

## The Upward Call – Part 1

Welcome to The Upward Call which is the title of the series that I am going to begin today, Part 1, October 31, 2007. We're still in the Kingdom of God. We just finished Summing Up in Jesus. The Scripture to use today is Philippians 3:12-14, Paul writes – I press on in order 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. Those of you who have been with me for a long time know that we've been on a journey, that we started at the beginning, we went to the cross, we came through the cross into the Kingdom of God, we explored the Kingdom from various perspectives and last time we finished with Summing Up in Jesus Christ. So "What then?" is the logical question. What do we do with all this perspective? Was all of it to simply acquire theologic knowledge so as to appear erudite when compared to other Christians? Was it to diminish our anxiety to a tolerable level so as to fulfill that spoken by Lenin that religion is simply the opiate of the masses? Was it to bring about material prosperity? Was it to have a social club with the cross on top? Was it to have perfect physical health? Was it to feel smug and content? Was all of it just to help us cope with a desperate situation that we find ourselves in in flesh and blood existence? Was all of this material simply to bring us to a plateau and then have us level off and be content? Does entering the rest of God mean that we rest in what we know, we rest in what we have, we rest in what we are; and thus, we adopt a passive posture and remain unchanged?

No, because we have a call. We have an upward call. We do rest in that which we have apprehended of God; but we're to remain restless about the rest of God that we have not yet apprehended. That's the upward call of God in Christ Jesus and each step along the way that we have gone through from the beginning on is an upward call. The goal is up, the prize is up, the call is up, God is up, Christ Jesus is up, the Holy Spirit is pointing up, and all that is of eternal value is up. So we will either respond to that upward call and press onward or we will spiral downward. The upward call is from God. The upward call is in Christ Jesus. That's because of Hebrews 1:2 where it tells us that God, in these last days, has spoken to us in His Son. It's in Christ Jesus because of Ephesians 1:10 which speaks of the summing up of all things in Jesus. It's in Christ Jesus because of John 6:44 where Jesus says – No one can come to Me unless the Father draws him. It's in Christ Jesus because of Acts 4:12 – there is salvation in no one else for there is no other name under Heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved. So make no mistake about it. This upward call of God is in Christ Jesus. In other words, it's part of God Himself summing up all things in Jesus so that we don't get misled by the complexity.

This upward call of God in Christ Jesus is intrinsic in every step that we have taken since we started this group a year and nine months ago. Looking at this upward call will help us understand not only where we have been, and not only where we are, and not only where we will be for eternity future, but also what we're to be doing now as we work out our salvation. So if we have eyes to see, ears to hear, hearts to comprehend, then we will

respond to the upward call of God in Christ Jesus that is intrinsic in everything that we communicate. So where should we begin? Some of you can answer that question. Genesis 1:1 – In the beginning God. But recall before that we began to escape the mind using human logic. We looked at Pascal's wager. This is the mind of a brilliant genius mathematician a couple hundred years ago using logic to try to point his atheistic academic friends in the right direction. He recognized that there are only two possibilities: Life either has no point or life has a point. Under that first one, if you believe it has a point but it has no point then you're wrong, but you lose nothing because it was pointless anyway. If it has no point and you believe it has no point, you're absolutely right, but you gain nothing because it was pointless anyway. But that second possibility, life has a point; now we begin to recognize a difference. I believe that it has no point; I'm wrong and potentially lose everything because it had a point, I declared it had no point, so I didn't seek the point, so potentially I missed the point of all of my existence and remain in a hopeless condition. Lastly, life has a point; I believe that it has a point; I am right and potentially gain everything because it has a point; I declare it has a point; I begin to seek the point; hopefully to find the point. So of all the options, it is the only one that offers any hope at all. Pascal realized the futility of existence apart from taking that option.

That moved him into what I would call the utility of futility. Futility is not useless; it can have a fulfilling outcome, if in fact, you recognize where futility itself is pointing you. The realization of the futility of existence apart from God propels one to begin to seek God. This pathway leads to the obvious logical conclusion that there is nothing more pointless than to declare that life is pointless. That leads to the revelation then that we do not come to God by logic; but it is logical to begin to seek God. There's an upward call, even using logic to recognize the futility of existence apart from God. There's an upward call in the revelation using logic alone that it is logical to seek God. We begin to then respond to that even before we have faith in our God; we can use the God-given logic to come to the end of logic to begin to seek God.

