



THE
HIGH
CALLING
OF GOD
IN
CHRIST JESUS

THE HIGH CALLING OF GOD

**Leading Texts: Philippians 3:13, 14;
Hebrews 3:1**

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Philippians 3:13, 14

Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus. Hebrews 3:1

INTRODUCTION

In Genesis 22:15-18 God promised to exceedingly bless the seed of Abraham. We are shown in the New Testament writings that the

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Seed to whom the promise was made is Jesus the Christ, and that the believers in Christ are part of that great Seed that is to be mightily blessed of God and to be the means of the blessing of humanity (Galatians 3:16, 29). The implication of this is awesome: God has prepared a great inheritance for the believer in Christ! Our Lord Jesus said in John 14: 2 ... *In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.* Indeed, as the prophets said *eyes hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him* (1 Corinthians 2:9; Isaiah 64:4). But God is now revealing these things to us by His Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:10). We give glory and praise to his holy name.

Included in the blessings of the gospel that is offered to the believer in Christ Jesus, is the restoration of all that mankind lost in the fall through the disobedience of Adam (Romans

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5:12). These include deliverance from sin, from sicknesses and diseases, from poverty and ruin, protection and preservation from all forms of danger, and deliverance from the power of the grave. Yes! The blood of Jesus Christ has secured for the redeemed all that he may ever need in this life. Eden lost is restored with all the privileges of fellowship with God and the enjoyment of his promises (Genesis 1:27-30; 2:7-15). Through faith, the justified in Christ can now live and obtain life's blessings (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:7; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38).

This blessed estate is not opened to all of mankind in this age, but only to those among men who exercise implicit faith in the saving works of the Lord Jesus Christ. What a glorious privilege we have in him. We can live daily in Eden, reigning in life, because of what the Lord has done (Romans 5:17). This is our *present*

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inheritance. The *Edenic blessings* will always be ours now and are to be enjoyed by faith.

However, there is another aspect of the great blessings of the gospel that God has reserved for us. 2 Peter 1: 4 talks about “*exceeding great and precious promises*”. These promises are associated with our ***future inheritance*** and constitute the hope of the believer in this age (Titus 2:13). Yes! There is a call in Christ Jesus, a call to a glory that is beyond what Adam ever knew, a call beyond Eden.

What is the nature of this calling? What is the glory associated with it? What are the implications of the calling for the believer? These questions constitute the burden of this meditation.

UNDERSTANDING THE WORD “CALLING”

The word “***calling***” derives from the Greek word ***Kaleo*** (Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance 2564,

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2861). Generally speaking, this word speaks of the divine invitation extended to man to participate in the blessings of redemption. It requires that the invitee be made thoroughly aware of the objective for which he has received the call. Next, the word implies that the Personage extending the call holds the invitee in kind regards. He has also made all preparations necessary to execute to the fullest, the purpose of the invitation. Thus, properly understood, the call is a favour extended to the invitee. Finally, *kaleo*, translated calling, in a tertiary sense, denotes a vocation, an employment, a career.

All of these three senses are expressed in the gospel call. The teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ and the writings of the apostles clearly brings out these elements. For emphasis, let's read and carefully consider Mathew 22:1-14 alongside Luke 14:16-24

Mathew 22:1-14

- 1. And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said.*
- 2. The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son.*
- 3. And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.*
- 4. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them that which are bidden, behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.*
- 5. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise:*
- 6. And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.*
- 7. But when the King heard thereof, he was wrought: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.*

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8. Then saith he to his servants, the wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.

9. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.

10. So those servants went into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.

11. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment:

12. And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.

13. Then said the King to the servants, bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth

14. For many are called, but few are chosen.

Luke 14: 16-24

16. Then saith he unto him, a certain man made a great supper, and bade many:

17. And sent his servants at supper time to say to them that were bidden, come; for all things are now ready.

18. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.

19. and another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.

20. And another said, I have married a new wife, and therefore I cannot come.

21. So that servant came and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servants, go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.

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22. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.

23. And the Lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.

24. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

It is not our intention to go into an expository teaching of the above scriptures. We will just draw out some observations that help to summarize what we have already noted concerning the word **calling** in the context of our present meditation.

