

The Upward Call – Part 3

For the long-timers here you know we've been on a journey. We prepared for it. We started where God told us to begin, in the beginning. And then looked at the holiness of God, the sin of man, judgment (ours of God and God's of us), the reality of Hell and Heaven, and then entered the Cross of Christ. I put this brief review, schedule type poster up just to remind us that we're in a series called the Upward Call, but the upward call is simply to point out to us to make sure that we don't miss the point that every aspect of this journey that we've been on has, in fact, represented its own upward call to which we are to respond. In the Cross of Christ last time, we began with the first few utterances of Jesus to remind ourselves of "Women of Jerusalem, don't weep for Me, weep for yourselves and your children." "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." And, "Today you will be with Me in paradise." The point being that each of those utterances that Christ made on His cross had an upward call for us to respond to. And this session that we're in today is Cross to Kingdom with the subject matter being the Upward Call. So I'll pick it up at that point and we'll be reminded of the upward call in each of the utterances in the Cross of Christ. Our core Scripture being Philippians 3:12-14 where Paul writes – this one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind I press forward toward the mark for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. There is an upward call that remains for the Christian.

Matthew 27:46 – "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" We have less need to remind ourselves of the physical suffering of the cross because as physical creatures we can all relate to physical suffering. But there is an upward call included even in the physical suffering of Christ on the cross because the physical always serves as a model of the spiritual. And the physical, the extent of suffering in the physical realm on the cross, points to the even greater suffering in the spiritual reality. And we often do need to be reminded of the spiritual reality of the travail of Christ on the cross. And this one statement of Jesus, "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" points us to that. This is the same Jesus, remember, Who said in John 10:30 "The Father and I are one", the mystery of the Trinity. But one of this one, namely the Son now has something different. He now has the sins of the world upon Him. He has become sin on our behalf. We're reminded of Habakkuk 1:13 speaking of the purity of God – "Thine eyes are too pure to approve evil and Thou cannot look on wickedness with favor". So God the Father now had to look upon His Son with the sin of the world upon Him. And He could not look upon this bundle of wickedness with favor. The Father obligatorily forsook the Son. The two Who had always been one, and now in some mystical way obligatorily become two; because the Father cannot look upon His Son with favor under these conditions. In His forsakenness the Son now had lost communion with the Father which is the outer darkness. Coupled with this, He received the fullness of the wrath of the Father for all the sins of the world; and the two coupled together, the fullness of the wrath of God and the outer darkness of no communion with God is Hell itself.

And that's what Jesus endured for us for certain reasons: to save us—"I came to seek and to save that which was lost", to reveal the grace of God for the ages to come, and thus, to glorify the Father while destroying the works of the devil and ushering in the abundant life for those who would respond to that upward call of His suffering on the cross. The upward call of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, on the cross; saying, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" is to receive the revelation that He uttered that phrase so that we never have to. As Christians, there is never one moment in our lives when we have to say, "My God, My God, why has Thou forsaken

Me?”, because He will never leave us nor forsake us. And He will not because He endured that for us on His cross. So bless our Savior for that utterance on His cross.

John 19:26-27, He said to His mother – Woman, behold your son and He said to the disciple, behold your mother. There’s an upward call contained in that statement. We are to honor our earthly familial relationships. We are to honor our parents; but we’re also now in the family of God. And the love of God that’s poured out in our hearts is not to be confined to our preexistent familial and social relationships. This love of God that’s poured out in our hearts is expansive and reaches outward. It becomes a father to the one who has no father, a mother to the one who has no mother and a son to the one without a son; because this love is an ever increasing circle flowing out of us. There’s an upward call in the family of God to honor prior earthly relationships, but never to be limited in our Christian walk to prior earthly relationships; because the love of God is not a zero sum game, which would mean that when we give more love to one, then we have less love to impart to the other. The revelation is this. When we love God more than them, we will love them more than before. That’s the expansive love of God. And there’s an upward call to respond to that expansive love that knows no limits instead of rationing out love on a conditional basis based on our prior knowledge of what we call natural love; because this God is love and this God has no limits and this God who is love and has no limits has poured out that love within us through His Son. And it’s all contained in the revelation of “Woman, behold your son”. Do not let yourself be contained to prior earthly relationships.