Pascal then made another statement. He said there are only two rational behaviors that men can take. If you do not know God, seek Him. That's an outflow of his wager. If you do know God, serve Him. So logic is not the enemy of God unless you worship logic instead of worshipping God. There's an upward call in coming to the end of human logic. God transcends logic; logic does not transcend God. There's an upward call in logically seeing the limitation of logic. God created logic. Logic cannot create God. So logic is a tool, not a god. That's why, remember, the mind is a trap to the spiritual fool; but to the man of God, the mind is a tool—God being the reason for reason. He's the reason for reason in the sense He created it, and He's the reason for reason, we're to use reason to come to the end of reason to begin to search for that which transcends reason—namely God Himself. So there's an upward call in beginning where God told us to begin – Genesis 1:1 – In the beginning God. There's an upward call in that revelation that to begin anywhere else other than that is pointless, is hopeless, is illogical, to the point of being irrational.

Then we completed the verse – In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth. And here we begin to get our first revelation of the Holiness of God, the other thanness of God. So other than, He's in a category by Himself; but even within that category, He is so other than that language can't encompass Him. The mind of man cannot wrap around Him. There's nothing that can approach Him much less transcend Him. He is that other than.

Next poster. If we begin to get that revelation, we begin to realize there's an upward call in seeing God as holy, as being that other than. Because how could we then depend upon the futility of our logic when we're presented with a revelation that a being such as this other than God of Genesis 1:1 exists? Flowing out of Genesis 1:1, we use that as a launching pad to see these two basic revelations. God is the only uncreated thing in all of existence. He's the only self determined thing in all of existence. All other things in existence were created by this other than God. Self determined means that He's the only thing in all of existence that has His meaning and value intrinsic within Himself. Everything else in existence has its meaning and value established by this holy, other than, God Who spoke it into existence. Our upward call flowing out of that revelation is to God esteem, not to self esteem. There's an upward call in the revelation that God is. There's an upward call to the revelation of what God is. He is holy. He is other than. There's an upward call that is to stir in the heart of man when he begins to get a whiff of the revelation of the other thanness of this God Who spoke everything else into existence. In fact, apart from this God, there can never be an upward call; because there would be nothing that was up. Because everything else would be locked in the futility of a physical existence on a level playing field, all helpless and hopeless; and helpless to change the fact that it is hopeless.

So the only way there can be an upward call is to a holy, other than God which begins to reveal Himself to us in Genesis 1:1. There's an upward call in the revelation that only God is self determined. The ultimate self deception for man is for man to self determine that he is self determined. Jeremiah 10:23 – Oh Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself. It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps. So the only self determined thing has given us an upward call by clearly declaring in His word that man is not self determined. So the whole struggle of man from that moment on is to declare, yes I am self determined and I can determine what I ought to be, what I ought to become and how I ought to become it and I will determine the point at which you should be satisfied with my efforts.

There's an upward call in the rest of Genesis 1:1. Psalms 19:1 (the King James Version) – The Heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork. There's an upward call in creation itself that introduces accountability to man even with no other revelation of God. Because this upward call has been placed in creation for man to observe to such a degree that it is unmistakable and cannot be avoided. Romans 1:19-20 – Because that which is known about God is evident within them for God made it evident to them; for since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made so that they are without excuse. So the only self determined thing in all of

existence, spoke creation into existence and has declared clearly through that creation to other beings, specifically humans, that it is unmistakable that I am the only self determined thing and you are not self determined because where were you when I created the Heavens and the Earth?

You've heard the example of a man finding a wristwatch on an island. No man would rationally and logically conclude that that watch occurred based on probability analysis attached to physical laws. Any man that did that and based his life on that conclusion would be judged insane by the rest of us. Yet all men that would conclude that that watch of necessity originated from intelligence and intelligent design and skilled craftsmanship can also exist in the torpor of looking at the whole created order and declaring that it just happened by coincidence. There's an upward call in God's created order that is unmistakable and that we are accountable for responding to that upward call even without the written Word of God. Now I use a mnemonic, a memory device, to help me be attentive to this upward call of creation. There's nothing mystical about it. I think in terms of cosmo, macro, micro, and bio. Why? Because of the following: cosmo, of course, refers to the cosmos. That is to say to the heavens, to the planets, to the stars, to the galaxies, to that which is simply out there. Macro refers to those things which are visible here on planet Earth; the clouds, the rain, the continents, the rivers, the oceans, the mountains, the volcanoes, everything that we can see with the naked eye; thus relatively speaking, big. Micro refers to those things which are invisible to the naked eye; neutrons, protons, electrons, atoms, and molecules; thus, relatively speaking, little. Bio, of course, refers to the incredible complexity added by living things. When you consider the millions of species of animals and the millions of species of plants with all their various organisms functioning in beautiful concert to allow them not only to survive, but to reproduce, think of the complexity involved in out there, the big, the little, and the living and compare that then to the wristwatch. And just ask yourself who would intelligently presume intelligent design from a wristwatch? Everybody!

