatians 5.22-23 CV). All these fruits of the spirit express and reflect the life of Christ.

Let us not yield to the flesh and allow sin to reign. May it not be coming to that! Let us yield to the spirit so that grace will abound and yield the fruit that brings glory to God. May it **be** coming to that!