

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

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GOD'S
HEAVENLY
CALLING

WITNESS LEE

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Living Stream Ministry

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THE GOAL OF GOD'S HEAVENLY CALLING

In [Philippians 3:10-14](#) Paul emphasizes the out-resurrection. [Verse 11](#) says, “If by any means I may attain to the out-resurrection from among the dead.” Paul’s endeavor was to attain to this outstanding resurrection. In [verse 12](#) he goes on to say, “Not that I have already obtained or am already perfected, but I pursue, if also I may lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus.” Here Paul admits that he had not yet attained the out-resurrection, but he continued to pursue that he might lay hold of it. For this out-resurrection, Christ had laid hold of him, and now Paul’s desire was to lay hold of the out-resurrection. The purpose of Christ in laying hold of him was that he might obtain the out-resurrection. Hence, in [verses 11 and 12](#) the out-resurrection is Paul’s goal, the object of his pursuit.

In [verses 13 and 14](#) Paul continues, “Brothers, I do not yet reckon myself to have laid hold, but one thing—forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are

before, I pursue toward the goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” Here we see that Paul did not reckon himself to have laid hold of the out-resurrection already. However, he pursued toward the goal, the goal of the out-resurrection, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

THE GOAL AND THE PRIZE

There is a difference between the goal and the prize. Paul pursued toward the goal for the prize of God’s high calling. Every calling has a purpose with a goal. What are the purpose and goal of God’s high calling? The expression “high calling” used here does not mean that the calling is high; it means that this calling is from above, that is, from the heavens. Literally translated, the Greek means “the above calling.” In [Hebrews 3:1](#) Paul uses the term “heavenly calling.” The out-resurrection is both the purpose and the goal of God’s heavenly calling. Therefore, if we consider [Philippians 3:10-14](#) carefully, we shall realize that the out-resurrection is Paul’s subject.

The term “out-resurrection” is found in the Bible only in [Philippians 3:11](#). The Greek prefix *ek* means “out.” Here Paul adds this prefix to the

usual Greek word for resurrection. What was his reason for doing this? According to his vision and experience, Paul realized that God's intention in the universe is altogether related to something which is new, something in resurrection, but resurrection in a very particular sense, not resurrection in an ordinary sense.

OUT OF THE OLD CREATION AND INTO THE NEW CREATION

The common meaning of resurrection is that something dies and comes to life again. Lazarus was resurrected in this way. He had died, had been buried, and had even begun to smell bad. Then the Lord Jesus came and cried out, "Lazarus, come forth!" and Lazarus came out of the tomb ([John 11:43-44](#)). Was the resurrection of Lazarus a case of the out-resurrection? No. Even though Lazarus was raised from the dead and came to life again, nothing of the new creation was wrought into him. Instead, he continued to be a person in the old creation. At most, Lazarus experienced restoration; he was restored from death to the natural life. But he was neither regenerated at that time nor did he receive a new constitution. The fact that Lazarus was not brought into the new creation through resurrection is

proved in that one day he died again and his once-resurrected body was laid once more in a tomb.

The out-resurrection in [Philippians 3:11](#) is very different from the resurrection of Lazarus. Did Paul expect to return to the tomb once he obtained the out-resurrection? Certainly not! The resurrection Paul was pursuing in [Philippians 3](#) was something absolutely apart from the old creation and in the new creation.

PAUL'S GOAL

According to grammar, the out-resurrection in [Philippians 3:11](#) is the goal of what Paul is seeking in [Philippians 3:10](#). In these verses Paul says, “To 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 out-resurrection from among the dead.” In [verse 10](#) we see that Paul aspired to know Christ, the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death. He wanted to know Christ, experience Christ, and enjoy Christ. Paul's goal is found in [verse 11](#)—attaining to the out-resurrection. In fact, this is the goal not only of [verse 10](#), but also of [verses 8 and 9 of Philippians 3](#). Paul counted

all things refuse in order to gain Christ (v. 8) and be found in Him (v. 9), to know Christ, the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, that he might attain to the out-resurrection. According to grammar, this is the proper interpretation of verses 8 through 11. Paul's goal was to attain to the out-resurrection.

In this booklet we need to consider how to attain this goal of the out-resurrection. For this, we must know Christ in the power of His resurrection, we must know Him in the fellowship of His sufferings, and we must know Him by being conformed to His death.

DYING TO THE OLD CREATION AND LIVING TO GOD

By incarnation the Lord Jesus took on human nature. He put on a body of blood and flesh. Did this body belong to the old creation or the new creation? Blood and flesh are part of the old creation. [First Corinthians 15:50](#) says that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." This includes the flesh and blood of the Lord Jesus. The principle here is that nothing which belongs to the old creation has anything to do with the kingdom of God. Therefore, the body

taken on by the Lord Jesus belonged to the old creation.

During His years on earth, the Lord Jesus lived a human life. Was the Lord's human living part of the old creation or of the new creation? Although the Lord Jesus had a body of flesh and blood belonging to the old creation and although He lived in the environment of the old creation, the life He lived did not belong to the old creation. On the contrary, the life lived by the Lord Jesus belonged wholly to the new creation. But how could He, a person with a body belonging to the old creation and dwelling in the environment of the old creation, live a life that belonged to the new creation? He could do this by continually dying to His old creation body and environment and living to God.

We should not think that the Lord Jesus died only when He was crucified. No, He began to die, to live a crucified life, as soon as He was born. The Lord surely lived a human life, but it was a crucified life. By living a crucified life He died to the old creation.

