

Introduction

That While contemplating the spiritual realities of Christ Jesus, and the glorious goal of the *upward call of God in Christ Jesus*, the apostle Paul seemed to resign himself to the fact that he was less than perfect, or complete, and that he was not where he wanted to be in his pursuit of God's highest. Perhaps he saw himself like a runner somewhere in mid-race rushing towards the finish line, or as a hunter earnestly desiring to overtake his prey. In that state neither the runner nor the hunter would turn and look back, but with eyes fixed upon the goal, he would reach forward with all his might. It is in this state Paul cried out, "...I press on *that* I may lay hold of **that** for which Christ has also laid hold of me." (Phil. 3:12) Some translations use the phrase "apprehend" in place of "lay hold of."

For so many years of my life, even to this day, I have had a sense of identity with Paul's cry, "*that I might apprehend that for which Christ had apprehended me.*" Undoubtedly, there was this gripping within my heart that Christ had laid hold of my life, and for a purpose. And by this purpose I do not mean some specific ministry such as a teacher or pastor, but a purpose of "being" something, walking in a spiritual reality--perhaps something above and beyond what many consider the normal Christian life. What dogged me most was to understand the word "**that**" in Paul's declaration. Just what is "*that*," i.e., the thing that had apprehended Paul and that he so desired to attain? Is it to come into a fuller understanding of the Gospel? Maybe of greater revelations? Is it to learn various doctrines with clarity in an attempt to claim and walk in them? Or perhaps is it to bring one's life into alignment with the commandments of Christ, such as love and goodness? Just what is "*that*?"

It soon became obvious that even the most solemn Christian religion was not "*that*." No matter how good the religion (sect, denomination) seems to be, the outward routine of symbolic worship, of rites and rituals, of programs and services, religion could not satisfy this inward craving of the heart. Religion was not "*that*." Charismatic or Pentecostal realms of supernatural experiences brought with it much excitement and zeal and an extended understanding of spiritual realities. However, it was soon to be found that even this seemed only to touch the outward soul and body, but could not satisfy this inward longing for the reality of "*that*." Something was still amiss. There was a continuing sense of being *apprehended* for something, and a pressing on, yet in increasing weariness.

It seems that so much of Christendom is rooted in what may be deemed "honorable" religious practices that produce a way of life, but does not produce life itself. Often it is with a sense of obligation or duty, which is lifeless, repelling, and un-Christian. Much current evangelism and doctrine is selfishly centered upon the hope of gain or fear of loss. It seems to foster a "get" mentality—come to church to get something good and avoid something bad. This man-centered gospel fills the airways and the churches with seekers. It is a popular message. Believers hope to gain a Christian victory and blessings for their own satisfaction. The altar, a place of sacrifice and death, is replaced by an altar as a place to gain release from suffering and discomfort. It has become a place to get, not to give. And with some, the goal is simply to get blessed and walk away from a service with emotional feelings of satisfaction and joy, and somewhat strengthened. This feeling, however, does not persist for long.

All of this is like a Witman's Sampler box of various candies for seekers. But none of it could satisfy a longing to find what Paul meant by "*that!*" Should not "*that*" be a spiritual reality that imparts an inward flow of life? Should not "*that*" be something that not only touches the heart of the inward man ,

but abides and apprehends, perseveres, endures, and drives from within towards that upward call of God in Christ Jesus? Should not “*that*” be something that apprehends with a relentless grip and not let go? And, if “*that*” is also a “*call*” of God, should it not be for Him and His purposes? And any personal benefits, of which there may be many, are but a by-product of attaining “*that*.”

It is written that “Christianity is not Christianity until it is applied to life.” Please note that this quote uses the term *life* and not *lifestyle*. “*That*” must be able to produce *life* and not just the window dressings of a new lifestyle that disciplines the outward man but has no sense of transformation of the inward man...an outflow of *life*! Aha, I discovered, “*that*” must be the transforming, energizing, and apprehending *life*—an outflow of His life, the one who dwells within the heart. It is the spiritual reality of John 15 in which I am that branch secured in the vine, which is Christ. The essence of *life* that is in the vine flows into me. There is no *life* outside of the vine, who is Christ. It is *life* that flows out from a most intimate knowledge of, and relationship with, God the Father and His Son Christ Jesus.

Paul further declared in 2 Corinthians 4:10-11, “*Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the **life** of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, that the **life** of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.*”

Thus, in the chapters ahead in this series, “THE MASTER PLAN and Trilogies of the Kingdom,” is a methodically laying forth of all that has been built into my life to understand and press towards this “*upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*” This building process has spanned a lifetime, and will continue on in its refinement—unending. We press on to apprehend that for which we have been apprehended.

All of this may be summed up in two words: **spiritual maturity**. Far removed from the passion that was within the apostle Paul, there yet remains a measure of identity with his heart’s cry found in Colossians, Chapter 1:

²⁴*Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:*

²⁵*Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;*

²⁶*Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:*

²⁷*To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:*

²⁸*Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect (mature) in Christ Jesus:*

²⁹*Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.*

Acknowledgements

This series, THE MASTER PLAN & Trilogies of the Kingdom, has been a lifetime in the making, but has only begun to come together this year, 2016. It is said that there are many ingredients in a recipe. This is so true in my life. Catholicism dominated the first 30 years of my life. Then the Charismatic movement introduced the experiences and doctrines of Pentecostalism. Even then, however, I found that I could not flow with mainstream thought. It seems I was drawn to what some may refer to as deeper-life teachers, chief of which was Watchman Nee. Others include A. B. Simpson, T. Austin-Sparks, A. W. Tozer, and Andrew Murray to name but a few.

Of utmost importance are the people that have come into my life which comprise the Body of Christ. These individuals have impacted my spiritual life immensely. They have both laid a foundation for, and established a vision for, this spiritual walk. Albert Wadel, an elderly dairy farmer from Shippensburg, Pennsylvania, was a spiritual father to me until his passing in 1989. He was a bulwark for the integrity of the Word. But most fondly remembered was the impartation into my spirit and soul of Galatians 2:20 and Romans 6—a foundation of real substance.

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The bottom line is that my ministry is actually a corporate ministry to the Body of Christ. I am merely the one out in front, speaking, and writing messages such as “THE MASTER PLAN and TRILOGIES of the Kingdom.” They are all an integral part of it, all of it.