

## 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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### ***Kingdom of the World***

An article was posted on Yahoo recently by someone who found Christianity repugnant. His first beef was against the Catholic pope conferring sainthood on mother Theresa for two miracles associated with her, one of which was a claim that someone was healed by praying to Theresa, the other of which has been called a hoax by those most associated with it. The author of this article made a valid observation that no claim has been made that she ever healed any of the sick that she ministered to in her life. The same accusation could be made against the many healing ministries that claim great healing powers and parade people onstage in an attempt to prove it, and yet, these same ones seem to have no power to empty the hospitals of the sick and dying. So, we can have a little sympathy for this beef. The second beef was against a god who would allow priests to rape altar boys; not intervening to protect these young boys as most earthly fathers would do if they knew of the possibility. The argument is that if God is all-knowing, then why doesn't He intervene? This is probably one of the most difficult and thorny questions we, as believers, face. The age-old question is: Why do bad things happen to good people? Theologians and the like try to answer it with their biases, often trying to get God off the hook and lay it at the feet of sinful man's free will. But even this does not address the issue, for some bad things happen purely accidentally or through what we call acts of nature or of God. However, the simple answer is that it just does; it happens. So, maybe this isn't really the correct question.

Before launching into this matter, there is one point to be made. The world judges us by what it sees and hears; it has no ability to discern what is spiritual, that is, what is of God who is spirit. It can only judge in a temporal way. In this regard, the world judges what could be called the **visible, public, or nominal church**, and based on this temporal judgment, the world defines or views what is called *Christianity* and those who call themselves *Christians*. In the case of the author of the referenced article, he made his judgment based on one very large organization that he saw steeped in superstition, and branded the whole of Christianity as repugnant. One more point to be made is a statement of historical fact. Down through the centuries, **religions and their multifarious systems and isms** have been as corrupt and, at times, more corrupt than the secular world around them. Many atrocities have been carried out veiled or excused in the name of God.

Now, to delve deeper into this matter, we simply need to look to the words of Jesus and His disciples.

The first thing to note is that, generally, we are not exhorted to go out and change the world system. It is true that Jesus told His disciples to make disciples of the nations (whether individuals or whole nations). Nationally, this did not occur with His disciples and, in fact, has never occurred in the two millennia since. Quite the contrary, there have been times in history that the nations appear to be everything but disciplined. Case in point is the day in which we live. There are more Christians on earth than at any time in history and, in an attempt to fulfill what many call the *great commission*, some are trying to infiltrate the world system in an attempt to build or advance (as they see it) the kingdom of God on earth. One particular ministry teaches on what are called *the seven mountains*, meaning that there are seven spheres of life in the world that Christians must infiltrate and change.

It is safe to say that any major attempt to disciple **whole nations** today, especially in the Western world, would be met with such vicious opposition that it, most likely, would lead to Christian persecution, on one extreme, or a constant spewing forth of venomous labels such as homophobic, xenophobic, islamophobic, and whatever *phobic* the amoral-immoral world invents, on another extreme. The so-called *social justice warriors* would come out of the woodwork, so to speak, to protest any national discipleship movement. Of course, opposition is no reason not to try; actually, opposition is to be expected. The good news is that discipling nations (not individuals) will be the norm for the coming age of King Jesus.

The second thing to note is that Jesus and His disciples and later the apostles never expended any energy trying to change the world system around them. The fact of the matter is that they accepted it as it was and, for the most part, left it alone. The only system that Jesus stood against and destroyed, not fixed or cleaned up, was Judaism and all its formalism and hypocrisy. Jesus didn't even challenge the pagan and superstitious thinking that had crept into Judaism from the Jews' time in Babylon and Egypt. Paul tried to help them see the truth, but for this, he was hounded daily.

Even after the cross, things did not change and the apostles accepted the world system as it was. Evil and sin were simply part of the mix and that was the way it was. They didn't rail against slavery, as if to demand social justice. If you were a slave and belonged to the Lord, then you were encouraged to serve your master well, as unto the Lord (Ephesians 6:5). Are you in the world? Of course, we all are. Well, then expect tribulation. *Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God* (Acts 14:22). Do you want to enter glory? If so, then expect to suffer, for *if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him* (Romans 8:17). By the way, the genesis for this came from Jesus Himself. *In the world you have tribulation, but take courage I have overcome the world* (John 16:33). This is quite telling, for Jesus did not tell His disciples that since He has conquered the world, they would be exempt from tribulation. No! He told them to expect it and, by extension, not be surprised when it came, but to remain at peace. James and Peter picked up this same theme. *Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance* (James 1:2-3). Peter wrote of the same testing of faith through various trials (1 Peter 1:6-7). Paul was a living testimony of all these various trials and tribulations and he testified to them happening to him and others: *In much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger* (2 Corinthians 6:4-5). To the Corinthians, Paul protested: *I die daily!* Both his and Peter's life were cut short at the hand of the executioners. Jesus even spoke of Peter's death: *Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go. Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God* (John 21:18-19).

What about the devil? What happened to it after the cross? It matters not how one views the devil—an adversarial force like an *it* or an evil force, like the flesh, within all of us, or a persona—there is still a warning. Did it disappear, no longer causing problems? We know that through His death, Jesus, who now holds the keys of death and Hades, rendered the devil, who had the power of death, powerless (Hebrews 2:14). But Peter exhorted: *Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour* (1 Peter 5:8). Paul warned not to give the devil an opportunity and to be on guard against the schemes of the devil and its snare (Ephesians 4:27; 6:11; 1 Timothy 3:7). James exhorted to resist the devil (James 4:7). It may be defanged and clawless; nevertheless, it is something for which to be on the alert and resist.

The point in all this is that, on one level, the world has not changed since the very beginning of man. Jesus' death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification have changed the ultimate outcome for all humanity but bad things, evil and sinful or even accidental things, happening in the world have dominated the 6,000-year known history of man, even to our present day. On this front, nothing substantial has really changed; it has simply ebbed and flowed during what some call *man's day*, which is marked by man attempting to rule apart from God. History proves man has failed. It is called *the kingdom of the world*. But the good news is that heaven declares: *The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign for the ages of the ages* (Revelation 11:15).

Until the open manifestation of the kingdom of God on earth, ruling over the nations, we must accept our present state with the realization that Jesus has conquered sin, death, the world, and the devil, even though all of these continue, as if unabated, especially death, the enemy of man, which is also the breeding ground of sin. The good news is that Jesus has settled every issue for everyone born of Adams' race that keeps man from the presence of God. The ages have been made through God's Son for a reason, and that reason is it will take time (ages) to bring all mankind to God's end of *All in All* in which all rule and authority and death, the last enemy, and its complement, sin, are fully and completely abolished. Rejoice!