

# 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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## ***TEACHING EVERY MAN [A PERSONAL WORD]***

Over the years since the Lord broke into my life and revealed Himself to me in a very personal way, I have had visions, dreams, and words from the Lord, along with what could be called miracles. My wife and I have known healing of our bodies. Mine were significant to me but nothing like what the Lord did in my wife's body when He healed her of stage 4 cancer, all to the glory of God. I am so thankful that He gave her life so that we can continue on our journey together. Years ago we were in a car crash in the bush in Africa, but the Lord miraculously saved us from injury. We will never forget that night way out in the bush in pitch darkness.

It is not unusual for some saints who have these experiences of the Lord to write books to tell others how they might have the same things. Just recently I read a book on dreams. Some parts of it were helpful, but frankly, I became irritated half-way through it as it took on the tone of a how-to-book. After all, as the authors saw it, since they had such a great experience, all believers should be able to enter into such an experience as long as they do certain things. For this reason, numerous books have been written that tell others how to have an experience that someone else has had. Unfortunately, something else happens; many take their experiences and make them a new emphasis for God's people, as if the whole of the Christian life is about this one thing. So the emphasis becomes dreams and visions, prophecy, healing, tongues, and the list goes on and on, as if no end is in sight. Then, on the other spectrum, camps are formed that declare emphatically that God does not work in these ways anymore and all who follow such things are deceived, at best, or not even saved, at worst.

As for me, I have no time or patience for this type of debate. I reserve my debate for other matters. I am not after emphasis but am after the truth that not only will set me free but continually sets me free and that builds my faith and hope all the more as we see the day approaching. I do not need how-to-books to learn how to receive a gift of God or to have a dream or vision or for the Lord to speak to me. All I know is that I purpose in my heart to seek the Lord, to hear the very heartbeat of God, and to be obedient to what He reveals to me or what I see in His word. As I have done this over the last 25 or so years, I have had dreams, visions, and healings, and the Lord has spoken to my heart as if audible words. I never sought any of this; I just sought Him, and He did as He pleased in revealing things to me through whatever vehicle He chose. By the way, at times, He has revealed Himself to me and my wife through suffering and discipline. At other times, the Lord became silent and so much of our lives at that point were brought into question. These are not the most pleasant times in life, but they are essential. Actually, we are in a particularly difficult time as I write this. Why not write a how-to-book on how to suffer? I can only imagine that this would not be a best seller and surely would not create a new emphasis in a day of immediate gratification.

My how-to-book is very simple: seek the Lord and obey Him to the best of your ability, and wait and endure with expectation. Of course, there are other things that could be added to this, but this is it in a nutshell. Seek and obey! Wait and endure! Expect (hope)!

As I considered the how-to-emphasis, some personal thoughts came to me that flowed through my keyboard this day, so I share them with you.

*First*, it is important to know a little about the one doing the writing. Periodically, I reference certain experiences that I have had, including dreams and visions, as well as words that I believe the Lord

has spoken to my heart, especially in the early morning hours. Some of these experiences are used in upcoming issues of *The Upward Call*. For your information, I try to post at least one a week on a Friday, and I have already written enough of them to post every Friday for several months. I reserve Tuesday for ones that I am inspired to write in the interim, some of which pertain to current events or to special topics. Articles are generally posted monthly; books whenever.

*Second*, I am thankful to the Lord for the several teachers of God's word that have had some influence over the years on my understanding of God's word. In our pride, we would like to be able to brag that what we see is unique and no one else has seen it. The truth of the matter is that all of us are influenced and helped along the way by others who diligently studied the word and were called to teach others. Many of us are recipients of a long line of faithful men who sought the truth and upon whom God shined His light. My purpose in writing has been to synthesize what I have been taught over the years, what I have read, and what the Lord has directly revealed to me in my seeking.

The men that have had some influence on my understanding of God's word are not ones that Christendom pays much attention to in these days of best sellers. You won't find their books in most bookstores. These faithful brothers in Christ, some of whom are asleep in Christ, include the names of T. Austin-Sparks, Stephen Kaung, Robert Govett, Arlen Chitwood, E.W. Bullinger, Adolph Knoch, and Stephen Jones (of late, a great help). I see my journey with the Lord as a progression of coming into the truth, and these brothers have helped me along the way. However, this does not mean that they all taught or currently teach from the same page. But what they have in common is their heart for the Lord Jesus and their vision of certain aspects of His ecclesia and the coming kingdom. I thank the Lord for them and others that I have not named. By the way, the journey is not over!

Reading and studying others is like eating meat that has bones in it. You eat the meat but spit out the bones. I encourage all who read what I write to do likewise. If it is meat, take it in, chew on it, and digest it; if it is bones, spit it out. For me, the meat has been like building blocks. Each step of the way, I have been able to add another block to the structure or what I call the framework of Scripture. Of course, the foundation block is Christ and Him alone. At times, I realized that a certain block(s) I added was a bone. At the time of receiving it, I thought it was meat, but after awhile, I realized that it was like a bone stuck in my throat that had to go. So I spit it out and moved on.

Frankly, I marvel at teachers who seem to hold to the exact same teaching year after year without any greater revelation of the word of God, or even correction. It is as if early in their ministry they imprinted, like a duckling, on one framework and have not deviated one bit from it over the years. Often, such ones are absolutely convinced that they teach the full gospel truth. Perhaps, this is all the light the Lord expected them to shine forth, so we must leave the judgment of it to the Lord.

*Third*, years ago when I wrote something, I would never use the personal pronoun *I*; instead I always used the first person plural *we*. This was the result of teaching that I received early on that exhorted against drawing attention to self. It was seen as a danger; after all, it is no longer *I*, but Christ. It sounded spiritual, but in reality, it created an imbalance, for it took all individuality and personality completely out of the equation. It was as if everything was about Christ, and there was never any room for the person that is *in* Christ. I recall some brothers speaking and never once mentioning themselves directly; it was all about *we*, even when it was clear that they were referring directly to *I*. This sort of emphasis is not needed. Thus, I abandoned the *we* when it refers to me, not to draw attention to myself but to be honest with the dialogue. It is good to know a little of the personality of the one who teaches, for his life experiences and temperament often add to his teaching.

*Finally*, I have carried a specific burden for the Lord's people most of my walk with the Lord; it was Paul's burden: **We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ** (Colossians 1.28 NASB).