But man can also exist in the stupor of pride to such a self determined declaration that he would look at cosmo, macro, micro, bio, and pronounce that it is surely by coincidence, not by design. But man is accountable for seeing the other than God in creation. Why? Because the only self determined thing in all of existence has declared to the one who is not self determined that here is one way you will recognize Me; because I have clearly displayed My glory in that which My hands have created. So any man who does not see that is refusing to see that. He is suppressing the truth in unrighteousness; thus, instead of responding to the clear upward call of creation, he is insisting on spiraling downward. Attempts to see backward beyond the big bang are futile. Man is not able to do so using logic and science. The limitation of science is the big bang. But again, there's meant to be utility in futility. Seeing the end of science is not meant to be a dead end. The purpose in taking us to the big bang using our logic and science is to introduce us to the Big Banger Who created that which logic and science studies. There's an upward call even in science in coming to the dead end called the big bang. Since logic is not to be worshipped, then science which is an expression of logic cannot logically be worshipped either.

Then God created the pinnacle of His creation—namely, man. And man is not the pinnacle because man declares that he is. Man is the pinnacle because God declares that he is and God being the only self determined thing declares what the value and meaning is of every created thing. Genesis 1:27 – and God created man in His own image. So man is the only thing that was so created. The only thing created to which the only self determined thing attached such value. There’s an upward call for us in the revelation that we are created in the image of God. There’s an upward call in that revelation that God values you to that degree so as to create you that way. There is clearly meant to be an upward call in knowing that we are to bear the image of God, to reveal this holy other than God of Genesis 1:1 to the rest of His created order. What calling could possibly compare to that calling?—that the only self determined uncreated thing in all of existence has created us so as to bear His image to exhibit Him to creation itself. Then God gave a command and His crown jewel disobeyed. Genesis 2:16-17 – From any tree of the garden, you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat for in the day that you shall eat from it, you shall surely die. So a command was given, disobedience occurred, a penalty was introduced, and death was pronounced. That’s a downward spiral. It is proper to call that the fall; because instead of responding to the upward call, you insist on a downward spiral, what better word than fall could be used for that? The downward spiral was initiated when man self determined that he was self determined and declared to the only truly self determined thing in all of existence that that which He had created and told wasn’t self determined has now declared that he is self determined. The created thing declared to his creator that the created thing was on the same level as his creator—namely self determined, which simply fulfills the temptation which Satan spoke that is when you eat from this fruit that God told you not to eat, you will be like God. And that was the fundamental drive in the heart of man to declare himself as self determined when, in fact, the only self determined thing had declared that it’s not in man to know his own ways. Not in man to declare his own ways and so on.

So man got to choose and we’ll look at why in a moment. But he did not get to choose what the choices were and he did not get to choose the consequences of the choices. Why not? Because he is not self determined. So death ensued because the only truly self determined thing declared that it would. But even in death there’s an upward call. There’s an upward call because of part of being made in the image of God is that God has put the concept of time into our hearts. Ecclesiastes 3:11 – He (God) has also set eternity in their heart. We are eternal spirits created in the image of God. Now that had little meaning to Adam and Eve at the time of their creation; but it has definite meaning to us now. It has meaning in part because of the introduction of death resulting from the fall of Adam and Eve. Their time on Earth is now limited and they face an unknown “then what?” after their time on Earth is completed. The conflict then originates that our bodies are limited in time, yet eternity is written in the heart of man, in the immaterial part of man. So man cannot help but notice that the body is limited, but he has this yearning in his heart for eternity.

So what happens with that? As part of being made in the image of God, man is made to seek after God. That means that man observes, he ponders, he meditates on what he sees

before him, meditates on how it came to be, meditates on how it relates to time, and meditates on how it relates to him. So we tend to speak of death as a point in time and it is. But we usually get there by gradations. There's an upward call in seeing the gradations of deterioration heading toward death in the body of man. Man observes deterioration and death. He denies it for awhile in his youth. He can only successfully deny it for that short season. Then circumstances, events, and aging keep thrusting in front of him calling his attention to the inevitable deterioration and ultimate death of the human body. But God has put a yearning for meaning into the heart of man that goes beyond what he sees as the limitation of his physical body. Death would seem to preclude any meaning at least from coming within man himself as he observes the deterioration of his physical body. And man has to face that. But think of that. That's an upward call. There's an upward call even in the contemplation of impending physical death; because to find meaning in the contemplation of death, men must look outside of himself. And that's the upward call of God Who has put eternity in our hearts, not time limitation in our hearts.

