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#### **S4. Pressing On**

### **S4.E4. Come Let Us Go**

[Episodes in this series, *Pressing On*, should be followed in sequence as the Episodes are built upon one another.]

Ps. 122.1-2 “*1* was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the LORD.  
*2*Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem!’”

#### **The Upward Call**

*Just who is the “I” in this verse; and why is he “glad” to hear the beckoning call from the passerby? Firstly, many, including myself, can identify as the “I” in this verse, perhaps you may also. The reason being is that I too was once the one standing within your gates of Jerusalem. No, I was not in the city Jerusalem, Israel; there is a physical Jerusalem and a*

heavenly spiritual Jerusalem. (See Heb. 12.22, Gal.4.26) The first is the abiding place for the natural man, the man of flesh; the latter city is the abiding place for the spiritual man, as it is written, Heb. 12.22 *“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, ...”* It was within this latter case I found my feet were “standing” within the gates of religion, just as the hearer in this verse.

To be “standing” means to be stagnant, stationary, observant maybe but caught up with mundane routine, without vision or goal—even standing firm in my understanding of the Gospel. Becoming “religious” one may be fervent in doing things seemingly spiritual, but are actually religious busyness—attending church services, observing all the rituals, Bible study, and doing good when possible are all good activities, but something one may do while remaining dry spiritually. Religious life becomes routine, and extreme dryness eventually sets in as a dullness in spirit—even though if born again and Spirit baptized. Something is missing; One may ask, “I ask, where do I go from here?”

Many can also identify with the reason why this person was “glad” to hear the beckoning call of the passerby. This Psalm is known as a Psalm of Ascent of David. An “ascent” is a climb to a higher place, such as the summit of a mountain, or the spiritual ascent to a high calling of God. This call came from the passerby *“Let us go into the house of the LORD.”* Within the city of Jerusalem there is a hill called the Temple Mount, once called Mount Moriah. According to 2 Chron, 3.1, *“It was here Solomon built the house of the Lord at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah where the Lord had appeared to his father”* (David). One may be in the city and attend to the many activities of that life, but only gaze towards the bold exterior of the temple, the House of God.

It is in the city proper where one is taught and learns of its history; of the mighty miracles of the Lord in deliverance and of a Promised Land; learning of the giving of the Covenant with God, of the Law and its moral code to conduct their lives by; learning of the religious rituals to do, holy days or feast days to observe, and sacrifices to make; and learning the value of obedience and the consequences of disobedience to all the demands of the faith. But something is lacking, something is amiss. Mk 10.17-21 tells the account of the young man who ran and knelt before the Lord and asked *““Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?”* It is one matter to observe the principles of religion; it is another matter to touch on “life”—spiritual life. Jesus responded to him in love and said, *“One thing you lack...take up your cross and follow Me.”* *“One thing you lack!”* I could identify with that *“One thing,”* I lacked that one something beyond religion, and that is the principle of “life.”

This *life* is not found in the Holy City of Jerusalem nor is it found in devotion to God in sincere religious practice. It is found in one place, *“I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the LORD’* — and this *“house of the Lord”* can only be entered “in Christ.” There is this point spiritually that I must be found “in Christ” and Christ be found “in me.” This is an awesome mystery waiting to be revealed to and in every believer. By no means compare the *“house of God”* with some ethereal immaterial place such as heaven, or of devoutly following a religion (sincere as you might be); or abiding in the most magnificent basilica or cathedral with all its “holy services,” its fine polished marble floors and granite pillars, with the fragrance

of incense and chants of “holy men.” No, *the house of the Lord* is where *life* and *light* may be found as nowhere on earth. It is not even a place or location but is in a holy and Divine fellowship with the living God. A spiritual encounter with God is life producing.

It is written, “*I was glad*” to hear that there is a company of people not satisfied with the status quo, having a sense or hunger for something on a higher spiritual plane, pressing on as a response to an upward call of God. The exact course to follow is unknown, nor what spiritual principles to follow, but there is a gripping, an inner witness that our faith in Christ is leading us to something higher in a spiritual relationship with God our Father and Lord Jesus Christ. There must be a renewed working of the Holy Spirit within. Religion, as that old mode of “worship” and “service,” now appears as only a physical model, or a shadow of a spiritual reality that involves *life* in relationship with God—O yes, something that also involves a cross, not the cross of Christ, but the one He spoke of to the young man kneeling before Him when He said, “*One thing you lack...take up your cross and follow me.*” This is something very personal. The cross represents a turning point, a time when a decisive change takes place in one’s life; as in leaving one’s “old life” behind only to lay hold of a higher spiritual life.

