

# 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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## ***Stripping Away the Religious Façade #1***

Last year I had much to write but felt restrained to do so. Lord willing, I will catch up on some thoughts that are carryovers from 2012. One carryover involved the November 2012 presidential election.

Leading up to the election, there were many in the at-large church who felt called to fast and pray for the nation along the lines of 2 Chronicles 7:14. Some called it a new movement where the church was being called into action as it had not been for quite some time. Some were saying that it was time for the church to be militant (mind you, not in physical violence); it was not about standing and seeing the salvation of the Lord but a call to get involved. The call went forth that we must reverse the evil course our nation is on. Some cried that we must take back the nation. Out of this so-called movement there were those who prophesied that Romney would win and the nation would enter a time of great prosperity, even with the wealth of the nations coming to the church. Well, so much for that prophecy.

Personally, I did not feel led to participate in this fasting and praying. Surely, it is scriptural to humble ourselves before God and fast, pray, and repent of our ways. If there was ever a time in our history for humility and repentance, it is now.

Nevertheless, I had little witness in my spirit to join this movement. It seemed like so many other religious things the church does these days. It is as if many in the at-large-church believe if we put enough mass and energy into or against something that this alone will change the course of history, as if we can force heaven to move on our behalf to give us what we want or think we need. For many, this is called *intercession*, but I call it a *religious exercise*.

True intercession is not about changing things; it is about lining up with the heart of God, knowing the times in which we live and what God is doing and how He intends to bring it about. It is all about knowing God's ultimate purpose and His plan to accomplish it. Once we know the plan of God or at least have some understanding of it, even if it is sketchy or in outline form with much detail missing, we stand with God that His will is being done on earth as it is in heaven. Simply, we line up our will and vision with God's will and vision.

Another way of defining *intercession* is simply seeing and hearing what God is saying in these days and lining up with His word. As shared in the first issue for this year, the word I was given for 2012 and beyond is based on Jeremiah 23:18.

**(16) Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you. They are leading you into futility; they speak a vision of their own imagination, not from the mouth of the LORD. (17) "They keep saying to those who despise Me, 'The LORD has said, "You will have peace"; and as for everyone who walks in the stubbornness of his own heart, they say, 'Calamity will not come upon you.' (18) "But who has stood in the council of the LORD, that he should see [perceive] and hear His word? Who has given heed to His word and listened? (Jeremiah 23:16-18 NASB)**

During 2012, this one question kept coming to my mind as I listened to and read what many were discussing and praying in relation to the national election and the state of affairs in America. But who is standing in the council of the Lord? Who is seeing or perceiving and hearing His word? In other words, who is hearing from God? Who is looking through the hype and religious fervor to understand what God is up to in these last days? What is His

purpose and plan? It is one thing to look at the state of affairs and see how dismal it all is and to see that wickedness and injustice abound, but what is God saying, what is He doing, why is He doing it?

More is shared on Jeremiah 23:18 in article #36, January 2012, *Who Has Stood in the Council of the Lord?*

Leading up to Election Day, it seemed that many Christians truly thought they had hit the mark in prayer and that God was going to give the election to Romney who was far more righteous than the man presently occupying the office. After all, how could God allow a man to remain in office who supports late-term abortions, which is infanticide, and wants all of us to pay for it? As noted earlier, the prophecies were going forth that God was going to put the more righteous man into office. It sort of reminds me of Habakkuk's cry to the Lord as the Chaldeans were being raised up to judge Judah: **"Why are You silent when the wicked swallow up those more righteous than they?"** (Habakkuk 1:13).

I was not totally sure of the outcome of the national election, but I knew what the Lord had spoken to me on September 10, 2009. I heard: **"The tea party will fail; Obama will rule."** Notice that the word was not that he would govern or win but that he will rule. Ruling is a much more onerous word for a republic form of government. Ruling is reserved for kings and monarchs who make decrees and, in many cases, are the law. This is not the form of government that our founding fathers established. Much could be said about Obama ruling, such as his propensity for executive orders and *Obamacare*, but this is not the purpose of this issue. The fact of the matter is that the tea party movement does seem to be losing as Obama has racked up many wins, including the latest increase in taxes.

So, when Obama won reelection, I was not surprised. Actually, by Election Day, I expected him to win by at least 1%.

What was a surprise was the reaction from many Christians that ran from anger to stun to disbelief to near-depression. I saw it in an entirely different light. It was and still is the will of God being manifested as He continues His plan that will bring our present wicked age to an end. Further, I saw the election result as God's way of answering the many prayers that had been offered up. Through the result, He was, and we can trust He still is, humbling His people and bringing them into true repentance, not based on a movement of men doing religious things but a change of heart that comes from crying out to the Lord to be in His council to see and know His word.

On one level, the many prayers that sought for a change of leadership seem to have failed. Yet, on another level, the many prayers have not failed, for God heard the great outcry that repeated the Lord's word to Solomon: ***If My people who call upon My name humble themselves.*** Surely, many called upon His name but, perhaps, true humility is yet elusive. There is great danger in telling the Laodicean church it is time to be militant. It builds up pride not humility, especially when the heart of the church is not ready to truly repent in humility. The election result was as much a judgment on the church as it was on the nation. It is about stripping the façade off the religious church and exposing her heart that the Lord is after and will get to His glory.

This may seem to be a harsh conclusion to some, but it is based on things that were said after the election. Some said that the country made its choice and has set its course. It was not God's will; it was the people's fault based on their "free will." A level of humility seemed to be missing, saying something like this: "Lord, where did we go wrong? Search our hearts and see what offensive ways are within us." Where was the brokenness that leads to true humility? Some tried to put a good spin on it by pointing out how many Christians came together for prayer and how they cried out to the Lord in ways they had never done before. So what? Football stadiums can be filled with Christians given the right venue.

I leave you with a word from Habakkuk who faced a similar time as ours. **"But the LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him"** (Habakkuk 2:20). We are the holy temple of the Lord. Perhaps, it is time for us to be silent in the temple, coming into His council to see and hear His word, letting the Lord speak to our hearts. It is not about movements or a mass of energy or momentum or militancy; it is about hearts in union with the very heart of ***God is love.*** To be continued....