

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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Parallel Universe

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Over the last year, I have heard the expression *parallel universe* used to describe the difference in the way people view matters. Simply, two parties see the same issue so differently that it seems that each party is living in a different universe that operates on entirely different principles. It is comparable to evil is good and good is evil, or dark is light and light is dark. When encountering such differing views, people sometimes ask: What planet are you from?

Recently, I heard this expression used to describe the news media's coverage of the political parties and their politicians. Research groups that analyze *media bias* claim that there are diametrically opposite standards applied by the news media to the two political parties. Some would call it a *double standard*. One example is the cost of George Bush's inauguration, which was under \$50 million, verses the cost of Barack Obama's inauguration, which is projected to be about \$150 million. Four years ago, the cost of Bush's inauguration was strongly criticized as too much spent in a time of recession. Comparisons were made to how much that money could buy or do in an economic downturn or even in fighting the war against terrorism. As a reminder, the recession of that day was a drop in the bucket compared to what we are facing today. Now, four years later, the country is in the worst downturn it has experienced since the 1930's, and the same people that criticized the cost four years ago are saying that it is essential to spend all this money on the inauguration today. They are talking about gowns and fashion for women attending the many events as if glitz is mandatory. On top of this, Hollywood is rushing in droves to attend the many gala affairs, something Hollywood ran from not only four years ago but eight years ago. Did I hear someone say: "The days of Noah!?" Actually, if I recall correctly, some in Hollywood were going to move out of the country or even give up their citizenship.

Obviously, the political process is often about people choosing sides, supporting one party over the other. However, the point is that the news media applies different standards in covering the political parties and process when it comes to the same issues. When one party (or individual within a party) does something one way, it is acceptable, but if the other party does it the same way, it is not acceptable. However, it is not just the news media that does this; the political parties and their politicians do so as well, although not all and to the same degree. Often to their shame the parties even flip flop on the same issue, so one moment it is light but the next moment it is dark, so to speak. Some would say that this is politics as usual and the very nature of the beast. In large measure, this is correct as each party competes with the other over money, power, and ideas. But this does not make it right or justify it. No matter how one spins such a thing, it is unrighteousness and lawlessness in action, for there are no absolute standards, only moving targets based on the political outcome that is desired. Is there any doubt that God should judge the political system of the US?

At any rate, this is what is meant by a parallel universe. It is as if one side sees an issue as dark if it involves the opposing side, but if it involves their side, it is light. One could substitute the words dark and light with any combination of contrasting words, such as black and white, red and blue, good and evil, responsible and irresponsible, to name a few. We see this very clearly in the way moral and ethical issues are handled; only the buzz word today is simply *values* without morality or ethics attached. It is safe to conclude that the word *value* has become a nebulous word which could be attached to anything, moral or immoral, ethical or unethical.

In the end, something even more insidious occurs; it is what could be called "lowering the bar." The result of a parallel universe is that the standards by which people judge things, especially right and wrong, are lowered on the scale of morality and ethical behavior. It becomes relative based on how one views a matter, not based on some absolute that stands apart from one's opinion or desired outcome. In

fact, in a parallel universe in which the bar has been lowered, the outcome is what matters, not how one gets there. Thus, immoral or unethical behavior becomes acceptable as long as it achieves the desired result. **Beware; Babylon calls this behavior the moral high ground.** Such thinking could even allow a president to usurp the office because he is not a natural-born citizen and continue in office as long as he gives the American people what they want. Is this too far-fetched? Perhaps not!

Consider the recent case of the nominee for Treasury Secretary who failed to pay \$34,000 in taxes. It has been reported that this involved three occasions, not one, which might meet the definition of egregious, or, perhaps stupid, except Babylon's smart people are never stupid, just shrewd and clever. Many in both parties want this man in this position because he is very smart and highly intelligent, and, as the thinking goes, the country desperately needs him to help solve the economic crisis. So, how are they treating this failure to pay taxes? They are declaring that it was an honest mistake that anyone could make. Really? This man is the current head of the Federal Reserve of New York. He is a money man, and if approved, will also be the head of the Internal Revenue Service, the agency that collects taxes. Admittedly, anyone can make a mistake, but shouldn't a red flag go up over a man who made a mistake, not only once but three times, heading up our tax agency, as well the money changers of government? Of course, according to Babylonian standards, the answer is no to the red flag because this man is smart, and we need him. By the way, *Babel* (Babylon) means "confusion." This is the best word to describe the economic strategy that we have seen coming from the smart financial men.

This leads to the latest polling results that indicate that 70% of Americans believe that Barack Obama will pull the country out of its economic crisis. No doubt this is based on image over substance, at least at this point. I have heard it said by many people on both sides of the political spectrum that they wish him success or that he will succeed. But, succeed at what? What successes are people looking for? Seldom do those making this statement add any meat to the bones. The new president could succeed at many things. For example, he could succeed in drastically altering the landscape of the US, so to speak, by veering it even more toward socialism. Is this the success people are looking for? He could ask the American people to bailout the government that has overcommitted all of us to trillions of dollars of debt. In the process he could (most likely will) dramatically increase the reach of government into all our lives. Is this the measure of success? He could reverse policy on a host of moral issues that go against Christian values in order to placate certain factions of his base. Is this what Americans see as success? He could make everyone feel good and give them hope that one day all will be well, without accomplishing much of anything. Are good feelings the measure of success?

It is like buying a car that looks great on the outside without ever lifting the hood to see what kind of engine it has. It could have a souped-up horse of an engine, a lawn mower engine, or no engine at all. In the latter two cases, the beautiful appearance won't get you too far, if anywhere at all. Which engine has America purchased? Some say: "Give him a chance to prove himself." I whole-heartedly agree, but let's not give him a blank check and, as Christians, check our moral and ethical standards at the door. Let's not allow standards to keep going lower and lower and justifying them by the outcome. The outcome should not justify the means if the means are unrighteousness and injustice. This must be our attitude regardless of which party or person is in power, or whether we suffer for holding the moral ground.

This leads to the heart of the matter, and that is the moral and ethical standards of the church. We are not to operate in a parallel universe. God does not have two universes. He is not a Democrat or a Republican. He has one universe, and He has one set of divine laws by which He judges all creation. His law is absolute, not relative. The outcome of His law is righteousness and justice. Are we living according to God's way, not man's way; is our hope in God's Man, our Lord Jesus Christ, not in men of flesh and blood; is our citizenship in the celestial kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, not in Babylon? The law of God speaks of knowing the will of God, and only those who know and obey the will of God will enter the kingdom.

Let us not be persuaded by a parallel universe and follow the world as it continues to lower the standard by which it judges things, all in the name of achieving some result. Let us follow the Lord Jesus, seeking to know His will and then obeying His will. His kingdom is coming! Now, this is an achievement!