Many unknowns lay before us in our journey, but something within comes alive with anticipation of what is to come, things not of natural experiences but spiritual; and anytime the word “spiritual” is used, it speaks of something both vital and necessary and viable as life producing; most importantly, it involves a potential Divine working in our lives. This is expressed in Phil. 2.13 “*it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*” Let’s think on that for a moment: “*it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*” In the case of religion, I am the one working feverishly to gain something of heavenly value, of becoming or doing something pleasing to God. But now, a new thing is happening; I now anticipate a Divine work “within” me, a Spirit to spirit in the ministry of life itself. The very word “*works in you*” in this verse is constantly used in scriptures of God working in the soul of man. (See 1 Cor. 12.6, 11; Gal. 2.8; Eph. 1.11, 20; Eph. 2.2) It is a Divine operation activated by the Spirit of Christ who is in me. In this manner Christ is both “the Way” to the Father but also to life itself. (Acts 19.9, 24.14)

And, if this work be “*for His good pleasure,*” our lives must eventually come into harmony with His. It is not God who acts “for” us, as in our behalf, but it is God who acts “in” us to *will and to do*. God does not compel or force us to act against our will. He lovingly leads us, patiently guides us, subtly working in our hearts that our wills become one with His will. It is man who finally exercises his own will and does those things pleasing to God; though God continues daily to make aware, to convict, and to influence him. It is the divine operation through the Holy Spirit. What is prophesied of Christ in Ps. 40.6-8 and written of Him in Heb. 10.8-10, may now apply to us,

*“Previously saying, “Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them” (which are offered according to the law), then He said, “Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.” He takes away the first that He may*

*establish the second. <sup>10</sup>By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

Verse 10 here reads, “By that will we have been sanctified,” speaks of Christ having a will in harmony and union with God to the extent that extraordinary things happen. By obeying God the Father in the specified manner of the cross, believers of all times and places are sanctified for all time. It was not merely doing His will in general, which is a high and important attribute, but it was the specific thing of offering His own body on the cross as a more perfect sacrifice for sin. Thus, “*by that will*,” that specific will exercised by Christ in union with God, we believers are now sanctified “*once for all*”—and this meaning we are consecrated, set apart for God; also signifying that aside from the eternal salvation to come, we are now in position and in relationship with God that His will might be further accomplished in our lives, in both a general way in our daily lives, but very importantly, specifically according to His calling. “According to His calling”... just what does that mean?

### **According to His Calling (Heb. 3.1-14)**

Thus far I have been making the case for the exercise of ‘life’ in Christ over the practice of ‘religion,’ even a ‘Christian’ religion. To speak of life is to speak of something you have abiding in you, it is inward, there is a vitality within that acts like...Jesus’ words in Jn. 15 in which He describes the vital essence from a vine— which is likened to the life of Christ— that flows into the branch— which is likened to the believer—in which fruit— which is likened to doing those things pleasing to God— is manifested in the exercise of our wills. Its origin is inward, from the depths of our souls.

Religion is quite the opposite of life. Religion is the outward manifestation of our wills to do those things we have been taught is the will of God; for example: read or make a confession of faith as in citing the Nicene or Apostles Creed, be baptized in water, read the Bible, go to Church, be “morally” good obeying the Commandments, say prayers, and so on...all of which are done or practiced routinely. The only smithereens of life in religion are the souls feeling some sort of satisfaction or other good feeling for having done any of those practices. For instance, as a former Catholic, I felt good or light hearted after going to mass, or saying the rosary, or going to confession; but that good feeling was not life, it was fleshly sensations of the soul making what is thought to be acts pleasing to God, and beneficial to me. It was and is false faith, all of it.

Likewise, the apostle Paul experienced this dichotomy between religion and the principle of life in Christ, writing about it in Phil. 3.1-11. In reading this passage note must be taken that he was comparing his former “religious” practices of Judaism to his new “life” in Christ,

*<sup>1</sup>Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe. <sup>2</sup>Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation (circumcision)! <sup>3</sup>For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, <sup>4</sup>though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: <sup>5</sup>circumcised the*

*eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; and concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.*

*But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”*

It is clear in this passage that Paul is flatly rejecting all his higher religious education and training in Judaism, even the position of being a high-ranking Pharisee, with all its traditions, and all that he might ever have gained spiritually through the practice of this religion. All of it he counts as “*rubbish*”—*rubbish*, is a word to describe something that is worthless, of no further use, or even detestable. In the context of this passage, it conveys the idea of something that is to be discarded or considered as of having no value—especially when compared to something of far greater worth; to Paul nothing on this earth or in the heavens above compares to the regenerated life that he is finding in Christ.

I spoke earlier of the spiritual power that was Divinely released when Jesus’ will was found as one with His Father’s in His obedience to a death on the cross; there was an unleashing of a power that transcended time from the beginning of creation to today, affecting the spiritual life of every true born again believer, as written in Heb. 10.10 “By **that will** we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” In this, Paul was fully *sanctified*, fully set apart by God for an altogether new and abundant life in Christ. He was never the same again, all things, not just “religious” things, but all things became new; to Paul, the old had passed away (See 2 Cor, 5.17), gone forever. His whole life was transformed with only one goal in mind to be shared with Christ, “Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.”

