

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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OVERWHELMINGLY CONQUER THROUGH HIM

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, “FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED.” But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8.35-39 NASB)

In these last days, the Lord is removing those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things that cannot be shaken may remain. Why? Because we receive a kingdom that cannot be shaken! Don't lose sight of what is set before the Lord's people who are called according to His purpose, which is to sum up all things in Christ Jesus our Lord, things in the heavens and on the earth (Ephesians 1.10). The kingdom of Christ that is coming to this earth in the next eon is the unshakable kingdom of God. God's Son has begun to Head up all things in the heavens and on the earth, but it is in the next eon, the Tabernacles Age, that He will manifest His power and glory to all creation through His complement, the ecclesia, which is the body of Christ. This is the destiny of all who conquer through the life and love of Christ.

In days of shaking, whatever the form might be, we might be tempted to question God's love for us. Why is He allowing this thing to happen to me? Why doesn't He intervene? We might not receive a direct answer to such cries of the heart, but we can be sure of one thing: God loves us. Nothing is able to separate those who are called according to purpose from the love of God, which is in His Son, Christ Jesus our Lord. This is the assurance we receive from Paul, one who suffered greatly for the cause of Christ and the building up of the body of Christ in love. His testimony was that he died daily for the ecclesia. He suffered tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and sword. It was as if he, along with the other apostles, were being put to death all day long, like sheep ready to be slaughtered.

Now, Paul declared these things in Romans 8, which is, without doubt, one of the greater chapters of his epistles, if not the entire Bible. In one particular translation, the beginning of the chapter is titled *Deliverance from Bondage*, and then at verse 26, it is titled *Our Victory in Christ*. It is not my purpose to expound on all that is contained in this chapter but to remind all of us of Paul's declaration as we live through these times of shaking, because we need to be encouraged. **We overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loves us!** Obviously, Paul's "we" referred to him and those who were in service with him, as well as all the other apostles, namely those of the circumcision. However, we must not limit his words to his time and service, for most surely we too can and must proclaim that we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loves us. Is the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, a restricted love? Never! God is love! God loves the world! He first loved us! There is no greater love than this, that He laid down His life for us! The above-quoted translation states through Him who *loved* us, which is the verb tense used by most translations; but the Concordant Version uses the present tense *loves*, which, to me, captures the true thought.

Also, some translations use the word *victory* (*victorious*) in place of the word *conquer*. Thus, the phrases *completely victorious* or *a complete victory* are employed.

The Greek word from which *conquers* is derived is *nikaō*, which means “to subdue—conquer, overcome, prevail, get the victory.” In most translations, this word is translated as *overcomes*, and is most employed in John’s Revelation of Jesus Christ as Jesus Himself exhorts those in the seven ecclesias: *He who overcomes* (Revelation 2.7, 11, 17, 26; 3.5, 12, 21; 21.7). However, Paul used the Greek word *hupernikaō*, which is an intensified form of *nikaō*, meaning “to *vanquish beyond*, that is, *gain a decisive victory*:—more than conquer.” In the Revelation, Jesus exhorts those in His ecclesia to overcome; however, Paul declares that *in Him* we more than conquer. It is a statement or a proclamation of victory. It is not an exhortation to get into the victory but a proclamation *from* victory. Do you see the mighty difference in the two positions? In Him, we are in the victory that is in Christ.

Those who overwhelmingly conquer are those who, like Paul, know that absolutely nothing is able to separate us from the love God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. As shaking comes into our lives, even perhaps throughout the entire world, never lose sight of this glorious fact of God’s love for you through His Son. Nothing, absolutely nothing can separate you from this love. Those who are in Christ are in the absolute victory of the One who has conquered sin and death, and because of this, they too will be beyond both sin and death, glorified and immortal as Christ is. This is our victory in Him who loves us. But until that glorious day, we must pass through much tribulation as we seek to enter His coming kingdom.

As if to prove the point beyond doubt, Paul referred to *seventeen* things that cannot separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. *Seventeen* is the number of victory, for it speaks of perfection; and our Lord’s victory is an absolutely perfect victory, which means there is no flaw whatsoever in His victory on the cross. In explaining the number *seventeen*, E.W. Bullinger wrote [*Numbers in Scripture, Its Supernatural Design and Spiritual Significance* by E.W. Bullinger, Kregel Publications, 1967, pages 258-259]:

We see a beautiful illustration in Romans VIII. 35-39, which concludes the first great division of that all-important Epistle, and sums up the blessings of those who are dead and risen in Christ. First we have a series of *seven*, then a series of *ten*. The *seven* are marked off by being put in the form of a question, while the *ten* are given as the answer to it.

Seventeen stands out as a significant number. It is not a multiple of any other number, and therefore it has no factors. Hence it is called one of the prime (or indivisible) numbers. What is more, it is the seventh in the list of the prime numbers.

The series runs 1, 3, 5, 7, 11, 13, 17, etc. *Thirteen*, it will be noted, is also a prime number, and is therefore important; but it is the sixth of the series: hence it partakes of the significance of the number 6, and is indeed an intensified expression of it.

In like manner *seventeen* being the *seventh* of the series, it partakes of and intensifies the significance of the number *seven*. Indeed, it is the combination or sum of two perfect numbers—*seven* and *ten*—*seven* being the number of *spiritual* perfection, and *ten* of *ordinal* perfection.

Contrasted together the significance of these two numbers is clear; and when united in the number *seventeen* we have a union of their respective meanings, *viz.*, spiritual perfection, plus ordinal perfection, or ***the perfection of spiritual order***.

Dear saints, this is what we have been called into in Christ. As many things around us are shaken, let us never lose sight of the fact that **we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loves us!**