1. The certain man, also called a certain King, is the Lord God Almighty, the great King above all the earth.
2. All things are now ready. The Father has killed his oxen and fatted calf. He has

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prepared his dinner. He has prepared a great supper.

3. Partaking in the blessing of the gospel will involve eating the supper of God (John 6:53-58). As the believer eat of Him, they become more and more like him.
4. The moral or physical limitations of the invitee at the point of being called to the supper do not disqualify him. The King has secured all that is required to realize the purpose of the call in the invitee. He enjoins all to come to the marriage.
5. The invitation is to a marriage with the king's Son. God seeks to raise up a bride for His Son Jesus Christ that will be united with him in his glory and kingdom. The bride is to be chosen from among the invitees.
6. He sends his servants to call all that are invited. The high calling of God is to be declared to the saints through ministries that the Lord raises. They are to be made

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thoroughly aware of the purpose of their calling.

7. However, the call is not binding. The invitation could be rejected. Making light of the invitation or refusing to submit to the conditions attached to participation in the blessing amount to outright rejection of the call.
8. There are conditions required for participation in the blessing. These conditions are symbolized in the possession of a wedding garment. It is the wedding garment that qualifies the invitee for the union (marriage). This garment has its various parts, but it is to be noted that none of the invitee came with a wedding garment. They all came in poor, maimed, halting and blind (1 Corinthians 1:26, 27). The various parts of the wedding garment are secured by the invitee as he opens the heart totally to the King and faithfully appropriate the riches of the supper. Thus in a secondary sense, the word "calling" refers to the *conditions attached to the invitation*.

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9. The invitees must prove worthy of the calling by faithfully submitting to the conditions attached. The value that each of the invitee places on the call is to be judged by the response given to the invitation.
10. There are seasons of divine inspection (testings) of the invitees. There is also a final inspection that is to determine the final placement of each of the invitee. Not all that are called ultimately receives the prize. Many are called, but few are chosen.

THE PRIZE OF THE HIGH CALLING

The Upward Calling, the Heavenly calling, the High Calling

The "*High calling of God in Christ* is also called the "*Heavenly calling*" (Hebrews 3:1), the "*Upward calling*". These three expressions of the call agree in one. They indicate that earth man, through the gospel call, is being invited to a heavenly inheritance, to a heavenly glory, to some honours in the heavenly kingdom.

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We cannot appreciate in any significant measure what this means unless we are able to see that there is a distinction between the earthly and the heavenly sphere of existence. The earth is created by God for the habitation of terrestrial creatures, of which man is King. Man is God's King over the earth, created to replenish and to rule it, to manifest the glory of God to the extent such glory can be revealed in human flesh (Genesis 1:26-30). Thus man is basically an earthly being. 1 Corinthians 15:45 says *the first man is of the earth, earthy*. That is the glory and estate that God has prepared for mankind. That was the glory Adam had before he fell.

But there is also the heavenly sphere of existence, higher and more glorious than the earthly sphere. Spirit beings are heavenly creatures. The very nature of their being does not adapt them to live on the earth. They are not terrestrial (but celestial) beings.

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These two natures and spheres of existence must be understood to be distinct. In fact, so distinct are they that the spirit realm is veiled away from the sight of man. God did not permit an intermingling! The one cannot cross to the other unless there is a change in nature. Contrary to popular belief, death does not bring about a change of nature; it does not bring man into a spirit existence. Otherwise it is no longer a judgment upon man's sin. What death does is to terminate man's existence bringing the body to decay while the life essence returns back to God who gave it (Ecclesiastes 12:7; 9:10; Psalm 6:5). Death brings to a total end and only a resurrection can make alive again.

The point of note is that it is only a complete change of nature that can bring man to a heavenly existence. 1 Corinthians 15:50 says *flesh and blood **cannot** inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.* And this change of nature is one of the

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opportunities offered in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The *High Calling of God in Christ Jesus* provides an opportunity for **some** among mankind to be elevated (upgraded) from the earthly sphere into a heavenly, to experience a change of nature from humans to becoming spirit beings.

What then constitute the heavenly inheritance contained in the gospel call? What are the elements in the prize of the High calling of God in Jesus Christ? These questions will be the focus of our meditation in the next subsection.

