

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)

#04-10111

Reconciliation

September 2, 2010

In the last issue (#04-10110, September 1, 2010), I commented that some of the criticizers and detractors of what the Spirit of God seems to be doing through Glenn Beck and others need to be conciliated to God and then to those they believe hurt them so that they can be rooted in the ground of reconciliation and be healed by the love of God.

Over the years, some of these same detractors have spoken often of the need for reconciliation, but in my estimation, they know so little of what this truly means biblically. I wonder how many Christians even understand it.

Reconciliation means “**to make friendly again or win over to a friendly attitude; to bring two parties into harmony or peace with each other.**”

The challenge is that many do not know how to make peace with each other. They simply do not know how to win each other over to come into harmony. Some ethnic or racial groups demand reparations for wrongs done to their forefathers, whether it was slavery or the stealing of land, and the ones to whom they make the demand see no need to make reparations for something in which they did not participate. So, many people seem to remain at an impasse with no apparent way out, at least to them. By the way, this phenomenon can be seen among Christians and non-Christians alike, and especially among the black Christian community.

Let's face the reality that some groups of believers that are divided along racial lines seem to be stuck in the past as if the past still exists like an open wound that has an infection that won't go away. However, there is a way out for all parties, and it starts with God. If we don't start with God, then what we think is reconciliation may be a very superficial thing that will not last when other challenges come along.

To begin, the words *conciliate* and *conciliation* are probably foreign to most people since these words are seldom used in common conversation; but they are vital words in understanding what God has done and is doing. **Conciliate** means “**to win over; soothe the anger of; make friendly; placate**” and “**to gain by friendly acts.**” We could say that this is the first part of a peace agreement. When two parties are at war with each other, they are enemies. If one party makes peace with the other, then that party *conciliates* with the other, and there is *conciliation*. Thus, *conciliation* refers to one side of a peace deal; that is, one party is at peace with another, but it does not follow that the other party has made peace with the one that has made peace. There is still enmity coming forth from one party. It is as if one waves the white flag of truce, but the other continues shooting.

For a peace deal to be of any value, it takes both parties to be at peace with each other. When both parties have entered into peace with each other, it is called *reconciliation*. Thus, the word *reconciliation* means that both parties are in harmony and at peace with one another. It is a mutual peace agreement. Each party has to make peace (**to be conciliated**) with the other in order to come into a mutual peace (**to be reconciled**).

As I see it, the problem with most rhetoric about reconciliation is that the party calling for it has not conciliated themselves with the other party. They remain at war while they demand reconciliation from their supposed enemy. This is not how one comes into reconciliation. In fact, it is how one keeps the war going. It is as if the wounded person does not want to be healed but would rather keep the wound festering and raw. Of course, this assumes the person is still wounded and not seeking some agenda. Sad to say, much of the divide today seems to be over agenda and less and less about healing.

Regardless of what drives the war, there is only one way to end it; and it starts with God, not with man. The following reads differently from most translations; however, it is more concordantly accurate.

Yet all is of God, Who conciliates us to Himself through Christ, and is giving us the dispensation of the conciliation, how that God was in Christ, conciliating the world to Himself, not reckoning their offenses to them, and placing in us the word of the conciliation. For Christ, then, are we ambassadors, as of God entreating through us. We are beseeching for Christ's sake, "Be conciliated to God!" For the One not knowing sin, He makes to be a sin offering for our sakes that we may be becoming God's righteousness in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:18-21 CV)

It starts with God who is in Christ not reckoning our offenses to us, for God's Son died for our sins. In other words, God is not keeping a ledger of our transgressions committed against Him. Then why do we keep a ledger against one another as if we are enemies? We have no right to do so.

For if, being enemies, we were conciliated to God through the death of His Son, much rather, being conciliated, we shall be saved in His life. (Romans 5:10 CV)

When all of us were dead in our sin, Christ died! This is where conciliation starts. The peace treaty starts at the cross. Mankind was incapable of entering into a peace treaty with God. It is a sad commentary on our day that many seem to project our Heavenly Father as one who refuses to be at peace with most of mankind. **God is love**, and He demonstrates His love, for **He first loved us!**

For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. (Colossians 1:19-20 NASB)

The word *reconciliation* is used here to stress that, ultimately, all mankind and all creation will be reconciled to God, that is, all will be at peace with God, and God will be at peace with all. This is the purpose of the eons, so that God may be all in all new. Why? Because all of God's enemies, all of mankind, have been conciliated to God, and one day, all will be made alive in Christ!

God has waved the white flag of peace. Through Christ, the entire world, which means all mankind, has been conciliated to God, and God is not counting our offenses against us. Do you grasp the greatness of these words? He is not counting **your** offenses against **you!** Consider how a paraphrased version reads: **That is, that God was in Christ making peace between the world and himself, not putting their sins to their account, and having given to us the preaching of this news of peace** (2 Corinthians 5:19 BBE). Here we discover the very heart of conciliation, making peace, and this is the message that we, as believers, are to be proclaiming to the world that remains an enemy of the cross. God has made peace with the world because of His Son, because of the **LORD JESUS!**

If this is what God has done through Christ Jesus our Lord, then how can we not be at peace with one another? Before reconciliation becomes a reality, we need to know in our hearts that God has forgiven us of our transgressions. On this basis alone, we then need to forgive one another for any and all transgressions against us, real or imagined. Without forgiveness, there can be no reconciliation because there will be at least one party who is living in the past and not willing to move beyond it. Forgiveness is an issue of the heart. One who forgives forgets the offense and leaves it in the past or, as Paul did, forgets what lies behind (Philippians 3:13-14).

Many years ago when we lived in Richmond, Virginia, a city steeped in history, especially of the Civil War and racial divide, I regularly met with others to pray for the city. For a time, we met at a very large denominational church building located along an avenue lined with monuments of Civil War figures. After one meeting, I left perplexed over why there seemed to be so much racial divide in Richmond. I walked out to what is called Monument Avenue and prayed as I stared at one of the monuments. As I did, I heard as clear as a crystal bell: **"Forget the past."**

Dear beloved saints, we all need to turn to the cross and see Jesus, His blood, and His forgiveness of our sins. It is time to forget what lies behind and press on toward the goal for the prize; and this begins with forgiveness, for without forgiveness, there will be no reconciliation. If you are warring over an agenda, let it go. If you are fighting a phantom of the past, let it go. God has forgiven you, and He has conciliated Himself to you. It is time to get beyond the past and man's agendas and make peace with God; then make peace with others. **Be conciliated to God! Be conciliated to one another!**