

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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More from the Vatican and Russia

To begin, there are two points that I believe are true. The end of our present age is coming, not the end of the world or of time. A new world order ruled by the true Christ, Jesus the King of kings, is coming, not a new world order ruled by an antichrist. God the Father has fixed the times and epochs by His own authority (Acts 1:7), and I believe that we are in a transitional period that is leading to one of the Father's greatest and most sought after fixed times when the world begins to know that **the kingdom of this world has become our Lord's and His Christ's, and He shall reign for the Ages of the Ages** (Revelation 11:15). His kingdom has come, but the world has yet to see His reign of righteousness and justice manifested among the nations in such a way that there is no doubt who is King. The good news is that the day is coming. Let us **prepare the way for the Lord, make the highways straight for Him** (Matthew 3:3).

Now, this issue is sort of a follow-up to previous issues, in particular to the ones linked below.

<http://www.kingdomandglory.com/tuc/tuc580.html>

<http://www.kingdomandglory.com/tuc/tuc581.html>

<http://www.kingdomandglory.com/tuc/tuc582.html>

Today, several articles in the news caught my attention that go along with what I have written previously, especially our need to discern the times by listening for the Lord's voice from any and all sources He might choose to use. As I have written, we must have ears to hear (as well as eyes to see) and be open to the possibility that God is speaking through very unlikely sources and ways. We need to cast off all labels that we place on others and stop judging their motives and seek for God's heart and His message to us in these days, regardless of the source. One would think that with so much technology at our disposal and the innumerable messages coming forth from Christian pulpits, books, ministries, etc that the voice of the Lord has been going forth with great power. But how could this be so when there is no coherent, consistent message going forth; but rather, the message is in a state of confusion as it runs from A to Z with great contradiction throughout? To make matters worse, when someone comes forth with a challenge to the fundamental, institutional establishment, the person is labeled a heretic, as one who has been greatly deceived. I think of Rob Bell and his book *Love Wins*. This brother simply posed questions about **God is love** and where this might lead, and he was pounced upon as someone who had to be snuffed out at all cost. Don't take me wrong; I am not endorsing his book, even though I truly believe that love does win in the end, and I definitely do not embrace some of his more recent views for which the evangelical community has declared him "dead." But, as the expression goes, do we "throw out the baby with the bath water"? Again, the point is that we need to throw the labels out the door, love one another, and listen for the voice of God in the midst of great confusion and even controversy.

This leads to an article recapping a recent interview someone had with Pope Francis. I have already reported on his view that God's mercy has no limits. Now, this pope is stating that his church has grown "obsessed" with preaching about abortion, gay marriage, and contraception. As he stated: *"It is not necessary to talk about these issues all the time. The dogmatic and moral teachings of the church are not all equivalent. The church's pastoral ministry cannot be obsessed with the transmission of a disjointed multitude of doctrines and to be imposed insistently. We have to find a new balance; otherwise, even the moral edifice of the church is likely to fall like a house of cards, losing the freshness and fragrance of the Gospel."* As for homosexuality, the pope recalled when someone asked him in a provocative way if he approved of homosexuality. He stated: *"I replied with another question: 'Tell me: when God looks at a gay person, does he endorse the existence of this person with love, or reject and condemn this person?'"* We must always consider the person." I can only imagine some Christians rising

up in indignation over such a statement. But, who among you will throw the first stone? For which of the countless number of sins do you want to condemn someone? Again, please understand that I am not endorsing Catholic doctrines, the pope, or life-style choices. But, what I am endorsing is the idea that God is speaking through this man and telling us that we have become emphasis or issue driven and have lost sight of the gospel, the good news.

By the way, the article made no reference to the pope speaking of Jesus, but I will. **The gospel is JESUS!** All the good news for all mankind is discovered in Jesus who is the Son of Man and the Son of God. He is the Son of God's LOVE! We need to get back to JESUS, for He alone is the answer for all mankind and in Him alone **all will be made alive** (1 Corinthians 15:22). He must increase and we must decrease, along with all our labels, our emphases, our traditions of men, and anything else that is contrary to the good news of JESUS who fixed it all and **abolished** all forms of **death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel** (2 Timothy 1:10) when He was raised up from among the dead and revealed to over 500 people. Hallelujah!

Many have especially lost sight of God is love. I'll offer a very recent example. A good friend of mine was in a store talking with a store employee who had tattoos on his arms. In the course of a normal conversation, my friend mentioned the Lord. The employee responded with something like this: "Speaking of the Lord, a Christian woman came in here and looked at my tattoos and told me that I was 'going to hell' because of them." My friend encouraged this man with the love of God. Is it any wonder why people are rejecting the Lord Jesus? He and His Father are portrayed as so vengeful and legalistic that they are going to torture people endlessly. According to this woman's theology, a man with tattoos who comes to the Lord has no chance of immortal life, for his literal flesh condemns him. What happened to saved by grace through faith or a circumcised heart?

Now, on the world political scene, Russian president Putin has issued some more comments, but this time it is about Russia's identity and its religious values. He said: *"People will lose their human dignity without values enshrined in Christianity and other world religions, without moral standards that have taken millennia to take shape."* He went on to state that it is *"natural and appropriate to defend those values."* The next quote is what really grabbed my attention: *"Events that take place in the world represent one more serious challenge to the Russian identity. There are foreign policy and moral aspects to this. **We have been able to see many Euro-Atlantic countries effectively embark on a path of renouncing their roots, including Christian values, which underlie Western civilization.**"* Here is a world leader telling us, as well as Europe, that we have embarked on a path that renounces our very Christian roots. Further, he is stating that his own country needs to consider these things in light of their own values and their viability. Have our leaders stated anything like this? How about our president? Could God be speaking through Mr. Putin, telling us that we are on the wrong path and we need to return to our roots? There is more, for he continued to state: *"Policies are pursued that put large families and same-sex partnerships in the same category, belief in God and belief in Satan. Excesses of political correctness reach the point where there are serious discussions on the registration of parties that have propaganda of pedophilia as their objective. **People in many European countries are ashamed and afraid of speaking about their religion, holidays are abolished or given other names, names that shyly conceal the nature of those holidays, and aggressive attempts are made to force this model on the rest of the world.**"* And, this is all from a former KGB leader. I recognize that people will question his motives, but, as I have written before, this is not the issue, for only God knows the heart. God can speak through any source He chooses in order to get our attention. But we need to be alert to His voice.

Now, balance what has been presented against the latest move from South Carolina Senator Lindsey Graham, who is presently trying to craft a resolution to authorize the president to use military force, not against Syria but against Iran. So, now we have moved from Syria to Iran, and this is at a time when the new president of Iran seeks for "constructive engagement." What is going on? Where are the peacemakers?

Dear beloved in Christ, **God is love, God so loves the world, Jesus is the Son of God's love, and love never fails. The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us** (Romans 5:5). Let us **owe nothing to anyone except to love one another** (Romans 13:8). Perhaps, just perhaps, the world will begin to ask us about the source of our love and the reason for our hope.