Elements in the Prize of the High Calling

The promised honours associated with the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus constitute the *prize of the High Calling*. From related scriptural passages, we can identify four elements that collectively make up this prize as

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- Becoming a life-giving Spirit (1 Corinthians 15: 42-49)
- Becoming Incorruptible Persons (1 Corinthians 15: 52-54)
- Becoming Immortal (2 Timothy 1:10, 11; Romans 2: 6, 7)
- Royal Priests, ruling and reigning with Jesus on His throne (Revelation 3: 21, 20:4).

These four elements are interrelated and each one is worthy of study and meditation. However, in this text, we shall only explain what each means

Becoming a life-giving Spirit

Just as we have different levels of glory and splendour among terrestrial (earth-bound) creatures (1Corinthians 15:39), the spirit estate is highly stratified. God used the things that we can see to tell us this: *there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another of the*

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stars, and one star differeth from another star in glory (1 Corinthians 15:41). Thus we are to understand that there are different orders or rankings even among spirit angels, and the glory, splendour, honour and life possessed by one angelic spirit may differ from that of another.

Far above the sphere of angelic existence is the divine estate. Angels are spirit beings but are not life-giving spirits. No angelic spirit has the capacity to create and sustain in life that which has been created. Only the divine Spirit has the capacity to do that. God is the father of spirits (Hebrews 12:9). He births and sustains in life all created things. John 5:21 reads *...The Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them*. The word “quickeneth” means He gives and keeps giving them life so that they continue to live. We read in Isaiah 42:5 that He is *God the Lord, he that created the heavens, and stretch them out; he that spreadeth forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the*

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people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein. Also, concerning Adam it is said... And God breathed into his nostrils the breathe of life; and man became a living soul (Genesis 2:7b).

It has pleased the Father to make the Son as He is. We are told that the second man (the human Jesus) has been made (by resurrection) a life-giving Spirit (1 Corinthians 15:45b). *As the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will (John 5:21).* And this same estate of life is one of the honours held out to all that are exercised under the High Calling of God in Christ... *As we have borne the image of the earthy, we **shall** also bear the image of the heavenly (1 Corinthians 15:49).* We give all glory and praise to his name.

Becoming Incorruptible Persons (1 Corinthians 15:52-54)

The prize of the heavenly calling is described in 1Corinthians 9:25 as an "*incorruptible crown*".

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“Corruption” is a term that is used to define the process by which a living being is gradually brought to physical death. We can call it the *“death or ageing process”*. The disobedience of Adam and the righteous judgment of God upon him and his seed, has subjected the entire human race to the bondage of corruption (Romans 8:20, 21). Romans 5: 12-14 reads *Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law). Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that have not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression.*

Corruptibility is a bondage from which none of the seed of Adam has won the victory, not even those that have exercised saving faith in Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and for atonement with God. But there is a victory that is soon to come. Yes! There is a song that is soon to

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be song in the midst of the redeemed, as it is written ...*So when this corruptible must have **put on** incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?* (1 Corinthians 15:54). Our Lord Jesus Christ said in John 10:25, 26 ...*I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And **whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.** Believest thou this?* Oh that we might believe and submit to the conditions for participation. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:51 ...*Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep (die), but we shall all be changed!*

Angelic spirits in the service of God are not subject to corruption. They do not die or age, they are kept in eternal youthfulness. And this same incorruptibility, agelessness as a fixed estate, total liberty and victory over death and

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the grave while yet living upon the earth, is one of the elements in the gospel call. This was the continuous longing of Paul and many others like him all throughout the church age (2 Corinthians 5:2-4; Philippians 3:10, 11). But they never attained to it, not because they were not worthy, but because the time for its fulfilment was not yet due. But the time is now. We are in the time when the fullness of our redemption is to be made known unto us. Yes! We can lift up our heads, for our redemption draweth nigh (Luke 21:28).

Now Paul says he was not just wishing this, it was not just a product of his own imagination. He says *He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit* (2 Corinthians 5:5). Oh! What assurance, what confidence, what zeal and longing, ought this to provoke in us.

Associated with the experience of incorruptibility is total deliverance from the

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power and presence of sin and its associated effects.

