

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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Jesus – God's Moral Standard

There are so many rather strange and bizarre things happening in the world today that it makes one wonder if the world has lost its mind.

There seems to be a trend or at least occasional suggestions in which Jesus is injected into social issues as if He were a champion of the issues. If He were here, He would be right in the midst of those fighting for social justice or civil rights, as it is being defined today, which means tolerance absent moral standards.

This is sort of (but not quite) reminiscent of the WWJD movement of some years back where young people wore wrist bands with "What would Jesus do?" written on them. I imagine this is still done in some circles. In some respects, this is an ok thing to do, especially if it causes young people to stop and think before they do things they are unsure of or might regret. But this is more like a Band-Aid in Christian growth. As we mature in Christ, the pressing question is: What is Christ doing? Or, what is the Father doing? But even this question gives way not to another question but to a cry: "Lord, live out from me. Manifest Your Life in Me." **In our spiritual growth we move from a what to a who, from a doing to a being, to being the Christ on earth.** This does not mean we become Jesus in His uniqueness with His Father or replace Him in the plan of God; it means the Christ in us lives out from us in a very natural way as truly an expression of His life. His life-giving Spirit energizes us and we live in His realm. As we mature in this realm, we come to rely solely on the direction and manifestation of this life.

To achieve this ultimate level of maturity, **we must go to zero**, that is, our self-centered soul-life must come to naught and **Christ become ALL**. By way of analogy, a full glass of water cannot be filled with another liquid. The glass must be emptied. Likewise, we must be emptied of our old humanity with which we were born. Zero means that nothing is left of the first order of the first Adam, and that the second order of the Second Man, the New Creation has come in and become operative. All our personal interests that cater to self, our resources, our confidence, our loyalties, our reputations must be zeroed out and our entire self-life yielded to the Spirit of the Lord until we embrace the utter Lordship of the Lord Jesus in our lives. Only His life pleases God and knows the full will of God and can engage in the work of God. Our old humanity is incapable of this; only the New Creation in us can do it: **Christ in you**. Not to discourage, but few of us probably attain to this level of maturity in this life. Even Paul, as he neared the end of his earthly life, claimed he had not reached perfection. Nevertheless, he stopped looking behind and pressed on toward the goal, the goal of perfection that would reward him with the out-resurrection from the dead in that Day. His way forward was to know **the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death** (Philippians 3.10-11). Death is God's way to life. Even so, Paul's last testament to his beloved Timothy was that he had finished the race and kept the faith. **"In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness"** (2 Timothy 4.7-8). It would appear that the Lord had given him assurance that he had done well; he had laid hold of the life that had laid hold of him. May many of us come to this assurance.

The key to maturity is to come out of all that is of the old humanity and to come into all that is of the new humanity in Christ. We cannot do this in our flesh, our carnal nature inherited from Adam through death (mortality). But Christ in us can do it, and He will do it. On our part, we must hold to **the faith of Jesus** and be obedient to the life within us until the resurrection and transfiguration into the image of Christ that comes with the Presence of the Lord that ends our present wicked age and ushers in the new age of the Son of God's love.

Now, to the point; when Jesus is manifested as the New Man, the New Creation, He manifests as the highest and utmost moral standard of God. He defines and expresses morality as well as holiness and righteousness. He cannot

manifest anything less than God's moral law. **Anyone who says that if Jesus were on earth today he would embrace, even be in the midst of fighting for something less than God's highest moral code is deceived and blind to the truth.** This leads to what is called *social justice*, which incorporates concepts of fair and just treatment for all, equal opportunity with equal outcomes, diversity, wealth redistribution, fair allocation of community resources, social privileges, public control and participation in all levels of life, as if the government is the primary driving force for social justice. One source states: "People are not to be discriminated against, nor their welfare and well-being constrained or prejudiced on the basis of gender, sexuality, religion, political affiliations, age, race, belief, disability, location, social class, socioeconomic circumstances, or other characteristic of background or group membership" (Toowoomba Catholic Education, 2006). Gender identity, same-sex marriage, and pro-choice are included in this.

Obviously, there are some elements of this that all of us can embrace, such as equality. It is not my purpose to try to explain or parse this social justice movement. However, there is one thing that is disturbing. Injecting Jesus into it as if He would be a champion of it if He were on earth is at best misguided. How widespread this is occurring cannot be said, but it nevertheless is happening and, as such, worthy of comment.

The one thing, and it is a big thing, to those who are in Christ is that there is no apparent moral standard applied in the social justice conversation. The fact of the matter is that God's moral standard is nowhere to be found in it, at least as far as is reported. It is not to say that it is never part of the conversation, but if it is, it is most likely redefined or the moral issues selectively chosen. On the contrary, when Christians publicly try to inject morality into the so-called "conversation," they are quickly dismissed with a disparaging label.

From outward appearance, this movement seems to be primarily *amoral*, meaning "not concerned with moral standards; not to be judged by criteria of morality; neither moral nor immoral." To some, perhaps many believers, it slips into the realm of the immoral. The mood of this movement in regard to Christians is best expressed in a quote I posted previously that recently came from the chairman of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission: "*The phrases 'religious liberty' and 'religious freedom' will stand for nothing except hypocrisy so long as they remain code words for discrimination, intolerance, racism, sexism, homophobia, Islamophobia or any form of intolerance.*" It is clear that this statement is directed toward Christians, not Islamists who may even share some of the same moral codes as Christians. Obviously, injecting God's moral standard into the conversation by a Christian, most likely, would be rejected as a form of intolerance.

The point is this: Man can attempt to rewrite, redefine, or ignore God's law altogether to the point of holding to something that is amoral, even immoral, and then claim Jesus would agree, but this is utter foolishness and not of God. **It is simply the old humanity trying to tame and shape the old humanity.** Just as Jesus walked out of the Temple nearly 2,000 years ago, so He has walked out of the old humanity. It doesn't mean He doesn't care about or love those living by the old nature, for surely He loves all. But it doesn't mean He embraces that which is contrary to His Divine character. It doesn't mean He doesn't care about justice and equality, for He most assuredly does. He defines it! **Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne** (Psalms 97.2). Man doesn't define righteousness and justice or morality, God does, and it is expressed in His Son, representative of a New Humanity.

To my fellow believers, the same issue applies to us. We must be careful not to inject Jesus into the many issues we face today, as if He were on our side. A prime example is the religion of "God, guns (and war), country (nationalism, constitutionalism), politics, and wealth (gold and silver)"; this is old-covenant religion. Christ is of another realm, and we need to live in and express His realm. We need to offer the only solution God has given to mankind and avoid debates based on man's old humanity. Jesus is the solution to all wrongs, all injustices, all intolerances, all grievances. Let's not drag Him down into the mud of humanity, as if we could ever do this in the first place. Let us embrace Him seated at the right hand of the throne of God. There is only one answer. He has already come into the earth once to begin the process of leading all mankind into the truth. He is coming a second time to settle it all once and for all, and then eyes will be opened to the truth. On our part, **we must hold to the truth, which is not a concept but a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is Truth and the epitome of love.** When His Life manifests in the New Humanity, the world will be changed. Until then, stand strong in the Lord, unmoved by the condition of humanity. **Go outside the camp to Christ! Go to zero and wait for the Spirit of the Lord to act.**