John 19:28 – I thirst. The upward call of this statement is to the utmost of humility; because when it is yoked with John 1:3, speaking of Jesus, “All things came into being by Him and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being”. So what’s the connection? The creator of everything, the creator thus of all water, the Son of God is saying as the Son of man while hanging on a cross “I thirst”. Can you imagine the humility intrinsic in the behavior of the creator of all water being willing to position Himself in the misery of the cross so as to say “I thirst”? To remind ourselves of the magnitude of the humility, recall Philippians 2:5-8 – “Jesus gave up the glory of Heaven, did not hang on to His equality with God, came to Earth as the Son of man and humbled Himself by being obedient unto death, even death on a cross”. He did not hang on to equality with God the Father so that He could hang on to a cross to the point of saying simply “I thirst”, where the creator of all water humbled Himself, gave up any right to deliver Himself from the circumstance and waited until the fallen men around Him would respond to offer something to satisfy His thirst; and all voluntarily and all for us. Can you imagine the humility in that attitude? That was the attitude of Jesus Christ. And we’re told in Philippians 2:5 “To have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus”. We have a tendency to take pride in appearing humble. Or if we have a little humility we note it with pride and congratulate ourselves on the great humility which we suppose that we now have. But when we look at the creator of all waters saying “I thirst”, as He voluntarily hangs on a cross to accomplish that which we could not do, then I think we’re called upward to reassess our assessment of our own humility as we go through this Christian walk. There’s an upward call to that kind of humility which destroys the mythology of our human pride in appearing humble.

John 19:30 – “It is finished”. There’s an upward call to that statement—a statement given by the Son of God and stated with such finality. The blunt statement: “It is finished”. And the bluntness of it gives us an upward call. His resistance to the temptation to sin is finished. His

active display of the perfect righteousness of God is finished. His perfect obedience to the plan of the Father – finished. The endurance of the physical suffering, the endurance of the spiritual suffering – finished. The drinking of the cup of the Father’s wrath – finished. The veil between us and God – finished. Satisfaction of divine justice – finished. A display of perfect love – finished. Perfection in humility – finished. The payment for sin – finished. The accusations of Satan – finished. And dependence upon our own righteousness – finished. So all of those, plus others that I’m sure you can think of are finished and not just finished, but finished forever. The upward call of “It is finished”, is for us to give up any resistance that we have in our hearts to “It is finished”. And to live in the fullness of the light of “It is finished”. That’s part of the summing up all things in Christ, is to live in the light of all which has been finished. From that point on according to I Corinthians 2:2 – we boast only of Jesus Christ and Him crucified; because that’s the one Who finished it. And that’s the time that it was finished and it was finished by the only one Who could finish it and we could never finish that which He finished. So I once heard it said that Christianity is not getting your act together for God; Christianity is realizing that your act is up for all time. There’s an upward call to live in the light of the utterance of Jesus Christ that “It is finished”. And all that remains is for us to spend the rest of our Christian lives adding the exclamation point to the end of that sentence; because there’s nothing left that we can finish because He finished it.

Luke 23:46 – “Father into Thy hands I commit My spirit”. Now this adds an exclamation point to the prior expressions, particularly, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” What’s the difference? That has now been finished, it’s this. The call before was to My God without claim to the familial relationship of Father; because in the forsakenness the familial relationship was broken. But now that it is finished, the call is to “Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit”. The familial relationship is restored. The oneness is restored. The forsakenness has ended. Why? Because in between those two utterances, “It is finished”. There’s an upward call even to the assurance of our salvation by the connection of those two expressions. The one Who was forsaken and could only say My God, not Father, has now been restored to the right hand of the Father. Why? Because “It is finished”, and therein lends verification to the assurance of our salvation; because that which had been broken in the forsakenness has now been restored in the light of “It is finished”. The very fact that the Son of God now sits at the right hand of the Father is testimony to the accuracy of the statement, “It is finished”; because had it not been finished, there would be no restoration of Jesus Christ to sit at the right hand of the Father. So even looking at those utterances of Christ, it provides salvation, but it also is the full assurance of salvation when you look at that sequence of expressions. So with that utterance, the cross experience may be over, but there’s another related experience that has its own upward call. That’s why we can distinguish the cross from the resurrection, but we’re never to unyoke the cross from the resurrection.

