

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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Putin Letter to USA; Pope Francis on Mercy

It has been quite a while since I have written about current events. I have felt that anyone with spiritual discernment should be able to see what has been and what is going on in the world today. There is so much e-communication today that it hardly seems necessary for one like me to weigh in on the countless social-media discussions. However, I am not so sure of the level of discernment in these days, simply based on the fact that the church-at-large holds so many divergent views or adheres to so many, what could be called, schools of thought that we are living in a day of *babel* (i.e., confusion) more than a day of discernment. In spite of this, God is speaking to us in this day through this confusion, but we must have ears to hear and be open to the possibility that He is speaking through very unlikely sources and ways.

A couple of years ago I was meeting with a group of Christian men when I proposed that we need to listen to President Obama, for the Lord, at times, may be speaking through him, either his words or actions. Not unexpectedly, this was met with strange looks and a bit of skepticism, if not cynicism; as if to say that the Lord would never speak through one such as him. But, need we be reminded that the Lord works through and often speaks through numerous sources? Cases in point are Nebuchadnezzar (king of Babylon, "My servant" [Jeremiah 25:9]), Cyrus ("My shepherd" [Isaiah 44:28; 2 Chronicles 36:22]), Balaam's donkey (Numbers 22:21-30), and evil spirits sent forth to deceive and terrorize (e.g., Judges 9:23; 1 Samuel 16:14; 1 Kings 22:21-22).

At the commencement of his first term, the president declared that his administration would be one of the most transparent ever. When it became apparent that this was not occurring, as most thought or expected it would, many became critical of what appeared to be just another broken political promise that was simply aimed to secure votes. But, was it? It seems that the president's words were more prophetic than political. Just consider what has been happening of late. We are seeing a transparency unfolding like the peeling of the layers of an onion. As each layer is peeled back, we are seeing the lies, corruption, and darkness of our government. The Lord is bringing the darkness into light; this is His concept of transparency and it is His doing. By the way, all of this is to free His people and, ultimately, all the nations of the world; it is not to bring an end to the world, as many think. See the following issues from 2008 for more on this.

<http://www.kingdomandglory.com/tuc/tuc137.pdf> [*The Cords of Falsehood*; September 30, 2008]

<http://www.kingdomandglory.com/tuc/tuc152.pdf> [*The Cord of Corruption is Cut*; October 23, 2008]

This leads to what prompted me to write this. I was caught by two articles that appeared today; one was actually written by Russia's President Vladimir Putin and the other about Pope Francis. First, the lead to Putin's letter states "A Plea for Caution from Russia" and was written about the recent events surrounding Syria. Now, I realize that many might look upon this article with great cynicism and doubt. After all, many have depicted Russia's president as one not to be trusted. Then again, we need to ask ourselves how much trust do we have in our own leaders, especially in relation to recent events in the Middle East and, we should add, the looming economic crisis we face? The *Drudge Report* stated that Putin mocks the USA in his letter. Let the reader discern.

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/12/opinion/putin-plea-for-caution-from-russia-on-syria.html?_r=0

It was the last paragraph of his article that I found most interesting as he commented on President Obama's reference to American exceptionalism. Regardless of the motive, Putin believes it to be "extremely dangerous" to

encourage people to see themselves as exceptional. Personally, I believe the concept of exceptionalism, as presented in our country, leads to pride, and we know what happens to the proud. By the way, this does not mean I am against our country; what it means is that we need to be humble.

... Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. (1 Peter 5:5-7 NASB)

Putin concluded his letter with this: "There are big countries and small countries, rich and poor, those with long democratic traditions and those still finding their way to democracy. Their policies differ, too. **We are all different, but when we ask for the Lord's blessings, we must not forget that God created us equal.**"

Wow! Do you hear the voice of God coming through this leader? I realize some, perhaps many, will read this as mocking a so-called Christian nation, but my sight tells me it is the Lord speaking through this man, even if the motive of Putin's heart is to mock us, which it may or may not be. We don't know his heart; but, on the other hand, we don't know the heart of our own leaders either. The good news is that God does, and all is being worked out according to His divine plan to bring about His divine and ultimate purpose of becoming all in all.

For America, the Lord is speaking to us to see things from His perspective. Where is **God is love** in our view of the world, especially parts of the world that are so different from us? Where is **God is love** in our cruise missiles and drones? Where is **God is love** in much of what is coming out of politically-corrupt and broken Washington? It is not uncommon for our politicians, especially our presidents, to end their speeches with "**God bless America.**" Do you realize that when we ask for His blessing, we are asking God the Father to send His Son and to turn us from our wicked ways? "**For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways**" (Acts 3:26).

O, come, Lord Jesus! He came for us individually, but do you not think He can and will come for nations?

This leads to the article about Pope Francis, who is much different from previous popes. Some call him liberal while still in the same breath claiming he is conservative. Labels simply restrict us from what we are willing or not willing to listen to, so let us throw off the labels and listen for God's voice. According to the article, Francis wrote: "**You ask me if the God of the Christians forgives those who don't believe and who don't seek the faith. I start by saying – and this is the fundamental thing – that God's mercy has no limits if you go to him with a sincere and contrite heart. The issue for those who do not believe in God is to obey their conscience.**"

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/pope-francis-assures-atheists-you-dont-have-to-believe-in-god-to-go-to-heaven-8810062.html>

I can only imagine the outcry of heresy and blasphemy from some corners of Christendom, especially from the hell-fire school of thought. Now, believe me, I am not defending this progressive view. There is only one way to God, and that is through His Son; and He will judge all. But this does not mean that God is out to toast the unbeliever in an eternal hell-hole. What I will defend is that **God is love** wills to save all mankind, and He will accomplish this because the cross of His Son is an absolute, 100% success in the salvation of all. Consider the pope's fundamental thing: **God's mercy has no limit!** Paul the apostle agrees: **For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all** (Romans 11:32). **ALL!** Through this pope, the Lord is telling us that it is time for us to show mercy to all and to reveal God is love. Flexing our military muscle and speaking with great bravado does not accomplish this. This is what does: **Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law** (Romans 13:8). God's divine law is summed up in love.

For more on the salvation of all, see *The Ultimate Purpose of God, All in All New*.

<http://www.kingdomandglory.com/allinall.html>