Becoming Immortal (2 Timothy 1:10, 11; Romans 2:6, 7)

Immortality is different from incorruptibility. Incorruptibility implies that life is held intact so that there is no decay. But the life so possessed by the one that is incorruptible is not inherent in him. In other words, he is neither the source of the life nor is the life sustained by his own power. Thus, it is possible for the one that is incorruptible to experience death and decay if the source of life is detached from him. In contrast "*immortality*" means inherent life, inexhaustible life, a situation in which life inheres an individual so that it is not possible for the life to be taken away or for it to be exhausted.

Immortality is described in scriptures as the ***crown of life*** (the crowning piece of life) (James 1:12; Revelation 2:10). This is eternal life, life in

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its highest expression (I John 1:2). Immortality makes a being to be **absolutely** independent, depending on no one and nothing for existence. It also confers on him the ability to give out life to others without experiencing any loss whatsoever. Out of the inexhaustible reservoir of life in him, the immortal one pours out life to creation.

Up until the advent of the Lord Jesus Christ into human history, this realm of life has been the exclusive preserve of the Almighty God. *Only God hath immortality* (1 Timothy 6:16). Like humans, spirit angels in all of their various rankings, though incorruptible, are mortal. They do not have life in themselves. They are sustained in life and maintained in an incorruptible state by the life that flows from the very presence of the Almighty God.

In the Almighty God is the fountain of life, in His light we see light (Psalm 36:9). He is the

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fountain of living waters, to forsake him is to die (Jeremiah 2:13). He does not depend on anything or anyone for existence. He does not eat food or breathe in oxygen to live. He breathes in the praises and worship of his creations and breathes out life to them in return. He sustains all things by the breathe of His life, yet He does not faint nor get weary (Isaiah 40:28, 29). By virtue of the immortal life, He is everywhere present at the same time, with the same undiminished glory and excellence, and in that presence is fullness of joy and pleasures forever more (Psalm 16:11).

But the door into immortality is now opened to men (2 Timothy 1:10; Romans 2:7). Yes! *Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath*

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brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2 Timothy 1:9-10).

Royal Priests, ruling and reigning with Jesus on His throne (Revelation 3:21; 20:4)

The final element in the High calling of God in Christ that we have set out to consider is the call to a royal priesthood. The Almighty God is raising up a royal priesthood. The scriptures teach that God found fault with the Old covenant and its priesthood (Hebrews 8:7, 8). The Old Testament priesthood was made up of human beings who were of the earth earthy and who in themselves were subject to corruption. But the new priesthood God is raising up to serve under the New Testament is to be an heavenly, constituted after the power of an endless life, consisting of persons who were previously humans but have being lifted up from that estate of limitation and have been made life-giving spirits (Hebrews 5:10; 7: 1-27). These royal priests of God are the ones to administer the

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affairs of His eternal kingdom. They are to be his sons, begotten into the divine nature (Hebrews 1:5). Through this body of sons, God is to fulfil His eternal purposes in the ages to come (Ephesians 2:7).

At his resurrection and exaltation to the divine glory, the Lord Jesus Christ was made the High priest of the New covenant, the progenitor and head of a new priesthood, the author of eternal salvation to all of mankind (Hebrews 5:9-10). Under him, sharing in the same office and glory, bearing the same image, is to be a body of priest. Yes!, Jesus was to be the first among equals, the king over many kings who are to administer with him, the Lord over many lords who are to rule with Him, the Saviour over many Saviours who are to share with him in the task of redemption, as it is written *...And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the Lord's* (Obadiah 21). The

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Lord is to be King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Saviour of saviours.

The royal (kingly) priests constitute the core *new heaven* full of righteousness that is to be set up in the age to come. They are the *holy city*, the *New Jerusalem*, the City-Government of the great King of kings and Lord of lords, coming down from God out of heaven, given in marriage to the King's Son, prepared as *a bride adorned for her husband*. They are living exact copies of the Son of God to whom they have been thoroughly conformed (Romans 8:29; Hebrews 2:10). They collectively bear His name as Mediator of the millennial covenant mankind will enter into with God in the age to come. Under the covenant, the multitude of people of the earth dwelling within their natural boundaries will by these royal priests be gradually uplifted to the highest human estate such as Adam had before the fall. Yes! By the ministry of this *new heaven*, there is to be set up a *new earth* of perfected humans

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wherein righteousness dwells (Revelation 21:1-5). These Royal priests, ruling and reigning with Christ is what the earnest expectations of these multitudes are waiting and groaning for (Romans 8:19).

