

GROWING IN GOD

PODCAST



GIG148 – The Upward Flow

Hi, and welcome to the podcast today. This time is really born out of something that came up in a prayer meeting we had a week or two ago. While we were praying, someone mentioned the idea of the upward flow; and, of course, that raised a question by someone else, “What do you mean by the upward flow?” So I want to explain that, because I think it is a very interesting concept, and it really is part of what we are believing for and having faith for as we move forward into the Kingdom of God. I think it will be a very simple explanation; we will use the Scriptures that will really define this. And I think it is going to help you in your walk with the Lord as you move forward, and as we believe for His return and for the Kingdom of God coming on the earth.

So, what is the upward flow? Well, we have to go back to Genesis the third chapter, verses 17-19. This is after Adam has disobeyed the commandment of the Lord and he has eaten of the fruit of the tree. God comes and speaks to him, and He says, “Then to Adam He said, ‘Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, “You shall not eat from it”; cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you will eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.’” This is the curse that God brought upon creation. I know here it says *earth*, but as we get into Romans, we will see a little deeper clarification, where God cursed His creation because of man’s disobedience. He was protecting man from getting in more trouble than he was already in, if he was not going to be obedient to the Lord’s commandments. He had to keep him away from the tree of life, as He did not want man to come into eternal life with this fallen state that he was in. And so, God here is really protecting us. And the way He does it is by placing this restraint, if you will, this curse upon the ground. As we see, the Garden of Eden was a wonderful place. Everything was great. It provided everything that you needed. Now, all of a sudden, the ground is going to be cursed, and with difficulty will man survive. He is going to have to work in order to have bread, and at some point he himself is going to die, and he is going to return to dust.

We are going to jump now to Romans the eighth chapter, because we realize that from this point in time, up until the time we now live in, there does continue to remain this curse that God brought upon creation. Romans 8, starting at verses 18-19. It says, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.” So here Paul is talking in terms of all creation; he is not just talking about the dust of the field or the dirt, the earth, as it was mentioned in Genesis. And the two are not in conflict; that was the expression that was being used in Genesis to deal with this idea that all of creation is now going to be under this futility, which is being described and defined in a clearer way here in Romans the eighth chapter.

I will read verse 19 again: “For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly,” – in other words, the world didn’t do this to itself; creation didn’t do this to itself; God did it – “but because of Him who subjected it, in

hope.” Now remember that – God did this in hope of something that was going to come and release creation from futility, release mankind out from under the futility, and that is really what Paul is dealing with here in Romans chapter 8.

Verses 20-25: “For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.”

This is painting a really beautiful picture here, recognizing that out of God’s response to our disobedience, mankind, our human body, our flesh, as well as all creation – we are part of creation – was subjected to futility. What is futility? Well, the idea of futility is that things tend to degrade. They tend to go backwards, they tend to disintegrate. Just as it is saying, we will at some point die and turn back into dust; that is disintegration from the state that we are now in. So we recognize this idea that under futility, things wear out, things fall apart, things stop functioning; and so, futility, if you would see it this way, is always a downward pull. It is always making things more difficult. If you are going to eat bread, you have to do it by the sweat of your brow. You have to make something happen; it is not just going to naturally happen. Whereas in the Garden of Eden before the fall, everything was just provided. It was there, and without sweat, man was being able to eat and to live and to enjoy the wonders of God’s creation. Now, the creation is under this futility; and we see that it applies to every aspect of creation and the world, the physical world around us, including our own bodies. And so, Paul is saying here that there is a groaning, there is a travail that is going on. There is a travail about our salvation that is yet to be manifest. We recognize that we do have salvation, the forgiveness of our sin; but we also understand that we have been forgiven of sin, and yet we still live our lives daily under this downward pull that is futility, and under this force that is making things wear out and making things pull, if you will, downward away from God, away from the things of God.

So that is what futility is. We see it as a downward force, like gravity, pulling us away. But Paul here is saying that there is a travail going on, because we have been saved in a hope. Part of our salvation does include the fact that futility at some point is going to be removed; and that is what Paul is talking about, that we are waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons of God, the redemption of our body – having our bodies freed from the futility. And it is this part of this hope that is our salvation. Christ comes the first time to deal with sin, but it says He appears again without a focus upon sin, without sin being the issue. What is the issue is the removal of this futility from creation, and the freedom of man and all the earth and all of the heavens from this futility that has been placed there in hope by God, that at some time we would come into a walk of obedience that would allow Him to now remove this curse of futility that we labor under and that we are all subject to.

Remember, verse 20 says, “For the creation was subjected to this futility”; and so, the futility will be removed. We actually see a picture of that when we look at the wilderness. And I know our concept of Israel and the wilderness is that it was a punishment, it was a negative time, it was a difficult time. Yet there were many ways in which their forty years in the wilderness really was a picture of the Kingdom, and the way things will manifest and function during the Kingdom of God.

