

# The Top of the Mountain

Roger Tointon—May 11, 2013

Good afternoon, brethren! It is good for us to get together—is it not? It always makes me very happy to look out upon some of God's people gathered in one place. You come from across the scattered plains of this part of the country. I recognize a number of your faces and I'm very happy to see that you are still here; you are continuing on with your calling. That's what it's all about! You're being faithful. Paul speaks so much about that—doesn't he? When you're faithful! And how happy he was to see that in some of his congregations.

God's message, in many ways, is very simple, straightforward. He wants us to look to Him! He wants us to trust Him in all things, so that *He* can work out His purpose in us. Isn't that what it's about? That is our journey after we are called.

I want to draw on my own experience a little bit, just so that I can bring out and emphasize the struggle that we are going through. It is a struggle, as you all know, if you've been called and you are still with it, many of you after a good many of years. Some of you are just beginning, and that's fine, too. You'll have your chance for struggle—believe me!

My struggle, one year almost to the day, after God reached out and in no uncertain terms, called me. Think back to your calling and for many of you it's the same way. It was sudden! You began to see things you had not been able to see before. You had questions answered that you had always wondered about, maybe. But it was exciting—was it not? You knew that God was dealing with you. That's the way it was.

My struggle was to climb the east face of a mountain in Glacier National Park that I had known and seen for a long time working up there. But I had never had the opportunity to climb it. Like all mountains you have to start at the bottom and your goal is to get to the top.

In our spiritual struggle—and we are in this spiritual struggle because God called us—we have to begin at the bottom as it were, and our goal is the Kingdom of God; our goal is to be with Christ and to serve with Him. You know our calling! Our bottom is in 1-Cor.1 to remind us of what we are.

1-Corinthians 1:26: “For you see your calling, brethren, that *there are* not many who are wise according to the flesh, not many who are powerful, not many who are highborn *among you*. Rather, God has chosen the foolish things of the world, so that He might put to shame those who are wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the

world so that He might put to shame the strong things. And the lowborn of the world, and the despised has God chosen—even the things that are counted as nothing...” (vs 26-28). I would imagine that that fits all of us here. Who are we in this world? Who were we when God called us? We're nothing to the people in the world, but God saw something that He thought that He could use, that He could work with.

“...—in order that He might bring to nothing the things that are; so that no flesh might glory in His presence” (vs 28-29). That's the beginning! That's the bottom of the mountain!

What is the top of the mountain? We will turn to Revelation 20:4 and we will see where we're headed. We know where it is. “And I saw thrones; and they that sat upon them, and judgment was given to them; and I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and those who did not worship the beast, or his image, and did not receive the mark in their foreheads or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were completed.) This *is* the first resurrection. Blessed and Holy is the one who has part in the first resurrection...” (vs 4-6). That is *the top of the mountain!* That is our goal!

Revelation 19:1: “And after these things I heard the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, ‘Hallelujah! The salvation and the glory and the honor and the power *belong* to the Lord our God.’”

Verse 7: “Let us be glad and shout with joy; and let us give glory to Him; for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.” That's the top, brethren! That's what we have in our mind and should always keep in our mind; that is where we are aspiring to go.

As you remember when you were first called, you remember as you began to learn quickly and things were very exciting. You had what the Bible calls *your first love*.

Just as I started out that day to climb Mount Gould, I was excited. I knew it was a formidable task; the east face of that mountain had never been climbed. I thought I could do it. I was young and I was full of it, and I thought I could do it. I set off to the mountain at 5:30 one morning and it took about an hour and something to get to the face I was going to climb. The face was over 3,000 vertical feet straight up into the sky. It was very quickly that I

saw how difficult this was going to be.

How long after you were called did you come up against something like that? You came to your first real trial, your first obstacle. Did you have second thoughts? *You may have, but you're still here!* That's the key. You overcame that and you moved to the next.

That's exactly what I had to do on the mountain. The first was a hundred-foot bed—the whole thing was vertical—of molten rock that had come between the layers of sedimentary rock, and there were no handholds. But I had found a place two years earlier in exploring that I thought I could get through. So, I went there and I did, I got through it. Then it got harder and harder!

As our struggle, after our calling, many times it depends upon how humble that God has to make us, I guess. Some start a little more humble than others. If God had to really deal with us, it wasn't very long at all before your trials maybe got really severe.

Again, you had to reach down, call upon God, get on your knees and you had to get through those trials. You did, because you're here! I was able to go to a point—kind of a turning point. In our spiritual life, I think, there probably have been many points that would have been a turning point. You didn't know if you could go through what you faced.

On this it was a large boulder straight over my head lodged in the gully that I was trying to go up. One side and another and there was almost no room to get through. I finally decided that I would wiggle through. I knew as I did that I probably would not be able to come back. I didn't know what was above me, except that it was along way to the top. I wiggled through it, got above it, and then I saw just how difficult a thing I was facing. I could not see it until that point. I had to go through that hole and then I saw.