Since God has purposed that the priesthood of the New Covenant will consist of persons that have been fully trained and perfected, it is pertinent that the graces and character of life required for the priesthood should be measurably worked into us in the time of preparation while still upon the earth as humans. It is for this reason we have been constituted priests and kings unto God (Revelation 5:10) to minister to Him in his sanctuary which we are, and to be trained in priestly services towards men and kingly rule over the earth. This is our vocation, a necessary training to fit us for priestly rule in the age to come.

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The Lord Jesus Christ, our fore-runner went through the same process. Positionally, he was set apart as a high priest when he was baptized with the Holy Spirit at the river Jordan. But he was then only a priest in training. He did not enter into the full import of that office until he was resurrected from the dead.

Now are we *priests unto our God* (Revelation 5:10), but when we have been fully trained and have fully taken on the garments of character and graces required for the priesthood, we shall become *priests of God* (Hebrews 7:1). And *no man taketh this honour unto himself*, but only those that God shall find worthy.

It would not be possible to adequately describe in human words each of these four elements that make up the prize of the High Calling. The riches of the glory thereof surpasses human understanding and are to be increasingly made manifest even in the ages to come (Ephesians 2:7). Indeed, it is unimaginable, nay unthinkable,

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that the Almighty God, who makes darkness his covering so that there is no searching out of his Person, the One who dwelleth in light which no creature (human or spirit) can approach, should look unto man and chose to share his essence and glory with him. *What is man that your mind is so full of him?*, the Psalmist asked, *or the son of man that thou visitest him?* (Psalm 8:4). *For verily, He took not the nature of angels* (to lift them up into a higher glory) *but he took on* (as apprentices to be trained and prepared for the divine glory) *the seed of Abraham* (Hebrews 2:16). Oh! May the Lord cause us to see in an increasing manner the purpose and the glory to which we have been called.

In Christ; together with Christ

The High Calling of God is said to be *in Christ Jesus*. This implies the following

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- (i) The invitee is accepted into a relationship with God through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ
- (ii) Continuous enlightenment as to the full objective of the calling is only received through union with the personal Lord Jesus Christ in vital fellowship.
- (iii) The calling would require the invitee to share in the privilege of extending the same invitation to others. But these services are acceptable to God only on the ground of what the Lord Jesus has done (1 Peter 2:4, 5; Colossians 2:9, 10). The faults and disabilities of the invitee are compensated for by the perfection of Christ.

Meeting the conditions set and attaining the mark fixed for the prize is declared to be *together with Christ*. This implies that all blessings and spiritual attainments are enjoyed and made possible by the indwelling Christ. The Father has given to us the spirit of sonship whereby we cry, *Aba Father* (Romans 8:9-11). Verse 11a says, *But*

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if the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you ... There is a power that is at work towards all of the called in Christ Jesus directed to fulfilling in them all of the father's promises. This is the power of the indwelling spirit. *Christ in you, the hope of glory* (Colossians 1:29).

In addition, the phrase *together with Christ* implies that it is only as we co-operate with Christ that we are assisted to go through all the testings associated with the calling. He alone knows the way, and if we submit fully to his rule, we shall experience the enabling strength to attain to the mark for the prize and to keep at it.

These considerations link us with the meditation in the next section.

THE MARK FOR THE PRIZE

Though the High Calling is secured by grace and freely offered, the term "prize" emphasizes the

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fact that, from a certain standpoint, these honours are bestowed only on those who prove themselves worthy through faithful and loyal compliance with the set conditions. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:24, 25 *Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.* Thus, there is a mark for the prize of the High calling of God in Christ Jesus, a mark that wins the prize (Philippians 3:14).

We have said earlier that the High calling of God in Christ implies that those who are exercised thereby are to experience a change of nature. However, the process by which the change is to be effected is mainly executed on earth amidst unfavourable trial-some circumstances that will thoroughly test the value that the invitee places on the promised honours that are declared and held out through the gospel call. God has

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arranged that all of the called in Christ are to be tried and tested before they are crowned. And it is only such among the invitee that prove worthy of the calling that ultimately receives the prize.

