

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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Seek Above

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would have fought that I might not be delivered up to the Jews. But now My kingdom is not from here. (John 18.36 LITV)

Jesus Christ ... who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him. (1 Peter 3.21, 22 NASB)

... fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12.2 NASB)

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.... (Ephesians 2.4-6 NASB)

So if you have been raised with the Messiah, seek what is above, where the Messiah is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on what is above, not on what is on the earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with the Messiah in God. When the Messiah, who is your life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. (Colossians 3.1-4 HCSB)

I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3.14 NASB)

To begin, I have a disclaimer: I don't know all that is going on in the Christian world. As such I can only report on what I see and hear, limited as it might be. But, as I have contemplated these things, a deep groan has come upon me that I believe is from the Spirit of God. So, what follows is based on this groan and the above scriptures that came to me as I sought to understand this groaning within. Here goes...

We are mere days away from the US presidential election, which has been one of the most contentious and strangest campaigns in our modern day. The many repetitive ads will end soon, but don't for a minute think the controversies will end there and we, as a nation, will go back to normal and all will be united under one leader. It will not happen in the kingdom of this world. Besides, this kingdom must and will crumble. Bank on it!

The world is governed by the spirit of this present wicked age, so what comes forth from it should not be a surprise to anyone with the Spirit of the Lord dwelling within them. The world lives according to the tree of knowledge, apart from the Life and Light of Christ. All the world can produce apart from God is death and failure.

Now, with this thought in mind, what has caused me to groan is what I hear coming forth, not from the world but from so-called *church leaders* or, as some call them, *faith leaders*. It started when I watched a son of a well-known tele-evangelist screaming into the camera with a rage in his eye exhorting believers that they have a God-mandate to vote in this election, and if they do not, then the blood of every abortion that occurs and every Supreme Court justice that is appointed after the election is on their head. Then he proclaimed himself to be John the Baptist, with no apology. Although this may be the extreme example, many other leaders have taken a similar position but with less flare and imposition of guilt. Of course, they all have their favorite scriptures to back up their stance.

But, it goes a bit further than this, for some have advocated we must vote for the lesser of the two evils. I thought we are to hate evil! One leader has encouraged believers to vote according to the party platform and not the candidate. This approach may put some check on the candidate, but it is not a guarantee that he or she will uphold it, at least in its entirety. To balance this out, I listened to one pastor who gave ten reasons, based mostly on scripture, why we should not vote for either candidate. He actually made some good points.

But, before I get to my point, there is one observation. Many leaders have pulled out the same old, worn playbook that has been used in past elections. It goes like this: We need to unite in prayer along the lines of the Lord's exhortation to Solomon in 2 Chronicles 7.13-14. So, they call for 24/7 intercessory prayer watches or some variation. The latest is an internet prayer for 5 days, every night led by two known leaders. I sat in on an intercessory prayer time for the 2012 election. What caught my attention was that people prayed along the lines of 2 Chronicles and never once asked the Lord for His view of the matter. They assumed this was the required prayer, as if it were in the Divine order of God. The other thing that I noticed was how pretentious the whole thing was. The intercessors assumed that God was on their side and the candidate of their choice had to be God's choice as well, and for their very reasons. So, they pulled out their prophetic scriptures declaring who was going to win. As I quietly listened, I was reminded that the Lord had spoken to me that Obama would rule and the Tea Party would fail. This has been proven many times over during the last four years. Did God not listen to His people? Surely, He did, but, more importantly, were His people listening for His voice, or were they caught up in their own traditions and religious templates? Here we are in 2016 and the same old playbook has been dusted off once again. Do church leaders or these intercessors ever ask the Lord to show them where they went off the track? It would appear not, for we are at it again, except evil is now on the ballot, only we must choose the lesser one. Have you noticed that throughout history God has used all sorts of characters, both good and evil, including the devil, to achieve His end?

Before concluding, here is my exhortation about voting. Ask the Lord what to do. If He gives you a particular candidate, then vote. If He doesn't, then vote your conscience, based on your reasoning. He might even tell you it doesn't matter if you vote or not, for *the time is up*. The sky isn't going to dissolve and the Lord disown you if it turns out differently. But, please do not put some pretentious Christian spin to your decision.

All of these points, and many more, can be debated, and they are; but what concerns me most is what is not being said by, again, these so-called *leaders*. Maybe I have missed it, but I have not heard any public exhortation telling Christians it is time to seek above and not to be embroiled in a temporal, political kingdom driven by a multitude of causes. Yes, there are any number of righteous causes to care about from abortion to marriage to gender identity, to name a few. But what if the Lord is not in these things at the moment? What if these are simply background, white noise to distract us from the much greater and best possible position or ground?

Is the church making the same mistake today that the Jews made nearly 2,000 years ago as they demanded the death of Jesus? They were looking for a temporal, political kingdom, and totally missed the bigger picture. The leaders yelled: "*Away with Him!*" They thought they had the higher ground as if they were lined up with God's will or, we could say, the Divine order. Yet, they were far from it; their thinking was stuck in the soil of the earth as they looked for a political solution to set them free from Rome. They were not heavenly minded. Is it any different today, especially amongst the God, country, guns and military crowd? No, it isn't, as many Christians and their leaders are battling for a temporal and political solution to the many issues they see as wrong.

Dear people of God, please hear this: The bigger picture, the higher ground is the Person of our Lord Jesus and His authority. We must get on His ground and off the temporal ground of this world and its kingdom. Jesus' Kingdom is not of this realm. He is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God. He has inherited the nations and possesses the ends of the earth. He is far above all powers and principalities. His name is above all names in this age and the one to come. We have been united with Him and we must be in living union with Him right now, today. We have been raised up and seated with Him among the celestials. So, let us seek above where He is. He alone is our life and our hope. Let us get our eyes off this temporal system of man and onto the King of kings and His Presence and Heavenly Kingdom that will come to earth for the ages of the ages. Let us press on toward this goal and not be distracted by man's kingdom that is failing and crumbling before our very eyes. We cannot fix it; we must let it go, for the Kingdom of the Son of God's love is the higher ground and God's Divine order. **SEEK ABOVE!**