The final enemy, death, has an upward call. John 11:25, Jesus said – “I am the resurrection”. Well how can we believe that? Because He was resurrected; the tomb of this one is empty. Well why is it empty? John 14:6 – I am the life. This one is the life. This one is not bound by physical death. And not only is He not bound, it is impossible for Him to be bound by physical death. Acts 2:24 – “And God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power”. Hebrews 2:14-15 says that – “Through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is the devil, and might deliver

those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives”. You see, the power of death over us is not death itself. The power of death over us as Christians is the fear of death. And we can only live in the fear of death when we’re not walking in the light of, “It was impossible for the grave to hold Him”; because He’s the first fruit and we’ll be the later fruits. But since He came out of that grave, we too can operate in our lives with full assurance that we too will come out of that grave; and thus, the fear of death is gone. Thus, the power of death is gone. Thus, the captivity of Satan using the fear of death in us as natural born creatures is gone. Jesus did not just die. He went through death. So what’s the upward call of the resurrection? That we live free of the fear of death. That the fear of death not enter our calculation and our decision-making and so on to shape our behaviors from the moment of salvation on. After all, “To die is gain”, as we’re told in Philippians 1:21; because we too will go through death and into His presence for all eternity. So I remind you of the obvious fact. Why did death exist? Sin caused death. What did Jesus Christ pay for? All sin, the debt of all our sin – paid for. The claim of death upon us – gone. Jesus Christ came out of the tomb because of the life-giving power of God that transcends the power of death. But that transcendent life-giving power could not be released until the sin which causes death had been paid for. Thus, Jesus Christ came out of that tomb because sin had been paid for. Why? “It is finished”. And there’s an upward call to us to live in the absence of the fear of death that goes back to the light of “It is finished”.

Next poster. After the cross then, we entered the Kingdom of God and we came through the doorway of salvation. We are justified at that moment, that is, declared righteous by a holy God. But there is an upward call to the reality of our justification. We are justified but we are never to be fully satisfied. We’re not satisfied because there remain others who are not justified. There are other upward calls embedded in our justification. Luke 10:20 – I now rejoice that my name is written in the Lamb’s book of life. Romans 12:15 – I rejoice with others who likewise rejoice—namely my fellow saints. But I also am to respond to the upward call and to weep with those who weep. There are those who weep because they know their incompleteness and know the black hole within themselves; but they do not yet know the One that is necessary for their completeness. So I weep for them. I also weep for those who don’t yet know that they should be weeping. As they are content in their lives of self exaltation.

There’s another upward call to my justification. I’m called upward from that moment on to bring glory to the one to whom I owe my justification. Well what is the greatest glory that I can bring to that one? It is to be transformed from glory to glory into His very likeness; because if He is worth worshipping, He is worth following, and if He’s worth following, I will grow into His image. The transformation of us into the very character of God becomes my strongest testimony to the ones around us who are weeping and my strongest testimony to those who don’t yet know that they should be weeping. So my transformation ultimately becomes the major part of my response to the upward call of my justification and to become the testimony of Jesus Christ Himself to those who are yet unjustified. Then the unjustified will note and the unjustified will see the transformation and the unjustified will say, “Would you explain to me the reason for the hope that is within you?” (as we’re told in I Peter 3:15). And then I know that my response to the upward call becomes an upward call; because it’s unnatural. Natural man can’t do this. Natural man cannot emanate unconditional love. Natural man cannot operate in forgiveness like this. And it will provoke those around to respond in various ways; but one of those responses will be to say, “Will you explain to me how you do that?” I couldn’t do that and

I don't know anyone who can do that. And it becomes the upward call flowing through us out to the world around us.

All of that occurs, remember, by faith. And according to Ephesians 2:8 – faith is a gift from God. But there's an upward call to any gift of faith that we have—namely to walk by the faith that we have been given and not walk by sight. We're called to walk in accordance with the faith that we have been given as we're told in II Corinthians 5:7. Then we fulfill Matthew 25:21 – As we're faithful over the little thing that we have been given, namely our faith, we will be made master over ever larger things. So we're given more knowledge because to our faith, add knowledge. Then we receive the assurance that that knowledge we've now gained is also true. And then that assured knowledge is faith itself. We begin to walk in accordance with the increased faith that we now have. That's the crescendo of faith. But that crescendo of faith has an upward call and it's never to end because the increasing truth of God that we have brought into our knowledge is never to end. But to continue the cycle of the crescendo of delight of our faith in God, we have a part to do. The upward call of walking by faith, meaning empowered by, is fulfilled and dependent on our walking by faith meaning in accordance with, the faith that we already have. Because why should the one who gives faith give us more faith when we refuse to use the little faith that He has given us? So we have a mustard seed of faith. But that mustard seed of faith has an upward call and the upward call is to be faithful over whatever faith that we have been given. And then to that add knowledge and then our faith will assuredly grow.