The human Jesus, the one that went ahead of us, was **thoroughly** tested of the Father. *For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame (Hebrews 12:2)... Who, being in the form of God, did not meditate upon a usurpation of God's rights but made himself of no reputation and take on the form of a servant and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, wherefore **God has also** highly exalted him (Philippians 2:6-9). Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death (failure to apprehend the purpose for which God had apprehended him), and was heard in that he feared; though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered. And being made perfect (in*

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loyalty and yieldedness to the Father), *he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec* (Hebrews 5:7-10).

God did this as a pattern for us. He says in Isaiah 28:16 *Behold, I lay in Zion **for a foundation** a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation...* There is none of the called in Christ that will not be required by the Father to prove his worthiness of these highest honours of the kingdom. Mathew 20:23 show us that the Father is deeply interested and deals prudently in this matter of choosing them who are to sit with Christ in his throne. Even the Lord Jesus Christ himself told all that seek to be his disciples *If any man will come after me (coming into the same place I am), let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it* (Mathew 16: 24, 25).

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What then are the things that constitute the mark for the prize, the things that the Father looks for in the called, which things qualify us for the promised honours? For the purpose of clarity, we shall list five elements that together constitute the mark trusting the Lord to help us explain each in turn

- (i) A clean heart (Psalm 51:10)
- (ii) A right spirit (Psalm 51:10)
- (iii) Bridal fidelity (2 Corinthians 11:2)
- (iv) Faithfulness (1 Corinthians 4:2)
- (v) Loyalty (2 Chronicles 16:9)

A Clean heart

Cleanliness of heart (sanctification) is one of the elements that make up the mark for the prize. The Psalmist asked and answered the question *Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; he that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and*

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speaketh the truth in his heart, he that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour, in whose eyes a vile person is contemned. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation (Psalm 15:1-4; 24:3-5). Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6: 9-11 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure (1 John 3:3). To ignore character development and holiness and to presume to serve the Lord, abounding in

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religious activities, is great folly, and amounts to running in vain or beating the air (1 Corinthians 9:26, 27; Mathew 7:23). Our bodies presented to God in sanctification, is the only entrance into reasonable service (Romans 12:1).

Unholy living and filthiness of heart typifies a horrible pit condition (Psalm 40: 2). A believer in such condition cannot be said to be running the race set before him. For such a one, the crown is not in view. But the blood of Jesus Christ not only lifts out of the horrible pit condition, it delivers also from the miry clay of struggling with sin.

A Right Spirit

A "*right spirit*" refers to spiritual awakefulness, fervency in the spirit, being possessed of a deep yearning for God, a continuous longing to be like him expressed in vital unbroken communion with him, and the possession of a positive attitude towards the Lord and towards his

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people, a disposition that is ready to follow the Lord all the way. This is that which makes the believer alive to God and in a position to receive more and more from Him.

The promised honours of the Kingdom are not given to casual comers. God will not give holy things to dogs or cast precious pearls before swines (Mathew 7:6). These aspects of the blessings of the gospel associated with the hope of our calling are not given to us because we have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ for remission of sins. They are given only to those who earnestly seek the Lord for them and submit to all the conditions for their fulfilment. *Unto them (and only them) that look (passionately seek and long) for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation* (Hebrews 9: 29b). Malachi 3: 1b says *the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in.*

Bridal Fidelity

Bridal fidelity speaks of singleness of affection for the Lord, spiritual virginity, turning away from the world and from all others in order to give all to the Lord, loving him above all and ensuring that his place in our hearts is not shared by another. Bridal fidelity implies that we submit to the Lord's rule in all things and allow his word only to direct all our activities (Luke 19:27). It requires us to be ready to give up anything that the Lord tell us is not in agreement with him in our personal lives, in our services for the kingdom (our ministries), in our relationship with our brethren and fellow men, and in his church. Yes! Bridal fidelity requires deliverance from the spirit of the world that seek to husband our souls and the spirit of error that sets men up in opposition to the truth and to the purpose of God in his church (James 4:4; 2 Corinthians 11:2-4, Galatians 3:1). Only brides of Jesus ultimately become the sons of God.

