

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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Having Been With Jesus

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Considering the history of the early church, we should be amazed at the power and authority that was manifested through a few men that the Lord Jesus had trained while He walked this earth. He had chosen them and discipled them to Himself. Often they did not understand His teachings or His ways, but they were so attracted to Him they could not leave Him.

The disciples were simple people of humble means. Several of them were fishermen, hard-working men who labored long hours to catch fish. They were not an educated group by the standard of the religious elite of that day, for they had not attended the great religious schools of the day. They worked with their hands to make a living. But through these men, the Lord literally turned the known world upside down. When the Holy Spirit came down from heaven and came upon them like tongues of fire, they went forth in power and authority and led thousands to the Lord.

In Acts 4, we find a very interesting story involving Peter, who was called of the Lord while he was casting nets, and John, who was called while he was mending nets. Casting and mending nets are two very important, yet different, callings upon disciples. Casting nets draws others in, and mending heals what has been drawn in.

Being led by the spirit of God, they were proclaiming the kingdom and, in Jesus, the resurrection from the dead. They knew the One who had walked with them for a few short years was no longer in the grave but was resurrected and now is seated on His Father's throne in heaven. The coming of the Holy Spirit was living proof that He has ascended on high and is glorified. The promised helper, the spirit of God, has come down from the throne. They were living proof of this fact. **Christ risen, exalted, glorified!**

Many believed their message, and the number came to be about five thousand. But this greatly disturbed the Jewish leaders. Peter and John were thrown in jail, and on the next day, they were placed in the center of all these leaders—the rulers, the elders, the scribes, the high priest, all those of high-priestly descent. In other words, those they stood in the midst of were the highly-educated religious leaders of the day. You might say they all graduated from seminary. They also all had the proper bloodline, having been born into their priestly positions. They were the religious elite, according to the flesh, the cream of the crop, so to speak, in the eyes of the Jews.

These two disciples of Christ stood in the midst of all these educated minds and were arrogantly questioned about healing a man forty years old who had been lame from his mother's womb. Can you imagine the thoughts going through the religious leaders' heads? They had all this teaching and none of them had any power to heal another man. So they demanded to know by what power or in what name they had done this. Consider Peter's response:

(8) Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people, (9) if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, (10) let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by this {name} this man stands here before you in good health. (11) He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, {but} which became the very corner {stone.} (12) And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:8-12 NASB)

What a testimony of the life of Christ. Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit. He answered their question with great clarity. It was all done in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene. There is no other name under heaven given among men. Jesus! What a name! Peter and John stood with confidence in this name. In verse 13, we are told that those who were listening to them marveled at them. Why? Because they were uneducated and untrained!

As these two men stood, they were a testimony of a new way, a way that was not dependent on so-called religious education. They did not fit the mold of the day for religious leaders. They stood outside it and were a living testimony of the power and authority of God. Those that questioned them had an authority that came by their bloodline and their schooling, but these men had something else and it could not be challenged. It was a noteworthy fact that the miracle had taken place. No one could dispute the healing. When they saw the man who was once lame standing in their midst, they had nothing to say. However, the testimony of these two said volumes.

Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus. (Acts 4:13 NASB)

So Peter and John were uneducated and untrained, and yet they performed a miracle that no one could dispute. If they were not trained in the religious schools, they must have had some training some place. Where was it? What was the source of their power? It came from having been with Jesus.

Oh, do not doubt for a minute. They were schooled, but theirs was not like any school that existed. They were schooled in the school of Christ. What is the school of Christ? Being with Jesus! Isn't this marvelous? They had been with Jesus. He was their Teacher, their Master, and their Helper. He taught them; He trained them. They did not sit in a classroom with a blackboard. They were trained as they walked with Jesus through the days of His life. He walked with them, spoke to them, exhorted them, rebuked them, loved them, gave them examples, and many times left them confused and wondering. But through it all, they persevered and were taught. They were taught the kingdom, and now they could proclaim the kingdom in power and authority under the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

We need to ask ourselves the question: Where are we to be trained today? Are some to go to a seminary so that they can minister the word to the Lord's people? Do all of us need to go to a school and receive a certificate, a degree, ordination papers to serve the Lord and His people? Is this what we are shown in the Bible? Quite the contrary; those who had all the education refused to accept the very One who had come to save them. The only thing these religious leaders could say to Peter and John was to warn them to speak no more in this name. In arrogance and in defense of their education, they were led to reject the Lord Jesus and to crucify Him. Their education did not lead them to life but led them to yell "Crucify" to the One who is life.

Oh, we need to wake up to the truth. Education does not make one a spiritual man nor does it make one a leader. Having been with Jesus is what leads us to spiritual growth and maturity. A piece of paper with our name on it will not do it. If we are not daily walking with Jesus, our education becomes all knowledge, head knowledge. When such a one ministers to the Lord's people, head knowledge is ministered. It will be words without the power. This is not to say that people should not go to Bible school. It is good to learn; but if we are not walking with the Lord, then our education is of little value. The power to minister is in a personal walk, a personal relationship with our beloved Lord; the very life of Christ experienced and worked out in life, not in a classroom or with a head stuck in a book. This is what set the disciples apart from all the others.

In verse 20, we are told that Peter and John responded to the leaders: "We cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard." What had they seen? Jesus! Whom had they heard? Jesus! They were in the school of Christ. Their lives were changed by the presence of His life. They knew this change came from being with Him. Have you been with the Lord Jesus today?