

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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A GREAT STORM ON THE SEA #4

When He got into the boat, His disciples followed Him. And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being covered with the waves; but Jesus Himself was asleep. And they came to Him and woke Him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing!" He said to them, "Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?" Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm. The men were amazed, and said, "What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"
(Matthew 8.23-27 NASB)

In discussing the great storm that is coming, I have focused on the nations and the fall of Babylon, the Great City. As I have considered this word, I have wondered if there is more to it in reference to the *ecclesia* of God. Perhaps, the great storm that is coming will also be one within the body of Christ itself as the spirit of God moves upon God's people to bring about great change as the end of our present eon nears, the gospel of the kingdom goes forth in power, and the kingdom of Christ comes. Not only are the nations in need of shaking, but so is the body of Christ in need of shaking. All things that can be shaken within the body must be shaken, for we receive a kingdom that cannot be shaken. Why would the Lord shake the nations and leave His most important possession untouched? After all, Peter wrote: **For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?** (1 Peter 4.17 NASB). But let us not forget that **the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether** (Psalm 19.9 NASB).

I could not begin to list the many things within the *ecclesia* of our day that need shaking; the Lord knows. However, I do suspect that a religious spirit, worldliness, and pride must be shaken until they are dust carried away by the wind.

In the first three parts of this series, I used the illustration of Jesus being asleep in the boat with His disciples when the great storm arose on the sea. The lesson of faith is that Jesus was in the boat with them just as He is in the boat with us as we go through the trials and storms of life. As the great storm moves upon the nations of the earth (sea), we must hold to faith in order to endure to the end if we expect to be saved, that is, counted worthy to enter *the reign of the heavens* on earth. The problem with many of us, if we were truly honest, is that we do not want to experience the great storms; we prefer the calm seas. In fact, again, many of us, if we were truly honest, would prefer the boat to remain tied to the dock, for it is secured to something that is attached to land. But let us be clear that we will never reach the other side of the lake or, if you will, we will never reach the goal for the prize if the boat never launches out into the deep with the Lord.

I remember watching a man in his boat. His boat was docked in a slip, and he got in it and started the engine. He began to rev up the engine and kept doing this, as if he were trying to get the boat to cruise out into the water that was set before him. To his dismay, nothing was happening. The boat would not leave the dock, no matter how much throttle he gave the engine. The man then throttled back the engine and looked around, until something caught his eye. What do you think caught his eye? The boat was still tied to the dock. He had forgotten to release the rope. He then released the rope, throttled up the engine, and the boat went cruising out into the water. He launched out!

I see the great storm that is coming as the Lord's way of cutting the ropes of many who have remained tied to the dock, having been unwilling to move out with the Lord. I also see it as the Lord's way of setting us free from the yoke of Babylon that most of us have been unknowingly in bondage to all our lives, but even more so in the last 50 years or so. We need to be cut loose from anything and everything that has us tied to the kingdom(s) of this world. We must be prepared to receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken (Hebrews 12.28).

I recall, as if it were yesterday, although it was nearly 20 years ago (1989), the first time I shared the word to a company of the Lord's people at a Sunday meeting. I spoke on the need to be ready for the return of the Lord. As an illustration, I used balloons with strings tied to a board. I began to cut each string, naming something that could tie us to this earth, and I asked the brethren to help me in naming some. When the last string was cut, the balloons rose up and out of sight (literally, since they actually went up into a skylight and were hidden from the view of most.) Considering the group, this was sort of a gutsy message to give for the first time, but I didn't know any better.

There is one other illustration of a storm on the sea, and that is when Jesus sent His disciples ahead of Him to cross the lake. They got in the boat while He went to the mountain to pray. I am convinced He knew full well that they would encounter a strong head wind, even a gale wind, as they rowed their boat that night. The account is given in Matthew 14.22-33, Mark 6.45-52, and John 6.16-21. Whether they were one and the same or separate events is not important to our discussion. What we do know is that in each account, Jesus walked on the water. In John's record, when Jesus got in the boat, immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going. In Mark's record, when Jesus got in the boat, the wind stopped and the disciples were astonished. However, in Matthew's record, we read of Peter stepping out of the boat and walking on the water. Undoubtedly, many sermons have been preached on this story as well, so there is really no need to go over ground that has been covered by others.

Peter said to Him, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." And He said, "Come!" And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" When they got into the boat, the wind stopped. And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, "You are certainly God's Son!" (Matthew 14.28-33 NASB)

The thought that has been coming to me lately is that perhaps we are in the day when the Lord, figuratively speaking, has stepped out of the boat and is on the water, and He is calling His chosen ones, His conquerors, to step out as well. Simply, perhaps, it is time to step out of the boat and onto the water with the Lord. It is time to exercise our faith in the One who is coming, our Lord who is called **Faithful and True**. Perhaps, it is time to experience the Lord's life manifested in the miraculous as His kingdom and *the reign of the heavens* draws near to this earth.

Truly, the world needs to see that God lives in the life of a company of people, not a religious people meeting in great edifices called a church, but in human vessels that are the temple of the spirit of God, the dwelling of God *in* spirit, New Jerusalem. Perhaps, it is time for the world to see the love of God in action, the unity of the body of Christ, and the faith of Christ's body in ways that have not been seen since Pentecost, even exceed that which was manifested in the embryonic church. Is this a pipe dream or is it faith that our Lord desires His people to step out of the boat so that He can reveal Himself and manifest the glory of His life in ways that many of us have only read about in His word and have come to not expect in our lifetime?

Oh, may it come! Let us have faith to step out of the boat and onto the water with our beloved Lord. Let us hear His voice: **"Come!"**