

# 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)

#03-0913

## *The Tongue of Disciples*

February 16, 2009

**(4) The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples, that I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple. (5) The Lord GOD has opened My ear; and I was not disobedient nor did I turn back. (6) I gave My back to those who strike Me, and My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting. (7) For the Lord GOD helps Me, therefore, I am not disgraced; therefore, I have set My face like flint, and I know that I will not be ashamed.** (Isaiah 50:4-7 NASB)

These words are prophetically speaking of our Lord Jesus. In verses 6 and 7, we see our Lord as He gave His life on the cross. What humility and beauty we see in Him. He willingly endured the shame of the cross. He set His face toward the cross and never uttered a complaint. He gave Himself up willingly that we might live. He is the Son of God; but He emptied Himself. He took the form of a bond-servant, was made in the likeness of men, and He learned obedience through suffering (Philippians 2:5-8; Hebrews 5:8). He was never disobedient to His Father. Jesus is the perfect model or example of a disciple. As He walked on this earth, He was *the* Disciple.

In the Hebrew language, a *disciple* is “one who learns, who is taught or is used.” In the Greek, it means “a learner or a pupil.” Our Lord Jesus was a learner. While on earth, His whole life was dependent on His Father who was in heaven. He is the Son of God; and yet as Man, He learned as a disciple of His Father. Today, He calls out to His disciples: **“Learn from Me”** (Matthew 11:29).

In other words, to be a disciple of Christ one must be a learner, one who recognizes that he knows so little and that he must be taught. Anyone who believes he or she has arrived at some great level of knowing and learning is no longer a disciple. **“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master”** (Matthew 10:24). Can anyone say he is above his Master? We cannot be greater than our Master. We must be at His feet learning as His disciple, just as Jesus’ first disciples learned by being with Him. We learn so that we will be like our Teacher (Luke 6:40).

According to Isaiah, while on earth, Jesus had the tongue of disciples that He would know how to sustain the weary one with a word. Is this not our Lord Jesus? After all, He is the One who came for the afflicted, the downtrodden, the sick, the blind, and the lame. He calls out to weary souls come unto Him so that He can give rest. Is He not the One who, today, continues to give His people a word in season to encourage and lift up weary souls? He is the good Shepherd, and the Shepherd knows His sheep and knows what they need to hear. He sustains His people with His living word. He is the Word of God, and what comes from His mouth to His weary ones is meant to sustain and keep.

In similar fashion, if we are true disciples of Christ, we are to be encouragers as well. We need the tongue of disciples so that we can minister a sustaining word to our weary brethren. With so many things happening in the world today as all things that can be shaken are shaken, there is a vital necessity for those who can give a sustaining and encouraging word to lift up the heart of a weary brother or sister.

All of the Lord’s people are called to be disciples. This is our calling. As disciples, we must be encouragers to others. Are you daily seeking the Lord, listening for His voice to give you a word for someone that the spirit of God may bring into your path that day? **Encourage the exhausted, and strengthen the feeble** (Isaiah 35:3 NASB). **Therefore encourage one another, and build up one another, just as you also are doing** (1 Thessalonians 5:11 NASB). **But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin** (Hebrews 3:13). We all are exhorted to encourage one another. This is

one of the greatest needs of the day and one vital responsibility of all the brethren. It is to be done day after day. In this way, the body is built up in love and the rest of mankind sees the love of God.

But take note that the tongue of disciples begins in the morning with an ear that is open to hear what the Lord is speaking, even to the point of being awakened with a word from the Lord. Have you heard His voice awaken you from a good night's sleep? For this reason, I pay very close attention to what I hear in the early morning hours. In fact, many of my writings have been inspired by His clear voice speaking to me as I awake.

Consequently, a disciple must be a listener. We must have an ear that listens for the Master's voice. The Lord Jesus has given us very clear instruction in this matter. **"Everyone who comes to Me, and hears My words, and acts upon them, I will show you whom he is like"** (Luke 6:47 NASB). **But He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it"** (Luke 8:21 NASB). There are many other Scriptures that instruct us to hear. In fact, throughout the book of Revelation, we are exhorted: **"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says."** Today, there are so many voices speaking out persuasive but deceptive words; it is essential that we have the hearing ear of a disciple.

How much more vital is it for us today to awaken each morning with the ear of a disciple? We must pray to our Lord God that He would open our ears each day. We need to hear the voice of our Master and our good Shepherd. How will we know what to do? How will we know how to serve one another? We need hearing ears. We must be listeners.

However, hearing alone will not make one a true disciple. One must obey what he or she hears. We must not be disobedient.

According to Isaiah, prophetically speaking, the Lord Jesus was not disobedient to what He heard from the Father. Throughout the book of John, we find the Lord Jesus stressing over and over again that He did nothing apart from the Father. He heard what the Father was saying and He obeyed. He was perfect in His obedience. **"I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me"** (John 5:30 NASB).

All true disciples of Christ know that they must follow in their Master's footsteps. How can a disciple do anything apart from the Lord? **"I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing"** (John 15:5 NASB).

In other words, a disciple is one who obeys. But it is actually more than this. Isaiah declared, **"I was not disobedient."** We find a very similar word from our brother Paul when he spoke to King Agrippa: **"I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision"** (Acts 26:19 NASB). As a Pharisee, Paul knew the sacred Scriptures, and undoubtedly he quoted Isaiah. After all, Paul sought to know Christ, to gain Christ, and to be found in Christ. Paul declared: **"That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the [out] resurrection from the dead"** (Philippians 3:10-11 NASB [WAET]). We could say that Christ was Paul's all-consuming objective and passion.

But why did Paul use the word *disobedient*? Why didn't he say: "I obeyed the heavenly vision"? In the Hebrew, the word translated as *disobedient* comes from a primitive root that means "to be bitter, to rebel, to resist." In the Greek, the word means "to be unpersuadable." To me, the answer lies in the fact that a disciple of Christ is going to suffer, for without suffering, there will be no glory (Romans 8:17). Being a disciple is not always an easy path to follow. There are many obstacles and hindrances along the way, and we could become bitter and rebel against the calling on our life. We could be persuaded by circumstances that God does not love us or that we are on the wrong path and turn back to our old ways or the ways of the Babylonian world. We must not turn back or be persuaded by events or by suffering we might encounter, for these things are our lot and often prove that we are on the right track. Even if the whole Babylonian world, or even the religious world, stands against us, we must not be persuaded or become bitter. If we have set our hearts to follow the Lord as His disciple, we will not be ashamed or disgraced before the throne of God in that day. Let us set our face like flint toward the prize!