

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)

#04-1010

Waiting for His Son from Heaven

January 22, 2010

‘But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.’ (Revelation 2:4 NASB)

This issue is a follow up to the preceding issue #04-1008, January 21, 2010, *First Love*.

First love is simply a pure love for Jesus that is manifested in first works, that is, deeds done out of a love for Jesus that are expressed toward His body and the rest of mankind, and that is manifested in a heart’s desire for and a love of the literal appearing of the Lord. If we love Him, we want to be with Him.

It seems that many ministries place most, if not all, of their emphasis on the here and now, and on the assumption that Christians are to have and experience all of Christ now, which is not possible while we occupy bodies of death and humiliation. For those who hold to such thinking: Are you truly satisfied? Are you satisfied with living in mortal bodies? Are you satisfied with merely a taste of the Lord and His spirit? Let us face the reality; we have not arrived yet, and we will not arrive until we see Him, and, when we see Him, we will be like Him.

(2) Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. (3) And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.
(1 John 3:2-3 NASB)

The spirit of God revealed mighty truths to the Lord’s disciples, and they have left us these truths in their epistles, which were letters to the ecclesias and saints of their day. However, the coming of the Lord Jesus was not lost in these truths nor relegated to the background as if it were of secondary importance.

Paul taught on some mighty glorious truths pertaining to the mystery of Christ, but he never lost sight of the return of the Lord. In fact, His coming a second time was paramount in understanding the very mystery that Paul unveiled. Even Jesus Himself never lost sight of it but, in fact, emphasized that the Son of Man was coming again.

This was the hope and expectation of the early ecclesia of God. I might add that this hope also was tied in with the resurrection, for this is the only way that we will literally see the Lord. We must see Him to be like Him, and this requires resurrection and transfiguration. It is this hope that causes us to purify ourselves, just as He is pure. If we remove this hope, then for what are we living? Why are we striving to be pure or to be holy? What is the value of first love and first works? What is the value of having a ministry, other than to satisfy our own carnality and self-worth?

When the Lord Jesus broke into my life nearly 30 years ago, the truth of His kingdom and His coming a second time was indelibly written on my heart and in my mind. Even before I knew much about the Lord and His heart of love for us, I knew that He is the Victor and that He is coming again. He put into my heart a love for His appearing and His coming kingdom that has not departed from my heart or diminished in its intensity, and I have purposed to remain true to this heart in all that I write.

No matter how great a biblical truth is, for me, every truth comes back to the Son of God, His love for His body, and His longing to literally appear or manifest Himself to the love of His life. This does not mean that He does not love the rest of mankind, for God so loves the world and intends to save all mankind through His love. Rather, it means that He has a special, deep love for the ones He has called and chosen to be His complement to work with Him as He reconciles all things to Himself, summing up all in the heavens and on the earth (Ephesians 1:10, 23).

Last year, on television, I watched a panel discussion of so-called religious leaders discuss the coming of the Lord. The panel represented most of the mainline denominations, along with some other not so mainline. Frankly, I was saddened, even a little agitated, by their discussion. The coming of the Lord was spoken of in very mechanical terms. I sensed no heart in what they spoke. It was simply a discussion for them of no greater import than any other “religious” matter. I could only imagine the lack of joy for the coming of the Lord that must be among the ones that sit under their leadership.

One theme that did emerge from their discussion was a fear of getting people too excited over the prospect of the Lord’s return. After all, according to these religious experts, many have predicted that the Lord was coming at a certain point in time, only to leave many people utterly disappointed and in ruin, even fallen away, when it did not happen as they said it would.

If one falls away from first love or the Lord entirely because someone else was mistaken over the time of His arrival, then we should question the motive of such a one. Was it to escape from the trials of life? Longing for the Lord must be based on love not escapism.

Love never fails, and if we hold to first love, and a year comes and goes without His arrival, we should not be deterred from our hope. We might be heartsick for awhile, for **hope deferred makes the heart sick**, but we should know that the desire to be with the Lord in glorified bodies will be fulfilled one day, for New Jerusalem is our hope and the tree of life (Proverbs 3:18).

As I listened to these men, the warning from Peter kept coming to me. I cannot say that they had a mocking spirit, but they surely had a doubtful, unexpectant one, devoid of a first-love hope.

Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, (4) and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.” (2 Peter 3:3-4 NASB).

Whenever I consider the coming of the Lord, I am usually drawn to the dear brethren that resided in Thessalonica in Paul’s day. Paul highly commended them for their expectant hope.

By the way, I join *expectant* and *hope* together because the world often has hope, but it has no guarantee that what it hopes for will come to pass. Expectant hope declares that it will come to pass without a shadow of doubt. It is a 100% assurance that it will come about.

And they speak of how you are looking forward to the coming of God’s Son from heaven— Jesus, whom God raised from the dead. (1 Thessalonians 1:10 NLT)

They also tell how you are waiting for his Son Jesus to come from heaven. (1 Thessalonians 1:10 CEV)

Notice that when the Thessalonians turned from idols to serve the true and living God, they did so with the expectant return of the Son of God in view. They were waiting for Him to come from heaven. Some commentators state that they were mistaken in their zeal or misled into thinking that the Lord was coming in their day. Not so! Paul did not correct them but encouraged them all the more to love as they, in fact, were doing. First love always manifests itself with a love for the brethren, even for all mankind. They were alive with first love and first works, which led them to wait for the Lord to come from heaven.

This is what first love is all about. It is not passive. It is a heart that is so in love with the Son that it waits patiently for the love of its life to return to satisfy its longing, and while it waits, it loves others.

First love always results in a love for His appearing, so let us not be led away from this love by the mockers and doubters. There is a crown awaiting all who love His appearing (2 Timothy 4:8).

Do you know this love? Is Jesus the love of your life? Do you long to see Him so much so that it is your all-consuming desire? If so, then you are in love, and you have first love that waits for the Son.