

THE UPWARD CALL

*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.***

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

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by – Stuart H. Pouliot

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What is the Endgame?

Recently, I shared some thoughts with some brothers about God's ultimate purpose. What started us down this road of thought was the question of whether people get a second chance to be saved after they die. If you have read my material, you should know the answer I offered. To say the least, it was a good discussion. Near the end of the time, I was asked one question: ***What is the endgame?*** This is a great question and one with a very simple answer: **ALL! All is the endgame.**

Without doubt, most Christians have been taught that there is no such thing as a second chance. One must turn to the Lord in this life, that is, during our **present evil age** (Paul's words), or else face an eternal torture chamber called *hell* with literal flames of fire licking at their physical body and worms coming out of their ears, and this will go on forever and ever and ever, with no chance of ever coming out of this hell-hole. Please put on your logic cap for a minute. How long can a physical body endure physical fire? Not very long! Others might counter this with the idea of hell simply being outside the presence of God forever. As we will see, the endgame does not allow for this.

Personally, I do not believe the question of a "second chance" is even the right question. Hebrews 9:27 states: **And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this [comes] judgment.** When one dies, judgment follows. It doesn't say when judgment occurs but that it occurs sometime after death. Obviously, in the case of those who appear before the Great White Throne Judgment, it occurs at the end of the Lord's Day right before God's Day.

However, according to Paul, no one is exempt from judgment.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10 NASB)

(10) But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? **For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.** (11) For it is written, "AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, **EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD.**" (Romans 14:10-11 NASB)

We must all appear sounds like a pretty inclusive statement. The more I have studied Paul, the more I have come to see that one of his most favorite words is *all*, the word of the endgame.

Paul repeated this same word in his epistle to the Philippians.

(9) For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, (10) so that **at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, (11) and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.** (Philippians 2:9-11 NASB)

Paul simply declared a fact that the Lord spoke through Isaiah the prophet.

(22) "Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. (23) **"I have sworn by Myself, The word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance.** (24) "They will say of Me, 'Only in the LORD are righteousness and strength.' Men will come to Him, and all who were angry at Him will be put to shame. (Isaiah 45:22-24 NASB)

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Again, through Isaiah, the Lord said: **"My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure"** (Isaiah 46:11).

What is the Lord's good pleasure? Adding what was given to Paul by the Holy Spirit, it is that every knee in heaven and on earth and under the earth, meaning all things and all people, will bow the knee to Jesus. The word *every* is synonymous with the word *all*, which is an inclusive word with nothing left out. The Lord has sworn and His word has gone forth throughout creation, and it will not return to Him void.

Now, for years I thought that believers will willingly bow the knee, but unbelievers will be forced to bow the knee; the angels will force them to their knees before they are cast into the lake of fire to be roasted and toasted for eternity. Fortunately, I began searching scripture on my own and discovered that the word *bow* does not mean one is forced into action.

In the Greek, the word translated as *bow* is *kampto*, which means "to bend." *Vines Expository Dictionary* states that it means "to bend, is used especially of bending the knees in religious veneration." The word *veneration* applies to worship and means "to look upon with feelings of deep respect; a feeling of deep respect and reverence." In other words, *kampto* applies to one who willingly bows out of deep respect and is not forced or coerced into it. If Paul meant that all will be forced to bow, then he would have used the word *sunkampto*, which means "to bend down by compulsory force" (Romans 11:10).

Scripture makes it clear that all will willingly bow the knee. Further, **no one is able to say Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit** (1 Corinthians 12:3). But there is more.

"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw [or, drag] all to Myself." But this He was saying signifying by what sort of death He was about to die. (John 12:32-33 ALT)

The word *draw* literally means "to drag," and Jesus meant exactly what He said. If He died on the cross of Calvary for the sin of the world, which He most definitely did, then He would literally draw all men to Himself. He did not elaborate on how He will do it, but He declared that He will do it.

"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws [drags] him; and I will raise him up on the last day." (John 6:44 NASB)

The word *draw* comes from the same Greek word meaning "to drag." Thus, the dragging starts with the Father. He drags people to His Son. But notice that the Lord said that He would drag all to Himself, and the word *all* is an inclusive word that means "everybody." In other words, it is the Father's will to drag all mankind to His Son, and it is His Son's will to drag all mankind to Himself.

There are many other ways that could be used to make the point, but these few verses are a start for the curious to see it is not a matter of first chance, second chance, or any other chance. God has not left anything to chance. Scripture clearly tells us that all will bow the knee and confess Jesus, and the Lord will draw all to Himself. Some might debate when the last day will occur, but it seems that the last day for all the dead to be raised up is the **Great White Throne**. However, the **conquerors of Christ** will be **raised up from among the dead** a thousand years earlier in the **first resurrection** (Revelation 20:4-6) or, as Paul called it, the **out-resurrection** [exanastasis] (Philippians 3:11 Wuest).

What is the endgame? **It is All!** God has purposed to save all mankind, for the cross was and will forever be a 100% success in the salvation of all, not all at the same time but all eventually.

So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. (Romans 5:18 NASB)

As everyone dies because of Adam, so also everyone will be made alive because of Christ. ... In Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order.... (1 Corinthians 15:22-23 GW, NASB)

To understand how He will do this, one needs to understand the true nature of **the lake of fire**, which is **the fiery law of God** that comes forth from the **Throne of God** for the purpose of restoration and restitution, so that **God the Father may be all in all** (1 Corinthians 15:28), which is His ultimate purpose. **For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things** (Romans 11:36 NASB).