

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)

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by – Stuart H. Pouliot

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Light, Life, Love

Three things are absolutely essential to the Lord's people—**light, life, and love**. We can manifest many great things in our assembly life and to the world; but if light, life, and love are not operative, then all we have is religion. **Light shows us the way. Life is the way. Love is the glue or mortar that holds all things together.** We cannot separate these because God is light; the life is in the Son—He is the word of Life; and God is love. When God acts, these three are operative because they are who He is. We cannot live without these essentials because we cannot live without God.

Light: In the beginning when God created, the word went forth, **Let there be light**, and light filled the creation. Then God brought forth life. So light is the first essential because as John tells us: And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and {yet} walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:5-7).

We are to be in fellowship with God, to have daily communion with Him, and out from this communion, we can have true and meaningful fellowship with one another. There is no darkness in Him, so we can only find true fellowship in light. We must walk in the light as He is in the light. Light brings forth growth. But how do we walk in the light? It is by following the light of the world, the Lord Jesus, who said: **I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life** (John 8:12).

Practically speaking, what does this mean to us? It simply means that we must walk in Christ. Paul told the Colossian believers: **As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him** (Colossians 2:6). If we are not walking in Christ, then we are not in the light. We will not know where to go or how to proceed. We have no light to see our way. It is a dark path.

John gives us the key to walking in Christ, and it is in the word **abide**. In 1 John, we are told many times to abide in Him. This means that we make our daily home in the Lord—to dwell in Him, to continue in Him, to endure in Him, to remain in Him. He becomes our whole life every day. He is our life! When we walk in His light, abiding in Him, we have fellowship with one another. In other words, we are one in Christ in thought and action. His light shines upon our situations and we fellowship with one another in Christ and He shows us the way. When there is sin, light exposes it and it must be dealt with. We know that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. We do not hold things against one another because the blood cleanses us. It washes us clean so that the light can shine unhindered in our midst. This is the basis of fellowship.

Life: When the light of God shines, the life of God comes forth. When Jesus said He is the light of the world, He also said that He is the light of life. Who spoke the words **let there be light**? It was the word of God, who is the Son of God, the word of Life (1 John 1:1). In other words, when the light of God comes, we have life, God's life. Where is the life? John tells us that the life is in the Son, and he who has the Son has the life (1 John 5:11-12).

But what does this mean practically to us? In the natural world, light shines upon the earth and vegetation springs forth from the ground. We see life coming forth when light shines upon the soil. The vegetation produces seeds, which results in more plants coming forth. The principle is that light brings forth life, and then life begets more life. No one tells a plant to bear seed and give forth more life; it just happens. This is the same principle we are to see in God's people. When His light shines in our hearts, the darkness is driven away; we have fellowship with God and one another, and life comes forth. It comes forth spontaneously. We do not have to work up a sweat to produce it; it just happens. Then this life brings forth more life. This is what the body of Christ is to be about. His body is organic in nature. Organisms have one main purpose, and that is to live and to continue to bear fruit.

Again, the key to life is abiding: **Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing** (John 15:4-5). Like a plant, we are to abide in our living vine, the Lord Jesus. When we do, more fruit comes forth for the glory of God. If we do not abide, there is no fruit. We can do nothing apart from Him. It is His life that bears the fruit. A branch merely takes the life from the vine. Cut the roots of the vine, and the branches all die. Cut off the branches, and they will no longer bear fruit; they wither and die.

Love: The last element is the most essential one. Light and life come forth because they are birthed out of the love of God. Love is the very source of the light and the life. Love is what holds all things together. Love is from God, for God is love. As with light and life, we must abide in love. Daily abiding in love is essential. John tells us to know and believe the love that God has for us. **And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him** (1 John 4:16). Do you know this love? Do you believe in this love? Before the Lord Jesus was about to go to the cross, He prayed to His heavenly Father: **O righteous Father, the world knew thee not, but I knew thee; and these knew that thou didst send me; and I made known unto them thy name, and will make it known; that the love wherewith thou lovedst me may be in them, and I in them** (John 17:25-26).

Our Lord Jesus is so gracious and loving. He desires that the same love that the Father has for Him will be in us. Oh, the Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father. Do you believe the Father heard His Son's prayer and answered it fully? Of course, He did! How could the Father resist a prayer of love from the Son of His love? Do you realize that **the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us** (Romans 5:5)? We have been given the love of God, and we are to live according to this love and to love our God in return. Jesus said: **He who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him** (John 14:21).

I will love him. These words need to be written on our hearts. Do you know that He loves you? Have you experienced the love of Christ? Have you felt His loving embrace as He cares for you? He is the good Shepherd who cares for His sheep. He watches over us. He protects us from danger. He applies anointing oil on our wounds and diseases to heal us and drive out all sorts of things that bring discomfort and distraction into our lives. Oh, Jesus holds His people and loves them with a never-ending love. We are called to love Him, but it is more than us loving Him. It is Christ Jesus our Lord loving us. It is a relationship. We are to abide in this love relationship. **Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love** (John 15:9). It is as if the Lord is saying, "Allow Me to love you. Allow Me to embrace you. Allow Me to care for you." This is abiding. It is essential, for out of our abiding in His love, God's love will come forth through us. Let us live in the light, manifesting the life of the Son, as vessels of love so that the world may see the life of God in action and believe that God sent the Son of His love.