

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)

#04-1016

“Righteousness is My Standard!”

February 15, 2010

I have made this point in several other writings, but when I listen to the many words coming forth through our modern-day media, especially that which is related to politics, I seldom see or hear the words *righteousness* or *righteous* being used. It is as if these words and their meaning are not even part of the mindset of man today.

Many years ago, the Lord spoke to my heart: **“Righteousness is My standard; Holiness is My character; Love is My way; Glory is My end!”** I will address holiness, love, and glory in subsequent issues, but what is burning in my heart this day is righteousness.

Does your heart groan for practical righteousness based on God’s righteousness, not man’s self-righteousness? Do you know such righteousness in your own life? John, the apostle of love, identified the source of righteousness, as well as unrighteousness, and the need for us to practice righteousness.

(7) Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; (8) the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. (9) No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. (10) By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother (John 3:7-10 NASB.)

I listened to the speeches given by President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton at the recent **National Prayer Breakfast** and heard many things, including the call for civility in the public-political forum, as well as a defense of gays and lesbians, but I never heard a need or a call for righteousness. Frankly, I would have been quite surprised, if not shocked, to hear such a call, since there is so little of godly-righteousness in our day and so much of self-righteousness. Self rules the day.

As David wrote, many are saying, **“With our tongue we will prevail; our lips are our own; who is lord over us?”** (Psalm 12:4). Does this not speak profoundly of the political system of our day?

As an aside, it was particularly telling to hear a defense of gay and lesbian behavior at a supposedly Christian event in light of what Scripture has to say on the matter (Leviticus 20:13; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 Timothy 1:10).

The use of the word *civility* caught my attention, for it was used as if this is all that is required among the politicians in order to represent the people that elected them into office and get things done. *Civility* is defined in terms of political behavior as “courtesy, politeness, and consideration.” In other words, the call for civility is a call for courteous and polite discourse among politicians. It is a process, not a result.

Like so many other words that fly off the tongues of politicians, this may sound like a great and lofty standard that deserves attention, but I see it much differently. Without a qualifier added to the word *civility*, it simply refers to an outward show or what could be called **political theater**. In other words, men and women could be openly civil toward one another as if they were on stage with each one acting a part in a play. Such a thing is simply a political performance, a process to impress the people.

We saw something quite similar when the president was called a liar during one of his addresses to a joint-session of Congress. The outcry from the politicians was that it broke the decorum, not whether he was lying or not. Consequently, political theater requires decorum even if politicians flagrantly lie to one another or, as some would say, “twist the truth,” “misstate the facts,” “conveniently leave out some of the facts,” or “shave the truth around the edges”; all euphemisms for lying. Oh, may **the cords of falsehood** be cut soon!

As far as I am concerned, it is far more important to know what standard, other than politeness, regulates the civility. Most importantly, is there righteousness or unrighteousness behind the façade of civility? After all, thieves and liars can have a civility toward one another when in the light of day for the world to see while in the darkness of night plot their evil against one another. Liars can smile in the face of their opponents as they slowly twist a knife in their backs. In fact, in some cultures, lying is a norm, and it is done in a civil manner, even if it is not honorable, right, or good.

In a day of **relativism, humanism, revisionism, and self-exaltation**, we need spiritual discernment to interpret the meaning of words and the standard that buttresses them, especially ones used in the political arena. For example, the words *smart* and *intelligent* are often used as if they are related to that which is good, and yet, smart and intelligent people can be good or evil. Another word I hear being used frequently is the word *brilliant*, as if brilliance is only associated with that which is good. Need we be reminded that evil or unrighteous men can be just as brilliant as good or righteous men!

See issues #03-0902, January 5, 2009, *Babylonian Leaders Are Smart*; and #03-09128, June 3, 2009, *Moral Excellence and Intelligence*.

Back to my point made at the beginning, the words *righteousness* and *righteous* are practically extinct in the language of man today, especially in the language of the US political system, which is coming under the judgment of God. I suppose that politicians do not use these words, for they know that they cannot speak of their actions and character as righteous, unless they were to attach the word *self* to it. Self-righteousness is the standard by which much is propagated and defended.

However, as Christians, we are commanded by our Lord Jesus to **seek first His kingdom and His righteousness** (Matthew 6:33), even if it leads to persecution. **Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens** (Matthew 5:10). Today, many are not willing to be persecuted for righteousness sake, especially politicians who will do and say anything to secure votes and retain their seat of power. They are not much different than the scribes and Pharisees that sat in the seat of Moses (Matthew 23:2). See issues #03-09151 through 153, August, 2009, *Seated in the Chair of Moses*.

So that the point is not lost, what is *righteousness*? According to *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* by W.E. Vine, *righteousness* is "the character or quality of being right or just; it was formerly spelled '*rightwiseness*,' which clearly expresses the meaning." According to Jesus' words, it refers to whatever conforms to the revealed will of God, whatever has been appointed by God to be obeyed by man, and the sum total of the requirements of God and man's duty to God. An old version (1956) of *Webster's Dictionary* defines *righteousness* as "moral integrity." We could say that *righteousness* is the morally right way to think or act in accord with God's character, will, and law.

Simply, righteousness is God's standard by which all things are done and will be done within His kingdom. After all, the foundation of His throne is righteousness (Psalm 89:14; 97:2).

The good news is that for all who come under the New Covenant in Christ, the Lord Himself **will put His laws into their minds and write them on their hearts** (Hebrews 8:10).

By the spirit of the Lord, this is taking place within those born of God with the seed of God so that they can practice the righteousness of God, even while they occupy bodies of death, awaiting the resurrection and transfiguration when **this mortal must put on immortality** (1 Corinthians 15:53). Praise God!

For more on this vital matter of righteousness please see issues: #01-0704, September 25, 2007, *Righteousness and Justice*; #01-0706, October 2, 2007, *The Inhabitants of the World Learn Righteousness*; #01-0725, November 20, 2007, *Effective Prayer of a Righteous Man*; #02-0848, August 8, 2008, *The Sun of Righteousness, The Dayspring*; #02-0850, August 26, 2008, *The Path of the Righteous*; #03-0934, March 12, 2009, *Justice and Fairness - Making All Right*; #03-0963, January 20, 2009, *The Kingdom of Our Lord #3: Righteousness and Justice*.

Let us seek His righteousness and practice it, for God declares: **"Righteousness is My standard!"**