

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)

#02-0845

MARCH 25, 008

THEY SHALL LEAD MANY ASTRAY

And Jesus answering said to them, 'Take heed that no one may lead you astray, for many shall come in my name, saying, I am the Christ, and they shall lead many astray....'
(Matthew 24.4-5 YLT)

In a previous issue titled *Many Shall Come In My Name* (#02-0815 March 11, 2008), I presented the warning from our Lord Jesus that many will come in His name, that is, come in the name of Jesus, who will lead many astray with false teaching or prophecy. We can be assured that as our present wicked eon comes to a close, many will go forth in Jesus' name to deceive many into believing that which is false.

I recounted how I met with a friend and brother in Christ whom I had not seen for some time, and he asked me the question: How would you describe what you see going on in the church today? I answered that the visible church of our day is in a state of Babel (confusion) and disunity. He responded that he thought that there was a great wave of false prophets and teachers going forth. Our responses were one and the same, only he described the process and I described the result of the process. In other words, the many false prophets are leading the Lord's people into confusion and disunity.

I thought one issue on the matter was enough, but I continue to be concerned over this matter. It is interesting that we keep hearing that there are great moves of God going forth throughout the earth that are being accompanied by signs and wonders. Many are saying that this must be of God. But consider the warning that Jesus spoke in reference to the last days.

'Then if any one may say to you, Lo, here is the Christ! or here! ye may not believe; for there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and they shall give great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, also the chosen.' (Matthew 24.23-24 YLT)

They, that is, the false ones, shall give great signs and wonders. This alone should be a red flag to us, for many will be led astray by these false signs. If it is possible, even the chosen could be led astray. This is a very serious matter, and we should not be so quick to embrace everything that we see or hear happening in our day. As John wrote: **Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world** (1 John 4.1 NASB). They went out in John's day, and they are going out in our day as well. The spirit of antichrist does not want the Christ of Scripture. It wants a substitute that suits itself.

Another thing that we keep hearing is how the spirit is moving so powerfully in Africa and many are being saved. Thank God if this is true. I don't challenge it as fact, but I have no first-hand knowledge to proclaim it as fact. However, what concerns me is what is happening to the ones who are saved. Are they growing in the Lord? Are they maturing in Christ? Initial salvation is one thing, but growth is another. Or, are they falling for every wind of doctrine and are they being led astray? Are they substituting things for Christ? In our visits to Africa some years ago, from what we saw and heard, some of the Lord's people in Africa are in great danger of falling into deception.

This leads me to an email that I received from Africa from a brother in Christ that I have known and trusted for nearly 20 years. He wrote:

There is still a lot of battle going on here between those of us who are holding on to the Truth and the rest of the crowd. They are still teaching the wrong things about anointing oil. I believe that I wrote you once about this. It is still raging on. Now the prophets sell the anointing oil for between \$50 and \$100 a bottle to people. They claim that they have prayed over the oil and so when you use it, you will be blessed. You have to anoint your store to get customers, anoint your face for your husband to love you. To get a husband (a husband from America or Europe) or wife, you need to buy and use this specially anointed oil. To get a promotion at your job, you need to buy this oil and anoint yourself daily so that when your boss sees you, he will give you a promotion. There is a special one for getting visas to travel to the USA. That is the one people buy the most. The sad thing about all this is that even some of the good churches have started this. The reason being that if you do not do it, you will not get people! Some of them think that if you use those methods and get the people, you can preach to them the truth. It is really sad, because they are always on the radio and television praising themselves and their oil. Someone even said he is using "blessed candy." When you eat one of the special candies, you will be blessed.

But thank God that in the midst of it all, the Lord is building His church. Some of us are standing for the Truth no matter the price to pay. We will serve the Lord from a pure heart, not making merchandise of the gospel or the name of our precious Lord and Savior Jesus. Please continue to pray for us. At times like this, I really remember you and the Truth you taught us. Thank you. Unto Him be the Glory now and forever.

I have touched the heart of this brother many times. I know that his heart grieves over what he sees happening to God's people in his nation. I also know that he has paid the price to stay the course as he presses on toward the goal. By the way, the truth that he refers to that I shared with him many years ago is Christ and Him alone. It is not about things but about Christ Jesus our Lord. It is about the preeminence and centrality of Christ. Thank God that this word penetrated the heart of a few and our labor was not in vain.

This leads me back to the point that I want to make. Let us not fall head-over-heels for everything that we hear coming forth in the name of Christ. In this brother's nation, false prophets are going forth with a message that places one's hope in oil and not in Christ. They are being led away from Christ Himself. But we must not be critical of what is happening in a foreign land, as if our own nation is better. Surely, America has its share of false prophets and teachers as well and its share of people who are merchandising the gospel. Just the other day, I was watching a local church service on television and they announced that they were being sponsored by a Mercedes-Benz car dealership and that they should contact Reverend (name) who is a salesman at this dealership. What does this have to do with the kingdom of God other than to promote a man's business and one who claims to be a Reverend? If the Lord's people don't see the danger of things of this nature, how will they be able to discern the spirit when overt signs and wonders appear?

For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables. (2 Timothy 4.3-4 ASV)

Are we not in the time that Paul saw coming? Surely, teaching on anointing oil itches the ear, but so does a lot of other teaching that is not built upon the one foundation, which is Christ.

What are we to do? Study the word of God yourself. Is what you see and hear proven by Scripture? Walk in the spirit. Discern the spirit. Hold fast the Head, which is Christ! And pray!