Next poster. We applied our faith to move toward the position of abiding in Jesus as we're commanded in John 15:4. There's an upward call to this place called abiding in Him because we're never perfectly there. But coming closer to that place is to draw near to Him. And as we're told in James 4:8 – He then draws near to us. And this is the place where we begin to see Him more as He is rather than we previously thought Him to be, as we continued to rely on our natural frames of reference to interpret the Son of God and what He did for us on that cross; because at this point we enter the crescendo of attraction. That is to say I can't retreat from that which is so loving. I can't retreat from that which is so humble. I can't retreat from that Who is willing to say "I thirst", after creating all water. I can't retreat from the compelling magnetism of that that draws me to Him. And I can't retreat from what I now see as the only thing of ultimate intrinsic value in all of existence, God Himself, and particularly known by us through the Son of God and what He did on His cross. And that upward call is to oneness. That's when we begin to realize that this love that He expressed on that cross is not just a theologic abstraction and a nice philosophic term; but it is a spiritual reality.

And then we are always satisfied with Him; but we're never satisfied with what we know of Him; because that kind of love has its own upward call and we see that love as we come into abiding with Him and we then proceed to respond to the upward call, to see the love displayed and we know love by this, that He first loved us. We know love by this that He delivered Himself up for us. And then we begin to become love as we respond to that love. And then we learn that that love is not just existent; that love is transcendent and that love is creative as I begin to operate in the faith and the love that God revealed to me on the cross. The love of God becomes shed in my heart as we're told in Romans 5:5. And that's when you begin to make the transition from just saying that God is love as a theologic abstraction. You begin to see His love. You begin to feel His love and you begin to love Him and when you love Him, you're in reality

loving yourself; because when you love God, you have a passion to be one with God. When you love yourself, you have a passion that yourself become one with God. And then you learn that loving God is love of self. And that's why we're told to love our neighbor as ourselves, you see. And then we have a passion for others because we now understand the God kind of love. When I love others I have a passion that they become one with their creator God through the Son of God, you see. And that's when you're beginning to respond to that which is love and then to have love shed abroad in your heart and then begin to walk in that love. And then love flows out of you and is exhibited as the fruit of the Spirit. There's an upward call to that kind of love. And that's what we're called to. There's an upward call to me and then to them through me; because they will know love by how you love one another. Your love of others becomes the testimony to the world that your God is real and your God is active and your God is in you and your God is performing because you're growing into His likeness as you grow in unconditional love. And that then provokes others; "Would you explain to me how you love like that? Would you explain to me how you love so that you take no offense? Would you explain to me how you love so that you hang on to no unforgiveness?" And once again, we see. Our response to the upward call of the love of God becomes its own upward call to call others to our God because they see this is not natural. This isn't something natural man could do.

