

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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GOD, COUNTRY, GUNS, WAR #3

“You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.’ “But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ... Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matthew 5.43-48 NASB)

Previously, I have stated that Christians who are strong on guns and war are warriors that are fighting by the physical sword and not the sword of the spirit. Ones who hold this warrior view are also ones most likely to believe in a hell that places billions of people in an eternal torture chamber. Simply, billions of people going to hell are seen as enemies that deserve what they get. Unfortunately, this attitude has spilled over to how many view guns and war. Personally, I hate both. I seldom use the word *hate*, but I do not hesitate to use it in speaking of my view of guns and war, for both speak of death, which is the last enemy of man, and the enemy that our Lord will ultimately defeat.

What concerns me for my country is the warning that **if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed** (Revelation 13.10 NASB); as a nation, the US has lived by the sword, and many Christians see nothing wrong with this. **For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you** (Matthew 7.2). Will God have to answer to Sodom and Gomorrah and all the other judged cities and nations if He does not judge us?

I propose that this warrior heart has come from the pulpits of Christendom that tell people if they do not believe in Jesus, then they are going to hell forever when they die. Rather than winning hearts through the love of God, many Christians have resorted to fear to coerce some into believing. This is like the physical sword. But, do ones who hear such a message truly believe in their heart, or are they merely scared into mentally agreeing? I have seen evidence of the latter. Isn't it strange that the gospel, the good news of Scripture, is never presented in Scripture as if it were part of some “fear factor show”? People aren't forced into believing; the grace of our Lord overwhelms their ignorance and unbelief with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 1.13b-14). Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ (God), which is the sword of the spirit (Romans 10.17). We are to put on the sword of the spirit (Ephesians 6.17), not take up the physical sword.

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Hebrews 4.12 NASB)

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6.12 NASB)

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. (2 Corinthians 10.3-4 NASB)

Do we truly believe Scripture? If we do, then we must see that we are not to be warriors of the world but rather warriors of the spirit. Sadly, the history of the church of God has been dominated by the physical sword, not by the sword that is sharper than any two-edged sword created by man. When men of the flesh, not of the spirit, got a hold on the so-called church, they resorted to the sword to get what they

wanted, and if people did not see it their way, they took the sword to them. Of course, I trust that you realize that I am speaking in generalities.

We are called to be the salt of the earth, speaking forth righteousness, and the light of the world, speaking forth the truth of the word of God. We are to be vessels of love that exemplify the character of our heavenly Father. But we have failed in our calling, and we see it in our leaders.

Though we walk in the flesh, we are not to wage war according to the flesh. I realize that some would say that this is the business of the nation and not of the church. This is true. But on what basis should a Christian who knows the word of God support war? Our fight is spiritual.

I recall very clearly George Bush's first inauguration when Franklin Graham and another Christian brother named the name of Jesus over the nation and his administration. I was amazed to hear such a clear declaration and wondered out loud how long it would take for this to be challenged by the many who despise the name of Jesus. It didn't take long! Since that day, it has been as if all the powers of darkness have come against this two-term president. Unfortunately, our spiritual enemy has inflicted damage. Instead of love, we have seen much hate; instead of peace, we have seen much war; instead of spiritual might, we have seen much military might; instead of godly-righteousness, we have seen much self-righteousness. Simply, **we act more like ancient Israel under the old covenant and not like spiritual Israel under the new covenant.**

I do not respect the many so-called Bush-bashers. I respect the Office of President; I respect our sitting president, and I will respect the new president, for we are commanded to pray for them. Holding this office in our day is a very difficult job that has many detractors and critics, regardless of which party one represents. President Bush has led this nation during very trying times. He has done things right and he has made mistakes, but we need to be reminded that men of flesh hold these offices and they can and do make mistakes. I become particularly distressed when I hear other believers question President Bush's salvation because they do not like how he has governed. **We need mercy!**

Regarding his stance on going to war, I would say that Bush is a product of the **warrior church** of our day. He is simply representative of many Christians, especially ones who believe that there is an eternal torturous punishment for the lost and that enemies and evil have to be stamped out by fighting according to the flesh. This goes right in line with the whole notion of an eternal hell where enemies will be cast. I would call President George Bush a "**warrior president,**" for this has been the hallmark of his eight years in office as we have fought wars on two fronts. But please understand that I am not implying nor stating that George Bush believes in hell, for I do not know what he believes or how strong his convictions are. I am simply stating that he is a product or representation of what could be called the "**militant church**" that has developed under a Pentecostal anointing based on a feast that is celebrated with leavened bread. To move beyond this heart of warring according to the flesh, we need the Tabernacles anointing that comes about with the arrival to this earth of the kingdom of our Lord.

Now, here is the point that I want to stress: The world, which I believe is predominantly **antichrist in its worldview**, has looked at the last eight years and sensed that something is amiss. It is as if the collective world is saying: "Here is a so-called Christian nation with a Christian president, and it seems that with every major confrontation, they go to war and are even willing to entertain torture of prisoners. In going to war, they are also willing to overturn nations and then help to rebuild them, which might be commendable, but their actions do not always match their words."

I believe that we have lost our message of the good news and have veered off course, and the world knows it. We cannot tell the world that God loves them and is at peace with them and then go off with some of the most destructive weapons known to man and intimidate the world into submission, all in the name of democracy and in the name of God, without being labeled hypocrites. It is the same as preachers declaring that God loves you, but if you do not believe in God's Son, then He is going to torture you forever and ever in some diabolical place called hell. Please do not read into this that salvation is apart from Christ; there is only one way to the Father, and that is through His Son.

The heart of the matter is this: We have lost our credibility and in the process lost our message of hope, love, peace, and mercy. It is time to return to the good news of Jesus and live it so the world will see!