So now, we can get a glimpse of what happens when a man’s will, as a believer, is found in union with our Father’s will, and here I am taking target at your and my wills. Our minds must be renewed that we were not just “saved” according to traditional thought of salvation, but also Heb. 10.10, “By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” For reinforcement sake I will repeat here what was written earlier...” we believers are now sanctified “*once for all*”—meaning we are consecrated, set apart for God; also signifying that aside from the eternal salvation to come, we are now in position and in relationship with God that His will might be further accomplished in our lives both in general, and very importantly, specifically **according to His calling.**”

We read in the continuing passage of Phil. 3 of the *upward call* or *heavenly call* of God. This New Testament word for “*call*” (“*klésis*”) primarily refers to a divine call or invitation, keeping in mind that an invitation requires a response; much like Jesus’ call in Rev. 3.20 “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock;” requires a response, “*if any man hear my voice, and open the door.*”

If the door is not opened, Jesus will remain outside; if however it is opened, then, He says, *“I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.”* There must be an exercise of one’s will to be in sync with God’s will for a divine presence or involvement in one’s life. Continuing to read is from Phil. 3.12-14,

*“<sup>12</sup>Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. <sup>13</sup>Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, <sup>14</sup>I press toward the goal for the prize of **the upward call** of God in Christ Jesus.*

It is quite obvious that Paul’s sanctification was far more than a judicial decree by God as one now justified by Christ. There exists here an inward working of God to create a passion, a zeal to press on, much like a runner in a race stretching forth, extending his body to its fullest towards the finish line, that he might obtain the prize—not the prize of just finishing the race for heaven and eternal life, but the victor’s crown, a reward above and beyond some certificate of completion.

*The high calling*, literally *“the upward call,”* or *“the call from above”* is the same as rendered in Gal. 4.26 as distinguishing *“Jerusalem which is above,”* and of Jesus in Jn. 8.23 saying *“I am from above.”* This clearly distinguishes the *“calling”* as an invitation from God as opposed from any kind of worldly invitation, like to hold a religious position or to achieve some personal aspiration to be a priest, pastor, or missionary. The response to the call of God must first be heard as a spiritual *“whisper”* from within the heart and followed by submission of the soul to the will of God, that is, a complete submission, not a partial or temporal submitting until it conflicts with other hopes and desires of our soul. The way for the believer seems always outside personal understanding and comfort zone. That is the nature of the call of God.

I wish to speak more on this *“high calling,”* or literally, *“the calling that is above.”* Col. 3.1-2 puts it this way, *“<sup>1</sup>If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup>Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.”* *“Things above”* conveys the idea of spiritual things, referring to heavenly or things of the divine realm, seeking the spiritual substance of the Kingdom of God. Things *“on the earth”* have substance—such as things visible and tangible and temporal; all these things relate to this present mortal and uncertain life; they satisfy briefly and then slip by so quickly; then, another day comes with its own set of earthly things that also pass by.

We must remember that we cannot set our affections on *things above* and on *things on the earth* at the same time; we cannot be at the same time spiritually and fleshly minded. One must be the master of our souls. A focus on one over the other will eventually bring dullness and dimness to the other. Our hope is as we sing the song, *“When I Look into Your Holiness,”*

When I look into Your holiness  
When I gaze into Your loveliness

When all things that surround become shadows  
In the light of You

When I've found the joy of reaching Your heart  
**When my will becomes enthroned in Your love**  
**When all things that surround become shadows**  
**In the light of You**

I worship You  
I worship You  
The reason I live is to worship You  
I worship You  
I worship You  
The reason I live is to worship You

Remember now, you cannot set your affection on things above and on things beneath simultaneously; you cannot go two ways at once, nor be at the same time spiritually and carnally minded. Religion attempts to do this but fails; it sets its focus on people and buildings, on ritual, to practice and commandments to follow, on foods to eat and special days to observe, on offices and organization; it focuses on priestly robes, a visible altar, candles, the odor of incense, and organ or choir music. Some modern services exploit the senses with loud music, laser lights, and clouds of smoke. These religious expressions change over time as man adds to them from the current day and as old cultural practices seep into the service. To religionists, religion evolves over time as “insights” are gained in how “they” think it should be practiced. But we have a Gospel that changes not, only being full of mysteries being revealed as one matures in the faith.

In true faith we have spiritual life in its “continuance;”— think on that, “spiritual life in its continuance; not a sporadic religious life periodic weekly or daily routines, but faith in a continuous spiritual relationship with God. As stated in Phil. 1.6 *“we are confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;”* what began in the regeneration of a new life in Christ, the Spirit of God will continue His work in us, ever changing and transforming us until the return of Christ and the resurrection of the dead. The draw of the Spirit, the invitation to a higher calling of spiritual life, never ceases; it is as the continuance of gravity on the earth, never ceasing. One thing only will stand in the way of this upward call, and that is our lack of desire to press on.

#### **S4.E4. Questions for Discussion**

1. Can you identify with the one found “standing” within the gates of Jerusalem in Ps. 122.1-2? If so, explain your circumstances.
2. To the best you can, distinguish between the spiritual concept of “life” and religion, even the Christian religion.
3. Explain how the power of God is released when our will is in union with God’s will. Explain it in context with Heb. 10.8-10.

4. Explain Paul's dilemma with the religion of Judaism; and how he later felt about all his grand accomplishment in it.
5. Can one press towards God's "high calling" through all the great institutions available today: Bible schools, seminaries, etc.? Explain.