But for love to be fully manifest that which resists love must die. Well how could that possibly happen? Well then we're introduced to your cross. I'm to follow the one whom I love. He is spirit and I must follow Him in spirit. That which competes with spirit is to be denied because I cannot soar in unconditional love in the spirit realm while tenaciously clinging to the branches of this world through the frame of reference of self. The basis of the flesh is self on the throne. The basis of spirit is Jesus on the throne. So the basis of self is the root of the flesh and that root must be severed and it is largely severed through your cross. That's when you take up your cross and that's where you embrace your present circumstances as either God-caused or God-permitted and it's the mechanism of revealing yourself to yourself. It reveals what parts of your thoughts are still rooted in self on the throne flowing out of your unrenewed mind which is in fact still anti-Christ. Oh, but you deny self. Why? Because it resists your Savior. You deny freedom to such thoughts and you capture each thought unto the obedience of Christ. You throw such thoughts out of this temple because this is the temple of the Holy Spirit. And you don't want unclean things rumbling around in this temple of the Holy Spirit. You follow Him in spirit. You walk by spirit. And in the spirit, remember, Jesus is the basis of all. Jesus is the cornerstone. Jesus is the foundation. Jesus is that which your house of thoughts is to be built on. He is the rock on which I build my house of thoughts. And I capture any thought that is not lying upon the foundation of the foundation which has been laid which is Jesus Christ and Him crucified. There's an upward call in denying self, embracing your cross, to follow Him where He goes. And where He goes, self cannot perform. Your cross is thus the mechanism to do four things, remember, tribulation/revelation. It reveals you to you. It'll reveal what part of you is still flesh with self on the throne. It will reveal Him to you because the greater suffering that you undergo is a tiny drop of revelation about the incomprehensible suffering that He underwent voluntarily for you. Then it reveals Christ in you to you as you begin to endure things and take up your cross and deny self in ways you never thought possible; because the power of God is now working in you. And then it will reveal Christ in you to them as they once again respond to your upward call which is to turn and say, "Would you explain to me how you embrace your adverse

circumstances like that?” And so you continue the sequence. Upward call, you respond to the upward call and you then become the upward call. That’s part of being an earthen vessel.

Next poster. Then I’m provoked to say, “Lord, how are You not offended by this unclean thing that I found in your holy temple?” And He replies, “Because I am love and I love you and love does not take offense. After all I paid the price for that unclean thing before you even knew there was an unclean thing. I love you so much that I preferred to go through Hell for you, paying for sins that you didn’t know existed rather than to spend eternity without you. I preferred to die for you than to hold your sins against you. I preferred to have a relationship with you for all eternity rather than to hold that unclean thing that you still have against you.” And that’s when you’re smitten by the grace of God. Now instead of that little drop of grace that you thought you needed, you receive an ever burgeoning revelation of how great the grace of God was because it was greater than anything you ever knew about. That’s when you enter the crescendo of delight of rushing to have your secret sins revealed. You have conviction but you never have condemnation; because self condemnation is to call unclean what He has called clean by the incomprehensible value of the blood of the Son of God hanging on that cross. And there is no condemnation in Christ because we are in Christ because He paid the price for whatever we would be condemned about. Romans 8:1 – there is no condemnation in Christ because whatever I feel condemned about I need to remind myself He paid for by grace before I knew it existed. That’s when you begin to smile as you receive the revelation of your secret sin; because the revelation of every secret sin just puts fuel on the fire to give you an ever greater illumination of the amazing grace of God that transcends anything that you ever knew existed. You can’t help but be humbled by that kind of grace. See, the upward call of that kind of grace never ends because revelation of that kind of grace causes humility; and oh, when you’re humble, what happens? He gives His grace to the humble. And you enter the crescendo of delight of grace leading to humility and humility accessing the greater grace. There’s an upward call to enter that crescendo of delight of grace and humility. That’s what testifies of the grace of God for the ages to come, because except for His holiness and our sin and what He did in the face of that sin, the whole created order would never understand the magnitude of the amazing grace of God.

That’s when you begin to live free of everything but Him because you can’t bear the thought of living free from Him. I’m now entering the freedom for which He set me free as we’re told in Galatians 5:1 – I’m free from the wrath of God. I’m free from the dread of the wrath of God. I’m free from the possibility of the wrath of God. I am free from living in any condemnation. I’m free from the fear of death. I’m free from the control of man. I’m free from my cocoon of carnality where I assess everything through the frames of reference of cost, comfort, convenience, and control. I’m free from hate. I’m free from unforgiveness. I’m free from walking by sight in this physical realm. I’m free from dead works upon which I previously relied. I’m free from the psychology of scarcity, thinking there’ll never be enough. I’m free from envy. I’m free from double-mindedness, free from being blown by the wind, free from self righteousness, free from judgementalism, and free from grumbling. That’s the freedom in Jesus Christ for which He set us free. But you can’t have it both ways. You can’t cling to self and want to walk in the freedom for which He set us free. But at this point we’ve tasted it. At this point we think we begin to see it. That’s when my yoke begins to ease. That’s when my burden becomes light and that’s when I obey and His commandments are not burdensome. But you will

not have that attitude unless you respond to the upward call to enter the freedom for which He set us free. So may we do so and become an upward call.

And my time is more than up and I thank you for yours.