We have come to things, and if you think back over the years... This was 47 years ago, and I think back over those years—and I can see many places in the history of the Church of God that I've had to live through—where there was some very, very difficult points where we really had to talk with God, we had to talk with ourselves, so that we would know if we were going to trust God.

Well, I proceeded, but the struggle was hard, and the first thing I knew I had pulled myself up on a little ledge about 12 feet wide and about 1-1/2-feet from the face. It was getting very dark.

I remember in 1995 when, in the Church of God, things got very dark. It was a hard time in the Church of God. We had been lied to and lied to for a good number of years. It was like: What do we do?

Where do we go?

I wondered that, but I knew I'd have to figure that out in the morning. I spent the night on the ledge shivering and shaking, and the next morning—after I got done shaking from the cold—I looked and I had to go up this vertical face with no handholds, just a little crack down the center. The problem was that at the top was an overhang. I knew I had no options. I knew I had to go up that crack through the overhang and try to find something to hang onto; and I couldn't do it, I had to go back down to the ledge.

At that point—like in any trial in our life—I had to have a talk with God. As I said, this was one year after He had called me. I had not yet gone to church, but I had learned a lot of things; I was finally told I could go to church when I got back. At that point I didn't know if I'd go back. But I had to talk with God and said, 'This is the only way, You've got to help me.'

I tried again. I got up and I groped and I could not find a handhold above where I could reach. I had to go back down in the sling. That's a very slow process in the slings in that crack.

I had to sit there and it was at that point—and maybe you had such a point in your spiritual life—to where you wonder if you can go on, and if you thought about turning back, what did you have to decide? *You have to decide: no way!*

I thought about going back down the mountain, but I thought about all those things I had to go through to get to that point. I said I can't do that. I don't want to go back down that way. I'm not going to sit here and wait for them to rescue me, because I knew they'd never find me. They didn't know where I was; they couldn't see me flying by. That left the only option: to go up.

I talked to God again and said, 'I can't do this unless You help me.' I started off again. That time I finally got one step higher in the loops—the slings—and I was able to find a little something for my fingers to hold onto if I kept enough weight on it. I had to thrust myself, let go of the other hand from the top carving and throw myself up chest high with that ledge and I was able to pull myself over. I found another handhold with the other hand. I had gotten up that!

When you go to the point when you wonder and you think about turning back, you can't say yes to turning back. We have to say *no* to that. *There's only one direction to go once God had dealt with you!* Once He's dealt with you, that is it! You are in your time of judgment, as Peter says very plainly. It has begun in the house of God. It began in the first century and is still going on, and it may be drawing

quickly to a close—we don't know. It is going on and still going on in our lives now.

After a point like that I thought I needed a rest, but God generally doesn't give us much rest. It was the same on that mountain. It seemed like each pitch after that was more difficult. I finally got to the top and that's what we are still aspiring to do.

We know how hard the straight [gate] is, the narrow gate, and how difficult it is. We've gone through that, but there are other things that we need to understand.

Hebrews 13:5: "*Do not allow the love of money to influence your behavior, but be satisfied with what you have; for He has said, 'In no way will I ever leave you; no—I will never forsake you in any way.'*" That is absolutely true, but it depends on what? *It depends upon*

- whether or not we believe Him
- if we trust Him
- if we have the faith to believe what He tells us

He tells us many things in His Word. ***He will not leave us or forsake us!***

Philippians 1:6: "Being confident of this very thing, that He Who began a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ."

What more promise do we need? God is sure of what He is doing! The only thing that can make that not come to pass is *if we turn back*. If we decide we don't want to face what's ahead. And we are facing more than I had to face on that mountain, in many ways.

I had been facing more than 3,000 vertical feet. But we're facing all kinds of things that we cannot see, yet. We can read generally about them in prophecy, but we don't know the details. It is a very, very real thing that we are still in a struggle. We do have *hope* from God; we just read one of them.

Romans 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose."

Verse 31: "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who *can be* against us?" ***No one, brethren!***

- They can kill us!
- They can hurt us!
- They can take away what we have!

***But they cannot take away our eternal calling if we are faithful!***

That is a very poignant Scripture that we need to keep in mind. I want to end by going to

Psalms. I want us to listen very carefully what God is saying to us through David.

Psalm 23:1: "The LORD is my Shepherd; I shall not want.... [that's because we believe it] ...He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul..." (vs 1-3). If He did not do that on a daily, weekly, yearly basis, we would not still be here. *He does!*

"...He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death..." (vs 3-4). We may very well have to do that! Are we going to look to God then as we think we are now? *I hope so!*

"...I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over" (vs 4-5). When you look at the blessings that God has given you in your life, since your calling, don't they greatly outweigh the trials and he struggles?

Verse 6: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever."

Amen, brethren! We need to be there!

#### Scriptural References:

- 1) 1 Corinthians 1:26-29
- 2) Revelation 20:4-6
- 3) Revelation 19:1, 7
- 4) Hebrews 13:5
- 5) Philippians 1:6
- 6) Romans 8:28, 31

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