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Faithfulness

Faithfulness has to do with seeking to know the will of the Lord especially as it relates to the outworking of His plans and purposes and going ahead to do the same in the way He required it to be done (Luke 12:47-48). It implies that we take time to know what the Lord's will is, and that haven known what the Lord will have us do, we do it joyfully with all of our strength and abilities, ***even at the cost of physical death*** (Deuteronomy 28:47; Mathew 10: 39; Revelation 2: 10).

It is a requirement in stewardship that a man be found faithful (1 Corinthians 4:2). Yet, faithfulness in the kingdom is not counted by what we think we are doing for God, or by the multitude of our activities, or even by the measure of our suffering, but to what extent our services agree with the counsel of His will (Ephesians 1:11). Ignorance of the Lord's will is also never an excuse (Luke 12:48; 2 Peter 3:5).

Loyalty to Christ

Loyalty has to do with possessing a meek spirit, always giving way for the Lord's glory, allowing ourselves to decrease in the sight of men so that he might increase (John 3:30). Loyalty implies that we do not meditate upon a usurpation of God's rights in his creation, we do not attempt to take the place of control over people's lives, that we are careful to give all glory to the Lord even when he uses us to bring blessing to our fellow men. Loyalty requires that we do not sit upon the throne of God in the hearts of men (2 Thessalonians 2:4), even when we are in a position to do this. A disloyal servant seeks to assume the rights and privileges reserved for his master alone. When loyalty is not possessed, a man sooner or later finds that he has set himself against the Lord.

A loyal heart will keep us from falling. It will put us in a place where mercy can always reach us. 2 Chronicles 16: 9

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says... For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect (loyal) toward him.

All of these elements that together constitute the mark for the prize of the High calling are seen as possessed by the overcomers in Revelation 14:1-5. These qualities are not unattainable. They are also not dependent on how old we are in the Lord. The mark can be attained by a babe in Christ if he/she is properly disposed towards the Lord. Yet it may be absent in a believer who have been saved for so many years (see 1Corinthians 3 and Hebrews 5:12-14 for example). It is also possible to be greatly involved in the service of the gospel, doing many great works in his name and conquering kingdoms and yet be destitute of the mark (Mathew 7: 22). This is sobering. May the Almighty God be gracious unto us.

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Once the mark is possessed by a believer, a place is already reserved for him/her by Christ. Symbolically, a crown is allocated to that believer. But the mark can be lost if the believer does not continue to do things that enabled him to possess the mark in the first instance. Revelation 3:2-3a, 10b says *...Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast and repent... Behold, I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.* Thus once possessed, the believer is to strive to keep himself/herself in that overcoming state that pleases the Father. This is the thrust of Paul's confession when he said he *press towards the mark for the prize*. He said he does all of these for the gospel's sake, that he may be partaker thereof (1 Corinthians 9:23).

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WHAT WILL YOUR RESPONSE BE?

It has taken God about two thousand years to raise up a bride for His son, to raise up a body of sons that will share with Him in his throne glory and kingdom. This work that the Holy Spirit began to do in the days of the Lord's first advent, He is now about to bring to a consummation. Yes! The fullness of the gentiles is about to come in (Romans 11: 25). We are at the end of the age and the Father is about to wind up His plans and purposes for the church.

God is calling all of His people at this time. He is calling us to break away from everything that has beclouded our vision and blinded our eyes, from the things that have made us far removed from Him. He says unto us

*Return, return, O shulamite; return,
return that we may look upon thee...
Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come
away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain
is over and gone; the flowers appear*

upon the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away (Song of Solomon 6:13a; 2:10b-13).

Yes! We must come away. There is a supper he has prepared for us at this time. The great time of the revelation of the Father's glory is here. It is the Father's good pleasure to give unto us the kingdom (Luke 12:32). If we be willing and obedient, we shall eat the good of the land (Isaiah 1:19).

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For further help, write

The Emergent Church,
P.O. Box 10113,
Benin City, Nigeria.

E-mail: housefellowship.benin@yahoo.com

OR

Call the following lines

08055105073, 08055066246, 07061969441