

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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CHRIST, OUR EXPECTATION (HOPE)

The Lord Jesus Christ our hope [or, confident expectation]. (1Timothy 1.1 ALT)

Those of us residing in the United States are living in the hour of our nation's history when everything is politicized. If one listens to what comes through the media, whether in print, over the airwaves, or on the Internet, one would think this nation is obsessed with politics. It is particularly acute this year because we are faced with electing a new president. During campaign season, the news media becomes obsessed, even ad nauseam, with every word or sound bite that comes out of a candidate's mouth or through his or her campaign machine. Global warming was the only big topic just a few months ago, but now no one is reporting on it. This would be a blessing if it weren't for what has replaced it as the latest hot button. You would have to be asleep to the world around you to never hear at least some of the political rhetoric and promises that are being blasted across the multiple modes of media at this time.

If you were from another planet and visited the earth, especially the United States, for the first time, you, most likely, would come to four conclusions. *First*, nothing is right in America; almost everything needs to be fixed. We are in all sorts of "crises" that we must wage "war" against. *Second*, candidates running for political office have the answers to all these problems and will fix them. After all, mankind is capable of solving all his problems, just so long as the masses follow one who has charismatically convinced them that he or she alone can and will bring about the necessary changes. *Third*, utopia is right around the corner. All we need to do is elect the right utopia expert. *Fourth*, God may have some part to play in it, but not much. After all, since man can reverse global climate change, he obviously can solve all problems related to man's social and economic woes. God is thrown into the mix only to appease those who are "religious." However, politics has become a religion unto itself, driven by man's greatest religion called *humanism*.

Thus, we hear campaign slogans or promises: **We can change the planet! We can change the world! We can unite the world! We offer hope! It is not about the candidate but about the power of us. This election is about a moment!** This is just a sampling of what has been declared recently. But what do the last two slogans actually mean? What is a moment? Moments are fleeting; here one minute and gone the next. The power of us makes no sense either, unless it refers to something like the Bolshevik revolution. Yet, some people respond to such vacuous statements as if they have great meaning and substance. What change is being offered? What hope? Hope in what? Unite the world around what? These are vital questions in this evil day; yet, the answers seem to be absent.

I do not recall the year, but it must have been in the late 90's when Bill Clinton was president. We traveled to West Africa shortly after President Clinton had visited that region of the world. We were shocked to read local newspapers that quoted people as referring to Bill Clinton as the son of God. It was amazing to realize how much hunger there was, and still is, for someone to come along to lift people out of their current economic or social status and usher them into some form of utopia, a much better way of life. Bill Clinton had done nothing for these people to warrant him being called son of God, but they looked to him as if he were a savior. He offered them some sort of hope because he was a charismatic figure who made them feel good without giving them anything. I don't single him out

as if he were the only one in politics who does this, for all we need to do is look around and listen to some candidates today to realize that they are not much different.

Before any of us who live in the high-tech, sophisticated, western world look down upon people in third-world countries who are looking for a savior, we need to look in the mirror. When we do, we will see that many in our own country are not much different. Oh, many might not say that they are looking to a certain person to be their savior, but they sure do imply it by their actions and by their adulation of certain politicians. After all, many buy into the promises of candidates who, although they don't say so directly, present themselves as a savior of the people. Again, consider the slogans: We can change the planet! We can change the world! We can unite the world! We offer hope! Doesn't this sound like a savior to you? By the way, this particular candidate is running for President of the United States, not President of the World. Or, is he?

I purposely avoid naming any of the candidates, for this issue is not about politics or support of one candidate over another. Referring to specific candidates would be an unnecessary distraction. My point in writing this is to warn of the great danger that I see in this evil day and to emphasize the only answer to man's hunger for a savior as well as true love.

Actually, politics, by its very nature, has always been like this, so in a sense, this is nothing new. Tracing all the *isms* that have tried to overtake the world down through the centuries, one would discover that they always feed off some fear, some greed, some crisis, some racial clash, some socio-economic clash, or some nationalistic fervor. By the way, an *ism* is a system or theory. Most movements or ideologies aim to unite the masses around some cause; thus, we have such movements as fascism, socialism, totalitarianism, liberalism, conservatism, and humanism, to name a few. Each tries to offer a hope, a better way, or a utopia, and eventually the masses succumb to one or more of these *isms* out of a deep-seated drive to have a better life. Unfortunately, not one single *ism* has been able to bring mankind's hope into the light of day.

It seems to me that we (mankind) have been programmed within our very genetic makeup to desire a savior to satisfy the longing or hope deep within us to have a world of peace and prosperity in which all participate. I will add that I believe that we also have a deep longing for love. This is both good news and bad news. The good news is that mankind has such a longing for a savior. The bad news is that many keep looking for a savior in all the wrong places. It reminds me of the country song about looking for love in all the wrong places. The masses seek for a savior and love by looking to others like them who are not capable of satisfying their longing. The road of history is strewn with this failure that has left many along the roadside, disillusioned, bloodied, mangled, and even dead.

So the world goes from day to day and year to year with hope in their heart that never comes about. The Concordant Version [CV] states that "hope has degenerated into a desire for something which we have no real reason to expect." For this reason, the CV uses the word *expectation* instead of hope, for *expectation* means that we expect something to occur in the future. It is not wishful thinking but a true expectation that it will come about in time.

My message is simple. In this day of super-hype and false promises, let us never forget that there is only one person who can and will satisfy the longing of the heart of mankind. There is only one who is the Savior of the world. There is only one who is our expectation or our hope. He is the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul, the apostle who was captivated by the love of God, wrote to his beloved Timothy that **Christ Jesus is our hope or expectation** (1Timothy 1.1). The glorified and risen Christ, the Messiah, is the expectation of not only those of us who believe but of all mankind. Let us not be persuaded by the religion of politics that places hope and power in any person or *ism*. Let us fix our eyes on our Lord Jesus, and let us set our minds above where Christ is seated. His realm is not of the realm of the world in which we live. He is not about *isms*; He is about life and love. The good news is that a day is coming when His realm will overtake this world and the deep longing of mankind will finally be met, to the glory of God. May He come soon!