The Lord's living of a crucified life is illustrated by an incident which took place when He was twelve years of age. When His mother and father found Him after spending days looking

for Him, His mother said, “Child, why did You treat us like this? Behold, Your father and I are greatly distressed seeking You.” ([Luke 2:48](#)). The Lord Jesus replied, “Why is it that you were seeking Me? Did you not know that I must be in the things of My Father?” ([v. 49](#)). Here we see that even at the age of twelve the Lord was living a crucified life. Through His mother, Mary, He had received the life of the old creation. But instead of living according to this old creation life, He died to it and lived according to another life, according to the life of His Father.

[John 6:57](#) helps us to understand this. Here the Lord Jesus said, “The living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father.” Yes, the Lord Jesus lived, but He lived by the Father. The Father lived in Him, and He lived the Father. He lived a life which is divine and eternal, God’s life lived out in the old creation. Such a living is the element of the new creation.

Paul speaks twice of the new creation. In [Galatians 6:15](#) he says, “For neither is circumcision anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.” In [2 Corinthians 5:17](#) he declares, “So that if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation.” When did this new creation begin? The old creation began in [Genesis 1:1](#), a verse which says, “In

the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (lit.). The new creation had its beginning when the Lord Jesus began to live another life, a crucified life. He lived the life of the new creation while in a body belonging to the old creation and in the environment of the old creation. As He lived in this way, He was continually dying to everything of the old creation.

One day, with the help of Satan and his followers, the body of the Lord Jesus was put to death actually and absolutely. Then His old creation body was buried in a tomb. After three days this body was resurrected. However, there was a great difference between the resurrected body of Lazarus and the resurrected body of Jesus Christ. The resurrected body of Lazarus was unchanged; it still belonged to the old creation. But the resurrected body of Jesus Christ was changed both in nature and in form. As a body in the old creation, it was a body of flesh and blood, but as a body in the new creation, it became a spiritual body.

KNOWING CHRIST IN RESURRECTION

This incarnated, crucified, and resurrected Christ has become a seed sown into us. The

Christ we have received is not a natural Christ, but a resurrected and transformed Christ. Peter knew Christ in the flesh, when He was still in the old creation body. But the Christ we experience today is a Christ altogether in the new creation. Deep within, perhaps subconsciously, we may secretly wish that we had lived at the time of Peter, John, and James, for they were with the Lord in the flesh. However, it is far better to know Christ in the power, sphere, and element of His resurrection and in the fellowship of His sufferings.

CONFORMED TO CHRIST'S DEATH

We may despise the old creation and want to be free from it. But the more we loathe it, the more it clings to us. Only in the Body can we be free from the old creation. Only when we are occupied with the Body and by the Body are we able to be free from spending so much time thinking about ourselves. Paul was so occupied with the Body that in his being there was no capacity for him to consider his own things. Because Paul was so concerned for the Body, he shared in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. In this way he was conformed to the death of Christ.

There are four important matters in [Philippians 3:10](#): to know Christ, to know the power of His resurrection, to know the fellowship of His sufferings, and to be conformed to His death. Actually, being conformed to Christ's death is related to knowing both the power of Christ's resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings. The words "being conformed" indicate how we may know the power of Christ's resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings.

Paul's use of the word "conformed" in [3:10](#) implies that Christ's death is a mold. Often when sisters bake a cake they use a mold. Dough is placed into the mold and conformed to its shape. On the day we began to live the Christian life, we, like a piece of dough, were put into the mold of Christ's death. When we suffer for the Body, we are shaped into the form of the death of Christ. This is what it means to be conformed to His death.

By being conformed to the death of Christ, we experience the power of His resurrection and enter into the fellowship of His sufferings. It is in this way that we attain to the out-resurrection and reach the goal of being fully out of the old creation and wholly resurrected into the new creation.

LIVING IN THE NEW CREATION

If a brother attains to the out-resurrection in his experience, even his love for his wife will be in the new creation. No longer will it be a natural love, a love in the old creation. A brother may love his wife very much, but his love may have nothing to do with the out-resurrection. Likewise, a wife may be submissive to her husband according to her ethics and cultural background, but her submission may also be altogether in the natural realm, in the old creation, not at all in the new creation. Suppose a sister makes herself submit to her husband. She does not want to submit, but, perhaps with tears, she forces herself to do so. This submission is in the old creation. God does not want a natural love or a natural submission, a love and submission which are not in the out-resurrection. Instead, He wants us to live the kind of life revealed in [Philippians 3](#). For this, we need to gain Christ and be found in Him to know the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, that we may attain to the out-resurrection.

God has rescued us from the old creation and put us in a race toward the goal for the prize.

Now we must run this race to attain to the out-resurrection from the dead and all the things of the new creation.

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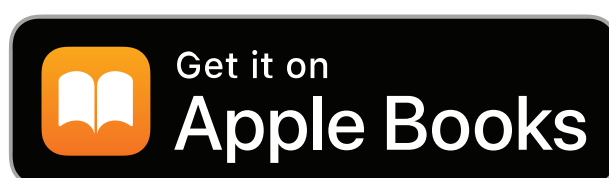
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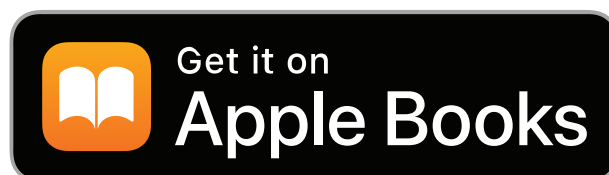
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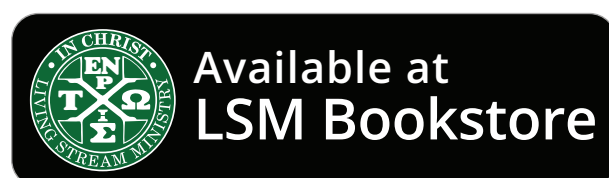
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