

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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LOVE NEVER FAILS #3

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing. Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13.1-13 NASB)

When God's love is in action, there is no failure. Perhaps, this is hard to believe because we see so much failure in relationships between the Lord's people. Offenses, hurts, and all sorts of emotional pains are inflicted upon one another amongst those who have been given the love of God that never fails. It is man's failure, not God's, for God has given His people every provision to love one another in such a way that the world will know that He sent His only-begotten Son to this earth to die for the sin of the world and to live so that all will be made alive in Him.

John, the apostle of love, wrote: **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 NASB). We know love by the life of the Son of God being laid down for the sin of the world. Notice that John did not say that love is a feeling or an emotion. Many people say they are in love with another because they have a feeling inside. Feelings can be fleeting, especially when the times get tough through a sickness, a financial crisis, or any stormy gale of life. During such times, the true heart of the person comes out, and often it is a heart of self-preservation and pride. It is a heart that is centered on self and what is in it for the person. It is a heart that seeks to protect the ego of the person. I believe pride is one of the most destructive forces in any relationship. After all, God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble. Why? Could it be because there is no love in pride!

Actually, the storms of life often offer the most opportunity to employ the love of God. Storms require patience, kindness, forbearance, faith, hope, and endurance.

Love is patient and kind, rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (1 Corinthians 14.4, 6, 7 NASB)

I have heard more than once of situations where a spouse becomes very ill, even facing death, and the other spouse leaves the sick one because he or she does not want to deal with the situation and make the sacrifice that is required to care for the other. Simply, the selfish one does not want to lay

down his or her life for the other. The same thing happens in the body life of local ecclesias. A storm enters into their midst and rather than lay down their lives to build up the body in love, some refuse to make the sacrifice and division enters and great damage is done.

Let us be clear that love is an action that weathers any storm. Why? Because the love of God demands that we lay down our lives for one another; that we lay down our self-interest and take up the interest of others. This is the key to the love of God. It is selfless and sacrificial for the sake of others; that others might live.

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. (Philippians 2.3-4 NASB)

Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. (Romans 13.8 NASB)

The love that never fails is the love that looks out for the interests of others, and this requires a keen sensitivity to what is going on with others who are in your life. In other words, you cannot live in your own world being oblivious to others, especially those who are closest to you. It is not uncommon for a husband and wife to occupy space under the same roof but not truly share a life together. Each one acts as an independent agent, merely sharing space with the other. They go about their lives doing their own thing and not relating to each other. Some take it to the extreme where the woman has her own last name and each has their own bank account.

This is not the love of God, for love is discovered in oneness, in unity. In oneness, there is no self-preservation that leads to division, for how can you divide one; you cannot. Also, God's love is always on the lookout to serve others. Even in marriage relationships, the two partners should be looking for ways to serve the other. Actually, it is not very difficult when the love of God is operative. The more you are with a person, the more things you see that you can do to serve the other. When you see them, you act upon them. Perhaps, some things might not be very pleasant to us nor to our liking, but sacrificial love does not require that we necessarily enjoy or like what we must do. However, it does not preclude that we enjoy it, either.

Let all that you do be done in love. (1 Corinthians 16.14 NASB)

Pursue love.... (1 Corinthians 14.1 NASB)

For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. (Galatians 5.13 NASB)

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma (Ephesians 5.1-2 NASB)

Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaint. As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. (1 Peter 4.8-10 NASB)

We are exhorted over and over again in God's word to love because God is love, because His love never fails, and because love is the greatest of the commands and fulfills the law of God. Let us love!