

# 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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## *The Goal of Our Instruction—Love*

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Paul, an apostle and bond-servant of Christ Jesus, nearing the end of the race that he so valiantly ran, wrote two letters to his beloved child in the faith, Timothy, who was in Ephesus because of Paul's urging. This remarkable brother who had suffered so much from persecution said at the end of his life that he had fought the good fight, finished the course, and kept the faith. He was not disobedient to the heavenly vision that began on the road to Damascus and grew in the years that followed. What a testimony and an encouragement!

In spite of all that he went through, Paul never became bitter. He was a man who poured out his heart for the body of Christ as he carried a daily burden for the ecclesia. This was more than just a concern or some good thoughts but rather a deep burden that the eyes of the hearts of the Lord's people would be opened to see their glorious calling in Christ; and that they would come through to the end, standing unashamed before their Savior and Lord.

We would naturally expect that a man like this would have been greatly appreciated among believers. But this was not always so. In 2 Timothy 1:15, Paul said, "**You are aware of the fact that all who are in Asia turned away from me.**" Later, he told Timothy that a brother named Demas, who loved this present world, deserted him. Even Alexander the coppersmith vigorously opposed his teaching. Throughout his walk, Paul was under persecution by Jewish religious leaders and was opposed even by other believers who were out for personal gain. Paul never sought personal gain as he instructed those who had an ear to hear. At the heart of his instruction was love.

**Whereas the object and purpose of our instruction and charge is love, which springs from a pure heart and a good (clear) conscience and a sincere (unfeigned) faith.** (1 Timothy 1:5 AMP)

Notice that he did not say that the goal of his instruction was to defend himself, to prove himself right, to battle all the offenses that were levied at him, or to destroy those who stood against him.

Paul had but one goal in all that he tirelessly taught. It was love. In the Greek, this word is *agape*, which is God's divine love, sacrificial love. Paul said this love is found in Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 1:14), and he lived out the love of Christ in his ministry. **Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another** (Romans 13:8).

We must see that the beginning and the end of all instruction is love. We instruct out of a heart of love in order to bring others into the depths of God's love. The heart of a teacher must be love—in drive, motive, and goal. Paraphrasing, Paul said, "If I do not have love, I am nothing. I can do all sorts of things that outwardly look good and seem right, but if I do not have love, it profits me nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:2-3). We all need Paul's words written upon our heart.

**Love is patient, love is kind, {and} is not jealous; love does not brag {and} is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong {suffered,} does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails...** (1 Corinthians 13:4-8a NASB)

Now, according to Paul, love must spring from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith, something that he saw was missing in some who were instructing believers.

**But certain individuals have missed the mark on this very matter [and] have wandered away into vain arguments and discussions and purposeless talk. They are ambitious to be....** (1 Timothy 1:6-7 AMP)

Although Paul went on to state that some were ambitious to be teachers of the Law, in our day, we could assign ambition to many other motives, such as making money or a name for oneself.

First, the love found in Christ comes from a **pure heart**. A pure heart is a clean heart; one that is free from selfishness, which is being too concerned with one's own welfare with little to no concern for the welfare of others. As Paul told the Philippian believers: **Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not {merely} look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus** (Philippians 2:3-5 NASB). After all, Christ laid down His life for us. This is the ultimate act of love and the antithesis of selfishness.

Second, the love found in Christ comes from a **good conscience**. Our conscience tells us if what we are doing is right or wrong. Before we were saved we had an evil, wicked conscience, but thank God, the blood of the Lamb is sprinkled upon our heart to cleanse it from an evil conscience. But this is not enough; we must obey what the Holy Spirit calls us to do. When the spirit of the Lord speaks to our conscience, we know what is right and wrong in God's eyes. If we obey, then we know that our conscience is clear before God and man. This is a good conscience.

Paul had a good, clear conscience that all he did came from the love of God that was in him because he lived by the life of Christ that dwelt in him. **But when He who had set me apart, {even} from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me** (Galatians 1:15-16). What a revelation this was to Paul—His Son in me. Paul knew this life in him, and he lived by Him moment by moment. When we live by His life in us, our conscience is clear. This was Paul's testimony. In fact, Paul said that he always did his best to maintain a blameless conscience before God and man (Acts 24:16).

Third, the love found in Christ comes from a **sincere faith**. Actually, a better reading of this word is *unfeigned faith*. In other words, it is real faith, without hypocrisy, which is pretending to be what one is not. Consequently, some might say they believe and yet they are not living and walking by faith. They are pretending. Their faith might go no further than a mental acceptance or understanding of Jesus' atoning work on the cross and the hope of one day "going to heaven," a concept that comes up woefully short of our true hope in Christ. They "accept" salvation but refuse its power in a daily working out of salvation through faith. This is not unfeigned faith. It is hypocritical because it is not genuine, real, active, living faith; a faith within based on a spirit of power and love and discipline (2 Timothy 1:5, 7).

Paul knew nothing of feigned faith in his own life. His faith was genuine and sincere. What he spoke, he believed. When he passionately taught of the Lord Jesus, he believed all that he spoke. When he said to trust in the Lord, he meant it. When he said rejoice in the Lord, he meant it. When he said that **"The Lord stood with me and He will deliver me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly [celestial] kingdom"** (2 Timothy 4:17-18 NASB [CV]), he believed it with his whole heart. When Paul shared the glorious gospel of the blessed God, he spoke from a living faith that had been tested in the trials of life and had not faltered.

Paul could not brag on himself because all that he was came by the grace of God and not from any rights he had or from anything good that came from his life. He lived by the life of Christ that was in him. In living this life, he learned to walk by faith not by sight. When the entire world seemed to be against him, when the powers and principalities were trying to destroy him, he knew that the One who had taken up residence in his life would deliver him. Why? Because **God is love**, and **love never fails!** Real faith knows the love of God and stands in the living reality that God is faithful. Love springs from unfeigned faith!

**For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.** (2 Timothy 1:12)

This is love in action based on unfeigned faith. May the goal of all that we do, not only of our instruction, be love from a pure heart and a clear conscience and an unfeigned faith, love that is in Christ Jesus our Lord!