

Fulfilling the High Call of God

Introduction

In our last lesson we ended with Paul desiring the “high call” of God and its fulfillment in his life. *“I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call (high call in KJV) of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:14 NASB)* This was something that Paul sought to attain. What did he mean by this statement? We know that we cannot attain to anything that relates to our salvation because it is a free gift by the grace of Jesus Christ. As the Scripture says, we receive all things that pertain to life and Godliness by faith and knowledge in the finished work of Jesus.¹ So, what is it that we should strive to attain? It must be the rewards that are promised to those who overcome, who persevere in faithfulness and obedience.

In the Scriptures, rewards are always related to the work to which we have been called—the work prepared beforehand for us. Rewards are promised to those who have been faithful and have persevered in the Way of the Lord. Rewards are not for everyone but only to those who have *attained the goal, achieved the prize*.

The Goal and the Prize

To glean Paul's meaning let's look at the verses that precede verse 14.

But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained *it* or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. 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 3:7-14 NASB)

1 II Peter 1:3

Paul counted everything that he had achieved in the natural as rubbish, worthless when compared to what He had gained in Christ—righteousness through faith in Christ instead of the striving of the Law. While based on faith, this righteousness has a purpose:

1. that I might know Him;
2. that I might know the power of His resurrection;
3. that I might know the fellowship of His sufferings;
4. that I might be conformed to His death.

On the basis of faith in Christ Jesus and His righteousness, Paul pursued these four things *in order that* “I might attain to the resurrection from the dead”. What is he talking about? Everyone is to be raised from the dead. Paul knew that. He had even mentioned it when speaking to Felix, the Governor, in Acts.

"But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets; having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. "In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience *both* before God and before men. (Acts 24:14-16 NASB)

Therefore Paul must be speaking of something that is different than the general resurrection of the dead. That of which he spoke is something that is *attained as a reward*. As a matter of fact, Paul used a unique word for 'resurrection' than he normally used. This word means “out resurrection”; that is, “out resurrection from the dead” and this is the only occasion where it is used in the Scriptures.

At the time that Paul wrote to the Philippians, he did not believe that he had attained to the 'out resurrection' (Philippians 3:12), but was still pressing toward it. He wanted to “lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus”. Jesus had laid hold of him for a purpose—to accomplish the work prepared beforehand for him. Now, Paul wanted to complete his work so that he might receive the prize, the reward.

Paul saw as his goal the completion of his work that had been assigned by the Lord. He saw the prize for achieving that as the reward of the 'out resurrection', for which he was still striving and pressing forward. However, there came a time when Paul apparently thought that the goal had been achieved because he said this to Timothy.

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; 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)

We each have a course to run, which has been assigned by the Lord. How we run the course determines our reward. Since God is no respecter of persons, finishing our course qualifies us for the same reward as Paul. It is the fulfillment of our 'high calling'.

The Course of the Work

For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. (1 Corinthians 3:9-10 NASB)

What could be a higher calling than to participate with God as a “master builder”? He is the architect, the one who understands how it is supposed to go together and gives the specifications for the materials that are to be used. How does one reach the point where God would entrust him to work on His Temple (for that is what is being built)?

To understand this, we need to understand the work of the Father in the earth. Jesus came to reveal the Father to us and in the process He also revealed the Father's work.

When Jesus was twelve years old, He already had understanding of His work. Joseph and Mary took Jesus with them when they went up to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. When it was over, they left to go home but did not realize that Jesus was not with them. They traveled a full day without knowing that He was absent. When they couldn't find him they returned to Jerusalem where, three days later, they found Him in the Temple talking with the learned ones. When Mary got onto Him about putting them through the ordeal of looking for Him, He answered her with a question.

And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke 2:49 NKJV)

He felt that it was time for Him to be getting on with His Father's business. Of course, it wasn't time. He went through another eighteen years of preparation before entering His ministry.

After the many years of preparation, you can be sure that when the Father released Him into ministry, He immediately went about the Father's business.

However, before He began His ministry, God sent one to prepare the way for the work of the Lord.

In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: "THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS: 'PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD; MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.'" (Matthew 3:1-3 NKJV)

John's preparation message was simple: “repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”. In preparing the way of the Lord, he was laying the foundation for the teaching and acts

of Jesus. Therefore, it is not surprising that as Jesus began to enter His ministry, His message began at the same point as John's.

From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 4:17 NKJV)

Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:14-15 NKJV)

Jesus was about the Father's business. We can see from His first message that the Father's business has to do with the kingdom of God. The Father gave Jesus work to accomplish and that work related to the kingdom.

Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. (John 4:34 NKJV)

But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working." (John 5:17 NKJV)

But I have a greater witness than John's; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me. (John 5:36 NKJV)

I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work. (John 9:4 NKJV)

We can see from these scriptures that Jesus was fulfilling the commission of the Father by doing the work, which the Father had given him to do. We have already seen that part of that work was to prepare others to carry on the work after His death and resurrection.

"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. (John 14:12 NKJV)

Not only did Jesus say that we would do the works that He did but even greater works. We usually think of His works as miracles and other similar things, but it also includes the works assigned by the Father as it relates to His kingdom.

It is one thing to work miracles in the Name of Jesus, it is quite another to participate in the purpose of the Father and further the work of the kingdom. During these times of restoration, we have seen miracles restored to the Church. Through the gifts of the Spirit, every miracle performed by Jesus has also been done by others. But, God is not doing this just so we can have a good time with His miracles. He has called us to a higher calling. The miracles are to demonstrate the kingdom of God, demonstrate that the King is in residence.

Two Aspects of the Work

Jesus performed the work of the Father. It was Kingdom work. Jesus also began a work for which He is primarily responsible and that is building His Church.

He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered and said to him, "**Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. (Matthew 16:15-18 NKJV)**

Jesus told Peter that upon the revelation of Himself as the Messiah, He would build His Church (assembly of called out ones). That is the business of Jesus. He is building His Church.

So, we have two aspects of Work. One relates to the Kingdom and is primarily the Father's business and one relates to the building of the Church and is primarily Jesus' business. We need to understand the difference between these two in order to fulfill the purposes of God and find and finish our part of the work.

Paul speaks of the two types in Ephesians:

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. (Ephesians 2:19 NKJV)

We are all fellow citizens of the Kingdom of God and we are of the household or family of God. We relate to the Kingdom differently than we relate to the family. The type of work that is done in each area is also different.

Through one of His parables, Jesus told us to "do business till I come" meaning that we are to hold the territory that He gained and continue His business. We are to dwell on it until He returns. This is Kingdom work.

Therefore He said: "**A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business till I come.'** (Luke 19:12-13 NKJV)

The Kingdom of God is our spiritual Promised Land. He owns it and has given it to us.

"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom. (Luke 12:32 NASB)

But, just like the Promised Land was given to the Children of Israel, they had to walk on it to possess it and there were giants that resisted them in that undertaking.

"Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. (Joshua 1:3 NASB)

We have received a kingdom, but the powers of darkness still contest with us as we try to possess it. That is why so few seem to live in the fullness of the promises that the Lord has given. In order to dwell in the land of Promises, we have to clear it of anything that offends. That is the meaning of “do business”.

It took 40 years and a new generation before the Children of Israel were prepared to possess the land. God had to change their mentality, their mind-set, in the wilderness journey. They left Egypt with the mentality of slaves but would need the mentality of warriors by the time they reached Canaan. Their thinking processes needed to change. That is why He did not lead them by the common caravan route between Egypt and Canaan.

Now when Pharaoh had let the people go, God did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, even though it was near; for God said, "The people might change their minds when they see war, and return to Egypt." Hence God led the people around by the way of the wilderness to the Red Sea; and the sons of Israel went up in martial array from the land of Egypt. (Exodus 13:17-18 NASB)

Though they left Egypt in ranks like an army, their looks were deceiving. They didn't think or act like an army. All of that would have to change and it took 40 years in the wilderness to do it.

We, too, are set free from the slavery of sin and the world system and God has promised us a land, a kingdom, which He has given to us, but we have to develop a spiritual warrior's mentality. Our mind-set has to change and it takes time for that to happen.

He has given us the scriptures to help us change.

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17 NASB)

The Lord speaking through the scriptures reproves us, corrects us, and provides instructions in doctrine and training in righteousness. This accrues to our benefit because it makes us complete, fully equipped for every good work that God has before ordained that we should do.

Being equipped is a process. It takes time. A person goes to school for years to become a doctor and then must intern under the oversight of an experienced doctor before he can go into practice for himself. Yet, we think that a person can become a proficient minister of the Lord overnight. It requires more than zeal and desire. We must go through a process of change, equipping, and growth in the knowledge and understanding of the Lord Jesus by attending the school of the Holy Spirit.

We have to get serious about the Kingdom of God, about occupying, about spiritual warfare, if we ever want to complete the work assigned to us.

"From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven

suffers violence, and violent men take it by force. (Matthew 11:12 NASB)

We have to get violent about the things that would hinder our work in the Kingdom of God. These would include the things of the flesh and the things of the world. As Paul said, *“I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 3:14 NASB)