

# 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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## ***Destroying Speculations***

June 23, 2009

Recently, there have been three incidents of what could be called religious violence or, at least, could be described as having had some religious overtones. First, a Muslim man killed a soldier at an Army recruitment center. The murderer has shown no remorse and, in fact, has stated that, based on his religion, his actions were justified. Second, a man killed an abortion doctor, one who performed late-term abortions, while he ushered at a Lutheran church worship service. Lastly, an alleged white supremacist killed a guard at the Jewish Holocaust museum in Washington, DC. In these three murders, we see the focus on three different religions – Islam, Christianity, and Judaism.

My point is not to discuss the possible reasons behind these acts of violence but to simply point out that there were reasons, and they seemed to be linked to some sort of religious bias, bigotry, obsession, or strongly held belief. These murderers took up the physical sword to carry out whatever cause or belief system they were defending or stood against.

But this is not the only kind of violence related to religion that we see in the world today. As I write this, there is civil unrest in the Islamic Republic of Iran as the Islamic leaders resort to force in order to retain their power over the people. In this case, it is the religious government that has taken up the physical sword.

Again, my point is not to discuss the underlining reasons for taking up the sword but to underline the fact that, down through the history of mankind, there have been battles fought with the physical sword, all in the name of some religion. Our day is no different, and it must be emphasized that Christianity is no different.

Although I do not consider Christianity a religion, for the sake of this discussion, I must place it alongside the religions of the world, especially those that have sought to hold their position in the world or to defend their faith through the physical sword. The history of Christendom is strewn with wars, battles, skirmishes, and acts of violence fought by the physical sword, all in the name of Jesus.

You see, I believe that some, perhaps many, Christians have lost sight of their true testimony to the world, which is based on love and peace, and, as a result, they have either resorted to the physical sword, or have supported its use by others, or have turned their heads to its use and not taken firm positions against it.

Please understand that I am not advocating pacifism, which is the belief in being passive or inactive, as if we are to live in our own little bubble and insulate ourselves from the challenges and issues of life in an increasingly challenging world, especially as it relates to upholding the name of Jesus. Also, please understand that I am not stating that countries should never fight wars or citizens should never exercise civil unrest. In our present wicked eon, there are just causes for war and for civil unrest. Considering the direction that the leaders of the US are moving us in, it would not surprise me if some level of civil unrest arises in the years to come.

But back to Christianity; there is a brand of Christian in the US, especially in the so-called Bible belt, that takes great pride in proclaiming that they stand for God and guns. I have written several issues on this, but God and guns have become like a badge of honor to some Christians. The result is that many Christians present to the world a god that is angry and vengeful and set on destroying most of mankind and sending them to an existence of eternal torture in a place called hell.

What if, as some believe is coming, Christians are openly persecuted in the US? Today, it could be argued that there is a form of persecution going on, but let's face it, most of this is rather tame. After all, there are still innumerable "church" buildings in every town and city of the US, and on Sunday, many people freely go to these buildings to worship as they see fit. If persecution comes in an outward physical way, are we to take up the physical sword to fight back? Are we to take our God and guns and kill in the name of Jesus? May it not be coming to that! Our battle is not a physical one fought with a physical sword; it is a spiritual battle fought with a spiritual sword.

I have stated so in other issues, but the Lord is not after destruction of this earth and the killing of millions of people. He is after the destruction of every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God. He is not after human flesh; He is after the fortresses that have been built in hearts and minds. This is where the real war is fought and won!

**(3) For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, (4) for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. (5) We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, (6) and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete. (7) You are looking at things as they are outwardly.** (2 Corinthians 10:3-7a NASB)

**For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. ... And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.** (Ephesians 6:12, 17 NASB)

**For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.** (Hebrews 4:12 NASB)

These verses speak of the kind of warfare in which we are to be engaged. This is the only way that real lasting change will come to this earth. How do we know? We know because this is the way our Lord Jesus will fight the final battle over the hearts and minds of mankind.

**Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming....** (2 Thessalonians 2:8 NASB)

**From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.** (Revelation 19:15 NASB)

**But with righteousness He will judge the poor, and decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; and He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked.** (Isaiah 11:4 NASB)

What comes from the mouth of the Lord? His word comes out of His mouth, not some grotesque physical sword. I fear that some Christians read these verses and conjure up images of knives literally flying out of the mouth of the Lord and driving into the flesh of mankind as their blood is splattered all over the place. This is the stuff of Hollywood movies but not of God is love.

When the Lord speaks, His word will go forth like a hammer to shatter every fortress that the nations, particularly the wicked, have built up in opposition to the kingdom of Christ and God. It is by His spiritual sword, a word that convicts hearts, not man's physical sword that kills bodies. This is the battle we are to fight until He comes. We are not to look at things outwardly but to discern them spiritually. Until Jesus comes, we are to take up the spiritual sword of His word and destroy speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God and of His Christ.