

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)

#13-1907

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June 10, 2019

Only Jesus! ***700th Upward Call***

With this issue of the *Upward Call*, I have reached sort of a milestone as this is the 700th one I have written since 2007 and posted on this web site. (You won't find this many on the web site at this point, as I have been removing ones I no longer consider germane to the message on my heart.) Actually, I began writing them in 1998, but not for publishing; so technically, the number is much higher, probably on the order of 150 higher. The genesis of the *Upward Call* was to provide follow-up teaching material for our brethren in Ghana who we met during our times there. The heart of the trips and the subsequent writings was and still is to lay the one and only foundation, which, as Paul says, is Christ, or, as I prefer—Jesus! There is no other foundation!

Only Jesus is another way to express this foundational truth! Only Jesus! There is no good news apart from Jesus. There is no hope but in Jesus. There is no life but in Jesus. There is no new creation but in Jesus. There is no way into the glory of God but through Jesus. Profoundly, Jesus is all!

As I was considering what would be the most fitting title for this "sort of" anniversary issue, a brother in Christ introduced me to a song by Casting Crowns titled *Only Jesus*. The whole song spoke to me, but one line in particular touched my heart:

*But Jesus is the only name to remember
And I don't want to leave a legacy
I don't care if they remember me
Only Jesus*

When people die, especially publicly famous ones, they are often eulogized for the legacy they leave behind. It is not uncommon to hear that their legacy will never be forgotten, as if it is timelessly memorialized, even idolized. Of course, this makes the bereaved feel good about the death of their loved one—but in reality, over time, most legacies gather dust in the footnotes of history as successive generations write their own history. Regardless, leaving a legacy is something many, including some among our brethren, seem to put up on a pedestal.

For Christians, legacy can be posited in a number of ways—What great things have *you* done for God? How successful was *your* ministry? How many people did *you* lead to the Lord? Notice the emphasis on *you*, the person. Where is—it isn't me any longer; it's Jesus who lives in me—in these questions?

Now, as I have aged a bit—something we all do whether we like it or not—I have pondered this matter of legacy. Looking at my history, what legacy will I leave behind? However, a day came when I realized it doesn't matter. What matters most is Jesus. Has my life manifested His life? Have people seen Jesus in me? Have I lifted up Jesus in my writings, placing Him central and supreme, especially preeminent? As the song says—I don't want to leave a legacy; I don't care if they remember me—*Only Jesus!*

The spirit of the world says—Leave a name behind; leave a legacy. But the spirit of the Lord says—Only Jesus! As believers, can we think of a greater legacy than that others see Jesus in us?

Recently, I attended a conference and a vision came to me when one of the speakers used three words—*inconspicuous*, *transparent*, and *Jesus*. Frankly, I don't recall his message; all I know is how the holy spirit made these words alive to me in that moment. Before sharing the vision, let's consider the definition of these words.

Inconspicuous—"hard to see or perceive; attracting little attention; not striking."

Transparent—"so fine in texture or open in mesh that objects on the other side may be seen relatively clearly; very clear; easily recognized or detected; obvious; transmitting light rays so that objects on the other side may be distinctively seen; capable of being seen through."

With these words in mind, here is the vision. (Although I saw myself in it, I'll change the pronoun to *you* and add some commentary.) Picture yourself standing inconspicuously in a crowd. You are not trying to attract any attention to yourself; and you have no ambition or desire to do so. You could just as easily be wallpaper in the room that no one notices. It is as if you are not even there (of course, you are in the physical sense). You are standing there—no name, no ministry that others acknowledge, no reputation—drawing no attention. Simply, you are stripped of all self-desire and self-driven ambition, and all worldly acknowledgment. But then, you suddenly realize an amazing change has taken place—you have become so transparent that it is as if others can see right through you. (In the natural this would be unsettling, for we all have something we want to hide from others. However, in spirit, the fear of exposure vanishes.) But there is something unique about this transparency—there is a golden light like pure gold shining through you. You're all aglow. Then it hits you—*Only Jesus!*

Shouldn't this be our longing? Shouldn't all of us who are new creations in Christ have a longing to be so inconspicuous and transparent that the light of Jesus shines through us in such a way that the world and our brethren in Christ only see Jesus? Of course, they won't see Him as a figure shining through us. What they will see is a life filled with the character of the beloved Son of God who selflessly gave His life for not only us but the whole world and all creation. They will touch life itself—Jesus' life lived out in us and through us.

Let us desire to throw off the shackles of a self-centered life and embrace Jesus as the center of our life, the one who is our life. Let us be Jesus-centered! Let us be centered in the love of our life; the one who loves us beyond all measure, and the one who calls us to live out this love.

Naturally speaking, we can't make this happen on our own, but the spirit of the Lord can and will. If we have this longing in our heart, I believe it is in us by His spirit as a sign that we are being brought to this point. I sense that this is the anointing that is coming. The anointing won't be a pouring out upon us; it will come from within, from the inner man, the Jesus within us. We have His anointing abiding in us (1 John 2:27), and this anointing is destined to transmit the Light of the World to all.

Oh, like a glass filled with refreshing, clear, transparent water, may His anointing so fill us that His life flows unhindered and unfiltered from us, bringing refreshment to all that touch His presence in us. May rivers of living water from our innermost being flow—rivers of life that bring healing and life to the dead sea of humanity—all to the glory of God.

May our living legacy be—*Only Jesus!*