

UPWARD CALL

Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but this is my one aim: to forget everything that's behind, and to strain every nerve to go after what lies ahead. I press on toward the finish line, where the prize waiting for me is the upward call of God

IN KING JESUS.

(Philippians 3:13-14)

#10-1601

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Love of the Pattern Son

I have had a word on my heart for each year starting in 2007. Last year was the year of rest and peace, even in a time of tumult and seismic change. Looking back, it would appear that the change the world experienced in 2015 was not quite what was predicted by most. The Blood Moons didn't elicit great doom, much like the Mayan calendar of 2012 or Y2K of 2000 did not elicit the doom that was feared. We have seen tumult and change, just not the kind that sells books and makes for man's ministries. Who expected the magnitude of mass killings, or the political turmoil that is occurring in the Republican Party as well as the whole USA political process? The Stock Market was a loser for the year, as well as gold and silver. Of course, oil was dramatically down, which is a good thing for those who frequent the gas pump. The EU is about to implode or perhaps explode. China is stumbling a bit. The Middle East continues in its self-destruction with the help or instigation of the West. Russia is being painted by the USA as evil; resulting in some fearing WWII might be on the horizon. Immigration is a huge topic for the entire Western world. And, these are only a paltry few examples of a near countless number that could be cited. Taken as a whole, it is no wonder that the whole world is on edge.

So, where does this leave us as we enter a new year? Well, I make no new predictions and leave intact what I have written in the past along these lines. Besides, I have come to see that we must not get caught up in expecting specific events or details. We need to view the days in which we live, not with a microscope but with a telescope; we need to discern the whole and not so much the pieces. What are the trends? What is the character of the day? AND, most importantly, what are the spiritual issues behind what is going on? OR, better yet, what is God, through His spirit, telling us in these days, which have the appearance of being last days for the age in which we live. We need the word (*rhema*) of God, *for no word from God shall be void of power* (Luke 1:37 Numeric).

Again, where does this leave us as we enter a new year? The answer that has come to me is summed up in the word *love*, both in its noun and verb form. We need love and we need to love. This is the answer for a world that has lost its bearings and is sliding down into an abyss of self-destruction and self-delusion.

God is love, and His love is the remedy for humanity. But, let us not overlook that this love is centered in **the Cross of Jesus Christ** and is manifested in **the Kingdom of the Son of God's love**. Down through the centuries, men have tried to take or leave out Jesus, even when it comes to *God is love*, as if God's love does not require His Son. This phenomenon is alive and well in our day as well. Recently, the pope stated that the Jews do not need Jesus, for they have a separate covenant with God apart from His Son. In the secular world, people talk of love and God, but they reject the Son of God's love. As the thinking goes, as long as you have God and love in your heart, you do not need Jesus, for those who do are simply intolerant and divisive, and by extrapolation, come across as unloving.

On one level, I agree with the criticism leveled against the Christian "religion" as practiced by many so-called Christians who have divided over doctrine, theology, tradition, emphases, eschatology and whatever high-brow word the institutional intellectuals have conjured up to separate themselves from the masses and to keep the masses under their sway. The heaven-hell gospel preached by many contradicts God is love. I reject the argument that God's love demands that He judge to the point of sending billions to an eternity in a place of literal fire and worms with no way out or no second chance. The whole concept is abhorrent and denies that Jesus truly is the Savior or Deliverer of the whole world and He alone takes away the sin of the world. And, let us add that God is not holding the world's transgressions against it (2 Corinthians 5:19). Yes, God judges, but His judgments are so that people learn righteousness; judgment is aimed at destroying the carnal flesh through God's consuming spirit-fire and restoring the person when the process is completed. This is love in action!

On another level, I disagree with the criticism, for Christ did not establish a new religion; He established a new way of life based on a new creation, even a new man, not patterned after the first Adam but after the last Adam, the Second Man, who is none other than Jesus Himself.

In the coin (numismatic) world, when a new coin is being planned, a pattern or several patterns are made in order to evaluate the design before going to production and general release. These are called *pattern coins*; some of which are highly sought after because of their mega rarity. For example, when Queen Victoria took the crown in 1837, only twenty pattern coins were produced for her review and these served as prototypes for coins to follow. As a result, Victoria's pattern coins are considered a very high-value rarity.

Jesus is the pattern man. He is a super-mega rarity because He is one of a kind; there is no other like Him and no other to follow Him. He is God's sole, unique pattern. He is so rare that no value can be placed on Him and no one can purchase Him; He is freely given by grace through *the* faith of the Son of God (His faith). His life is not a religion, it is a way of life; it is life itself. This life demands that we walk by the spirit, and this walk is one of love. As Paul wrote: *Be therefore imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, even as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for you* (Ephesians 5:1-2). Notice that we are to imitate God is love, that is, we are to practice love.

But what is love? According to John: *We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren* (1 John 3:16). You see; no one can know true love, that is, the love that is God, apart from knowing God's Son, Jesus. He is not only the pattern man, but He is the pattern love. We know God's true love by imitating the life of the Lord Jesus. Whether one knows Jesus or not, when one lays down his or her life in a selfless, sacrificial way, that one is practicing God's love, for Jesus manifested for all the world to see the true character of God's love. He set the pattern for love and God judges all love based on this pattern. Some might argue that I am proving their point that Jesus is not necessary. I make no such assertion. I believe that from God's view, when He looks at one's love, He will judge it according to the sacrificial love of His Son. Further, I believe that at the judgment seat of God, even all the way to the consummation of the ages, no one will be exempt from being measured by how much their love was of the pattern of His Son.

Before giving the word that came to me for 2016, we need to take note of the number 16 itself, which signifies *love*. Two examples will suffice. In 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, Paul gave 16 characteristics of love.

Love is patient (1), love is kind (2) and is not jealous (3); love does not brag (4) and is not arrogant (5), does not act unbecomingly (6); it does not seek its own (7), is not provoked (8), does not take into account a wrong suffered (9), does not rejoice in unrighteousness (10), but rejoices with the truth (11); bears all things (12), believes all things (13), hopes all things (14), endures all things (15). Love never fails (16)... (1 Corinthians 13:4-8 NASB)

In the Hebrew language, the number 16 is written with the letters *yod-vav*. *Yod* literally means "closed hand" and symbolically means "deed, work, to make." *Vav* literally means "nail" and symbolically means "add, secure." Thus, these two words symbolize the work of the nail that joins hearts together as one. Of course, this speaks of the love of God manifested through Jesus being nailed to the cross, *for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son* (John 3:16). The work of the nails is love. The nails thrust into God's Son were the work that secured and displayed the love of God for all mankind.

Well, this all leads to the word I was given for 2016.

And, you, may the Lord cause to abound and excel in your love one toward another, and toward all,—even as, we, do toward you: To the end he may confirm your hearts, faultless in holiness, before our God and Father, in the Presence of our Lord Jesus with all his saints. (1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 Rotherham)

Dear brethren, as the world is on edge, we need to be the ones who love ALL as Jesus patterned for us. The weapons of our warfare are love and peace. It is time for the world to see this in and through us.