

# 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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## ***Why So Much War In The Old Testament?***

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Recently, I was having lunch with a good friend and brother in Christ. Our conversation turned to why there was so much violence and war in the Old Testament. We talked about it for awhile but did not seem to come to a conclusion that seemed to satisfy the question. I was bothered by the matter, for there had to be a reason. My concern was not to satisfy curiosity, but an aching that many who read the Old Testament and who do not know the heart of God or understand His heart seem to draw the conclusion that God is actually a vengeful god not much different than man. I believe that the erroneous and unscriptural concept of hell, a place of endless torture and literal fire that tortures and torments the unbeliever for ever and ever and ever without any chance of reprieve, is based, at least in part, on a vengeful, even hateful, god as perceived in the Old Testament. After all, if He can kill thousands upon thousands of people, even those called out of Egypt to be His own possession, why can He not thrust billions of unbelievers into a torture chamber called hell?

I assure you that God is not vengeful as man is vengeful. He never acts with hatred or “the get-even attitude” that is the basis of man’s actions. He is not after a pound of flesh, so to speak. Actually, He is after our flesh (i.e., our old nature), but not just a pound; He wants it all. God is love, and everything He does is motivated by His heart of love and His purpose to reconcile all things to Himself.

Well, as I was driving home from my lunch date with my friend, I continued to ponder the question. I had plenty of time since it was a six-hour drive. (No distance is too great to travel to have lunch with a friend.) After a couple of hours, it finally dawned on me why there is so much war in the Old Testament. It is so simple, yet so profound.

Simply, God was at war with man and man was at war with God, and this was most exemplified through the very ones He called out of Egypt to Himself. If there is one lesson to be learned from the many ancient accounts, it is that, using a slang expression, “you don’t mess with God,” for you will lose every time. It is strange how mankind is so prone to war with God, the very Creator and Giver of Life, as if man thinks he can prevail. Consider Jacob; he wrestled with the angel of the Lord all night. In the end, he received a new name, Israel, which means “God rules.” So, you can wrestle with God all night or even all your life if you want, but when all is said and done, your conclusion will be that God rules.

But there is good news. God is no longer at war with mankind. He was at war before He sent His Son to this earth to die for the sin of the world, but once the greatest act of love in the entire universe and for all of time was accomplished on the cross of Calvary, God’s war with mankind officially ended. He raised the flag of truce. This is what Paul wrote to the Corinthians.

**(18) And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; (19) To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. (20) Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:18-20 KJV)**

**(18) Yet all is of God, Who conciliates us to Himself through Christ, and is giving us the dispensation of the conciliation, (19) how that God was in Christ, conciliating the world to Himself, not reckoning their offenses to them, and placing in us the word of the conciliation. (20) For Christ, then, are we ambassadors, as of God entreating through us. We are beseeching for Christ’s sake, “Be conciliated to God!” (2 Corinthians 5:18-20 CV)**

Two translations of the same verses are presented in order to provide more clarity to the matter. In particular, please note that the words *conciliates* and *conciliation* (CV) are used in place of the words *reconciled* and *reconciliation* (KJV).

Now, the words *conciliate* and *conciliation* are probably foreign to most people since these words are seldom used in common conversation; but they are vital words in understanding the cease fire called by God. Most translations use the word *reconciliation*, but the editor of the Concordant Version (CV) has pointed out that it is important to make a distinction between *conciliate* (or *conciliation*) and *reconcile* (or *reconciliation*). The Greek word *allassō* means “to make different, to change.” From this root word are derived two other words: *katallassō*, which is translated into the verb *conciliate* [noun form *katallagê*, translated as *conciliation*]; and *apokatallassō*, which is translated into the verb *reconcile*.

*Conciliate* means “to win over; soothe the anger of; make friendly; placate” and “to gain by friendly acts.” We could say that this is the first part of a peace agreement. When two parties are at war with each other, they are enemies. If one party makes peace with the other, then that party *conciliates* with the other, and there is *conciliation*. Thus, *conciliation* refers to one side of a peace deal; that is, one party is at peace with the other, but it does not follow that the other party has made peace with the one that has made peace. There is still enmity coming forth from one party. It is as if one waves the white flag of truce, but the other continues shooting.

For a peace deal to be of any value, it takes both parties to be at peace with one another. When each party has entered into peace with the other, it is called *reconciliation*, and there is no more war. Thus, the word *reconciliation* means that both parties are in harmony and at peace with one another. It is a mutual peace agreement. Each party has to make peace (**to be conciliated**) with the other to come into a mutual peace (**to be reconciled**).

Conciliation starts with God alone. **For if, being enemies, we were conciliated to God through the death of His Son, much rather, being conciliated, we shall be saved in His life** (Romans 5:10 CV). All were enemies of God. But when all mankind were dead in their trespasses and sin, Christ died! This is where conciliation starts. The peace treaty starts at the cross. Mankind was incapable of entering into a peace treaty with God. Can you imagine what it would be like if mankind wanted to be at peace with God, but He did not want to be at peace with mankind? It is a sad commentary on our day that many seem to project our Heavenly Father as one who refuses to be at peace with most of mankind. God is love, and He demonstrates His love, for He first loved us!

Consequently, the Old Testament is a story of the enmity between God and mankind. Much of it is a war story in which mankind loses. However, the story changes with the New Testament. God provides a way to conciliate the world to Himself, to end the war. Paul declares: **How that God was in Christ, conciliating the world to Himself, not reckoning their offenses to them.**

In other words, man is no longer God’s enemy because the enmity has been removed through His Son’s death on the cross. It is as if God Himself waved the white flag of peace. Through Christ, the entire world, which means all mankind, has been conciliated to God, and God is not counting their offenses against them. Consider how a paraphrased version reads: **That is, that God was in Christ making peace between the world and himself, not putting their sins to their account, and having given to us the preaching of this news of peace** (2 Corinthians 5:19 BBE).

Today, there is still war with God, but it is on the part of man, not God. Rather than war, God is calling all to be reconciled to Him through His Son. As Paul wrote: **Through Him (Christ) to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven** (Colossians 1:20 NASB).

The very heart of conciliation is peace, and this is the message that we, as believers, are to be proclaiming to the world that remains an enemy of the cross. God has made peace with the world because of His Son, because of **the LORD JESUS!** Man may still try to war with God in our present eon, but in the next eon, more and more of mankind will be reconciled to God as the Lord’s ambassadors are sent forth to the nations to teach them not only who the true King of all is, but also of the ways of His kingdom, until all things on earth and in heaven are brought into God’s peace.