I will give you an example out of Deuteronomy 29, verses 5-6. It says, "I have led you forty years in the wilderness; your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandal has not worn out on your foot. You have not eaten bread." Now, why would He say you have not eaten bread? We know that they were fed with manna, but what does that have to do with anything? Well, remember, under the curse, you only receive bread when you earn it by the sweat of your brow. In the wilderness, they didn't earn their bread. They didn't make the bread. They didn't grow the wheat. They didn't have to do anything. They went out in the morning and picked it up off the ground. So, you see, this is a picture of the fact that futility during the days of the wilderness was really suspended. One of the other Scriptures talks about the fact that they had none of the diseases that existed in Egypt during that time of the wilderness. So, they were free of sickness. Their clothes did not wear out. See, this downward pull, this disintegration of everything, ceased. Why did that cease? Because they were living virtually in the Presence of God, right? The Presence of God was there day and night. He was a pillar of fire at night that warmed them and gave them light, and He was a pillar of cloud by day that sheltered them from the heat of the sun in the desert. They lived in the Presence of God. In the Presence of God, this futility was suspended; and that gives us a picture of how things will manifest in the Kingdom. In Christ's return, in His coming, in His Parousia, then, we are going to see simultaneously this aspect of salvation beginning to manifest itself, which will include the release from the futility – the downward pull, that wearing out of everything, including death – that transpires because of His Presence and because we are into the Kingdom of God.

I want to go on now to the prophecies that show this literally does take place as part of what God has spoken will transpire with the earth and with mankind. I am going to start at Isaiah the second chapter, verses 2-4. "Now it will come about that in the last days" – in the last days, as we are moving into His Kingdom, we are going to see these things begin to transpire – "the mountain of the house of the Lord will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it." You see that now there is not a downward pull of futility, there is an upward flow into the Presence of the Lord, into the Kingdom of God, into the things of God. "And many peoples will come and say, 'Come, let us go up.'" See, the movement is now up. It is not being pulled downward. "'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us concerning His ways and that we may walk in His paths.' For the law will go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples; and they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war." War is definitely a part of this aspect of futility that the world is under, and it is one of the signs that seems to increase as we come into these last days, because Christ Himself said that you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. So the futility continues on into days of tribulation. But also in those last days, there will begin to be a reversal of this.

I want to go to Micah now, chapter 4, verses 1-7. "And it will come about in the last days." Notice how overlaid these Scriptures are; they are saying the same thing. When God repeats Himself in the Scriptures, it is pointing to the fact that there is something significant in what is being said; and Micah and Isaiah are mirror images of one another in these verses. "And it will come about in the last days that the mountain of the house of the Lord will be established as the chief of the mountains. It will be raised above the hills, and the peoples will stream to it. Many nations will come and say, 'Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord and to the house of the God of Jacob, that He may teach us about His ways and that we may walk in His paths.'" See, this is something that under the futility we exist in, it is very difficult to have the teaching and the purity of the Word of God come through to us. Part of our

salvation is the fact that you are not supposed to have to teach every man his brother and his neighbor; they will all know the Lord. Why? Because as futility is broken, the ability to understand and grasp and hear the Word and walk in the ways of God is opened up to us as futility disintegrates and goes away. He is going to teach us His ways that we may walk in His paths. Now we are not going to walk as disobedient children anymore, we are going to walk in His paths.

“For from Zion will go forth the law, even the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He will judge between many peoples and render decisions for mighty, distant nations. Then they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they train for war. Each of them will sit under his vine and under his fig tree, with no one to make them afraid. For the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken. Though all the peoples walk each in the name of his god, as for us, we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever. ‘In that day,’ declares the Lord, ‘I will assemble the lame and gather the outcasts, even those whom I have afflicted. I will make the lame a remnant and the outcast a strong nation, and the Lord will reign over them in Mount Zion from now on and forever.’”

So as we see, everything is reversed here – disease is reversed; the war that takes place, the inability for the nations to relate. God is going to come and remove futility from our midst. And as He does, we find ourselves in what we call the upward flow. Now, the first time I heard this teaching was from John Stevens, who was my mentor and father in the Gospel. I don’t know if others have taught this; I have always taken it just as a terminology that he came up with and used, because it is so expressive of these Scriptures that we find here – the ending of the downward pull, and the initiating of us flowing up into Zion, up into the Presence of the Lord and up into His Kingdom. I think it is a great terminology, and it really expresses what we are believing for. Because remember, this is a part of salvation, as our salvation grows and manifests on another level into the Kingdom of God.

I want to emphasize a few points here as we end this. And as we do end this, I would say, let us have faith that we are in the days where we will experience the end of this downward pull and the beginning of an upward flow into the Presence of the Lord.

The first point I would make is that in the world today, we battle the effects of futility. It should be obvious to everyone. Number two, futility works against us, both on a natural level and on a spiritual level. It is like a tide that pulls us away from God and the things of God.

I would add, that as the Kingdom of God draws near and begins to dawn, the tide of futility will be reversed, acting instead like a river that is pulling us up into the things of God and up into His Kingdom. It is this change of tide that we call the upward flow. And I bless us all that we enter into it and experience this in our lifetime.

Amen.