

# 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 Kingdom of Our Lord #17.***

August 31, 2009

### ***Rulers Serve, Owing Nothing***

#### ***Except to Love***

Today, in the US in particular, there is a great deal of emphasis placed on politics. It is as if politics has become a national obsession, at least as far as most of the media outlets, as well as the many organizations and lobbyists that feed off the government, are concerned. Of course, this obsession is not only over politics but over the politicians that drive the political system as well.

As I have written before, the US political system is run, in large part, by a class of professional elites. Politicians that remain in power for 20-40 years, having held few, if any, private jobs in their lives, must be called professional politicians, for politics is their profession.

Interestingly, the US Founding Fathers warned against a professional class. They believed that it was an honor to serve in public office and that those who were successful in life because they were gifted in certain ways should be encouraged to give up their private life for a period of time to serve the public interest. But, they never encouraged citizens to become professional politicians as a career or an elite class, especially the type of aristocratic class that was prevalent in Europe in their day. In fact, some of the founders cautioned against high salaries for public officials as a way to prevent such a thing from occurring.

In 1787, Benjamin Franklin addressed the Constitutional Convention and warned that “there are two passions which have a powerful influence in the affairs of men. These are ambition and avarice; the love of power and the love of money. Separately, each of these has great force in prompting men to action, when united in view of the same object, they have in many minds the most violent effects” (source: *A Miracle That Changed the World: The 5000 Year Leap*, by W. Cleon Skousen, National Center for Constitutional Studies, 1981, page 66).

Paul the apostle gave a similar warning to his beloved Timothy: **For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs** (1 Timothy 6:10 NASB). He also cautioned the Hebrews: **Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have** (Hebrews 13:5).

Of course, I am sure you realize that these are generalities and do not refer to all politicians. As I have stressed elsewhere, there are good figs and bad figs, so to speak. An honest appraisal of our current political system must conclude that, at best, today we have a system that is a mixture of a quasi-aristocracy, a professional elite class, and true public servants that give up their private lives for a season and then return to private life. To me, those who leave private life but never return to it, unless they are not reelected or die in office, become part of the professional elite class.

The professional class is the most dangerous, for it is most vulnerable to fall prey to the love of money and power. The emphasis turns from how to serve to how to get reelected and remain in power. Power often corrupts, and some begin to see things in ways that are contrary to the best interests of the country and begin to think more highly of themselves than they ought, something Paul warned Christians to guard against (Romans 12:3). We see signs of this when a female senator upbraids a military general for respectfully addressing her as ma'am rather than senator; or a congressman who helps write tax law repeatedly failing to follow the law himself and his cohorts taking no action against him; or officials (elected, appointed, or otherwise) pushing for legislation that is against the will of the people and justifying their actions as needed for a citizenry that does not know what is best for them.

Benjamin Franklin was right; a public servant (i.e., holding public office) should have experience in private life (e.g., holding a job, running a business, applying a certain skill or gift in a trade) before entering public life. It is the experience that comes from private life that makes one best suited to hold a public office.

I have believed for many years that the same principle applies to any who desire to serve the Lord's people (i.e., pastor, teacher, elder). It is not uncommon for young men who never held a job to decide that they have been called into "the ministry." So, some go off to seminary to get a piece of paper, while others simply take on a title for themselves and a name for their ministry. This is contrary to Scripture and the way that God works in preparing men for great things in His service. Moses and David tended sheep. Peter, James, and John fished. Paul mended tents. They all had experience in a profession before the Lord called them to serve, and even then, some of them continued to practice their trade.

In like fashion, those who will be counted worthy to reign with Christ in the age to come are the conquerors that overcame the many trials of life. In other words, the conquerors are the ones who were trained in the everyday experiences of life. They suffered with Christ so that they may be glorified with Him (Romans 8:17). They are not conquerors because they have a name for themselves, a ministry, a title, or any such thing that the world idolizes. They are conquerors because **they overcame by the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death** (Revelation 12:11 NASB.)

In the Lord's kingdom, greatness is in serving by laying down one's life; it is a life of humility.

**(25) "The kings of the nations lord it over them, and those exercising authority over them are called benefactors. (26) But you be not so, but the greater among you, let him be as the lesser; and the one governing as the one serving. (27) For who is greater, the one reclining, or the one serving? Is it not the one reclining? But I am in your midst as One serving. (28) But you are those continuing with Me in My temptation. (29) And I appoint a kingdom to you, as My Father appointed to Me....** (Luke 22:25-29 LITV)

**(8) But do not you be called Rabbi, for One is your Leader, the Christ, and you are all brothers. (9) And call no one your father on earth, for One is your Father, the One in Heaven. (10) Nor be called leaders, for One is your Leader, the Christ. (11) But the greater of you shall be your servant. (12) And whoever will exalt himself shall be humbled, and whoever will humble himself shall be exalted.** (Matthew 23:8-12 LITV)

Notice who will be appointed a kingdom; they are the ones who, in this age, do not lord over others or demand that they be served and who do not take on the lofty, exalted titles of men. They are the ones who proclaim that there is only one Leader, the Christ.

Today, many men within government and, unfortunately, the church beam with pride when they are called leaders. Let them have their glory in this day. But for those who desire to be counted among the conquerors, who will rule and reign with Christ in His coming kingdom, position and title mean little. What matters the most is to serve as our Lord served, and that requires a life laid down in love.

The mother of the sons of Zebedee wanted her sons to be great in the kingdom, but Jesus answered her, along with the ten disciples that became indignant over her request: **"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles [nations] lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. (26) It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, (27) and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; (28) just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."** (Matthew 20:25-28 NASB)

The ones who will reign with Christ in His kingdom are those who serve in this age. Does this mean that they will not be servants in the kingdom of our Lord but rather will be like potentates that demand others to serve them? No! Jesus has given us the example of servant leadership. In fact, the nations will finally see what true leadership is all about. Leadership is serving. True leaders do not exalt themselves; rather, they exalt the One true leader. **Rulers serve, owing nothing except to love** (Romans 13:8). In their service, the nations will see the love of God and come to know that **God is love**.