So man cannot ever be truly satisfied by simply producing the next generation and then dying like salmon. God made us this way. It's part of being made in the image of God. This is how God is. As we know, God exists in the Trinity and although the Trinity is a mystery, we know that each member of the Trinity is God Himself and the way they function, each can never be fully satisfied independently of the other Persons of the Trinity. There is a oneness in the Trinity. Likewise man cannot ever be completely fulfilled apart from oneness with his God. When man simply says there must be more to life than what I see here in this physical universe, he's responding to that upward call of eternity in his heart. It's given urgency by the contemplation of death brought about by the fall of man. So even the fall, bringing about death can produce the upward call of the contemplation of death when viewed in the light of eternity that God has put in our hearts. The call in man put there by God to seek meaning beyond his physical self and to seek meaning that transcends death. So the man who looks at death and self determines that annihilation is the end of man is simply locked into the downward spiral. He is so, not because of the declaration of God; but he is so because he insists on self determining that eternity is meaningless and self determining that he is not eternal. He self determines that the upward call is nonexistent and then insists on calling the downward spiral up. Scripture speaks of man calling good evil and evil good. So here's one of the ultimate expressions of the self determination of man to declare that the upward call of God is nonexistent and continuing the downward spiral is fulfilling.

But we face death, remember, only because man sinned. So we need to recognize that there's an upward call even in sin. The upward call is not in sin itself, the upward call is in the consequence of sin. There is always a price to be paid. Sin relates to choice; so let us remind ourselves of the origin of choice. The origin of choice flows out of the fact that God is love. Love is relational. Relational requires choice, no choice, no love. That's called slavery. If one choice is God, then any choice that God gives us other than God is by definition ungod. It's something other than God. So in an ultimate sense, God gave us the choice to be God determined or the choice to declare ourselves self determined. So let's now remind ourselves of some of the choices along the way and

their consequences in broad terms. In a theologic sense, the choice is always between God and ungod as I just explained about the origin of choice. In regard to Adam and Eve, the choice was eat or don't eat. In regard to the Old Testament, it was obey or disobey the law as given by God. In regard to the New Testament unbeliever, it is accept Jesus or reject Jesus. In regard to the New Testament saint, it's spirit or flesh. Remember spirit with Jesus as the basis, flesh with self as the basis. Every choice is ultimately at its root between being God determined or being self determined; God and ungod.

But look at the consequence of sin at each level. Death is the consequence spoken of at each level although death can have different meanings depending on what group you're talking about and what time frame you're relating to. Death to Adam and Eve meant impending physical death as well as being cast out of the blessed state called the Garden of Eden. Death to those under the law meant all of the curses pronounced upon them for disobedience to the law. Death to the New Testament unbeliever, if carried along in that condition, means eternal death. And that means the absence of communion with God, while enduring the wrath of God, in the lake of fire for all eternity future. Death to the New Testament saint means dead works, dead abundant life, dead testimony, building with wood, hay, and straw, doing nothing of eternal value in the Kingdom of God while remaining here on Earth. There are always consequences to sin, serious consequences. And the simple recognition and revelation of that is an upward call of God in His telling us at each level and each time frame the consequences of sin.

All along the way, remember, this is how God relates to us. Because of love I get to choose. But I do not get to not choose because when you don't choose, you choose. You default to the sin nature of man which you have developed through habits over decades on planet Earth with self as the foundation of it. So you get to choose, but you don't get to not choose. You don't get to choose what the choices are. You don't get to choose the consequences of the choices. And you don't get to choose both. Why? Because the only self determined thing in all of existence has declared that this is the limit of your choice. So He's given you choice that it may be of love; but He's restricted those choices. He always gives you one choice with two options. Why? So it may be of love. Well, why doesn't He give you more than two? Because He doesn't want you to be misled by the complexity of the situation. So He always gives you two that it may be of love and no more than two so you don't miss it because of complexity. So we can choose at every step along the way and the choice in the context of the subject I'm talking about today is to either respond by choice to the upward call of God in Christ Jesus through all these various aspects of this journey that we've been on or to choose to continue in the downward spiral of insisting on self determination and shaking our fist at God and declaring that whatever You say, I say I am self determined and not God determined. Is it any wonder we call it the fall?

So my time is up for today and we'll pick it up there next time and continue the Upward Call.