

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)

#08-1420

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Scripture—Springboard to Union-Life

I am sure we all have internal feelings or sensings when we hear or read something that does not seem right to us. Perhaps, some of my writings hit you that way. That's OK! But I am referring to more than something "not speaking to us," as if we simply see it differently. Rather, it is a gnawing feeling (sensing) that says something is not right; there is something off about the thing in view. At times, these gnawings are probably what Paul called groanings of the spirit of God within us. Here are two translations of the same verse.

In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. (Romans 8:26-27 NASB)

Now, similarly, the spirit also is aiding our infirmity, for what we should be praying for, to accord with what must be, we are not aware, but the spirit itself is pleading for us with inarticulate groanings." Now He Who is searching the hearts is aware what is the disposition of the spirit, for in accord with God is it pleading for the saints." (Romans 8:26-27 CLV)

The CLV calls them *inarticulate groanings*, meaning we feel them but cannot quite explain them. The word *inarticulate* means: "without the articulation of normal speech; unable to speak clearly or coherently; unexpressed or inexpressible." Personally, this best describes the feeling I get when I have groanings deep within my soul that I cannot explain. It is too deep for words.

I recall many years ago when the concept of *diversity* began to infiltrate corporate America, I experienced the groanings. Back then, we all were required to attend "diversity training" courses. On one level (superficial), there was some good in what the instructors taught, but, on a much deeper level, I groaned within, not knowing why. I sensed something wrong or off about the concept but could never quite articulate it, no matter how much I tried. After all these years, I now realize that the problem with diversity as it was taught (or more so, as it is taught today) is that it destroys our common culture as one nation under God and is being used in such a way that it goes against God's divine Laws, especially the law of impartiality. Instead of drawing us together as a nation, it has actually torn us apart along many different lines, most notably racial and religious. I don't like using the word *religion* to apply to those who truly believe in Jesus, for they have joined a person, not a religion. Nevertheless, diversity and some of the other modern-day concepts, such as political correctness, separation of church and state, LGBT rights, same-sex marriage, and hate crimes, have now been turned in various ways against Christians so that the scale has been tipped, so to speak, and America is clearly becoming, if not already, a full blown post-Christian nation. The diversity movement has destroyed our common culture that was deeply rooted in the Christian faith that was brought to our shores in the 1600s. Today, our Christian heritage has been thrust out of and not included in diversity. There are many reasons for this, one of which many might not like to hear; but one of the primary reasons is that Christians have failed to present the true gospel, the truly good news of the Savior of the whole world. Instead, the public or evangelical church has preached another gospel, one that says people must choose between heaven and hell. Well, this is another topic, so I will leave it.

This leads to the heart of the matter. Whenever I hear the word of God (i.e., Bible) mentioned in certain ways, I get this deep groaning that cannot be expressed verbally. Here are two examples. It is not uncommon to hear in certain denominations: *Pastor preaches the word and only the word*. When their evangelists are preaching, people yell out: *Preach the word, brother*. Or, the one that really leads me to groan of late is when I hear: *It is all about the word of*

God. We need to come together around the word; it is the only thing that unites us. In other words, the act of opening the word in itself unites us. I'm not saying it can't happen or doesn't happen on occasion. But experience tells us that this alone does not unite. What needs to be underlined is the danger of taking the words printed on paper and expecting some magical or mystical or inspirational power to burst forth from them simply in the act of reading or preaching them. Again, I am not saying this can't or doesn't happen.

To the point—how can we believe every written word is inspired when there are over a hundred English bible translations? By one account, there are 115 translations. How are we to account for *man's interpretative bias* built into all of them? And, don't even bother to suggest that the *King James Version* is the only true word of God. A partial blindness has set in for those who believe such a thing. I know that the spirit of God can breathe on the printed words, regardless of the translation, and bring it to life in a *rhema* sort of way. But then again, the spirit can breathe on a donkey and speak to us, if need be. Also, I know there are disagreements among various groups over the words *logos* and *rhema*. Further, I understand the arguments about the inerrant and inspired nature of the written word. And finally, I understand the need to study the written word in context and according to the original languages and, I would add, to study it with a historical perspective. I do a lot of this. I get it!

So, you might ask: What is your point? Well, I groan when it seems that the Lord's people talk as if they worship the written word. In other words, they worship words and countless interpretations of these words that divide, not unite. Mind you, I know there are exceptions and all that, but bear with me.

Many years ago, I met regularly with a dear brother and friend in Christ who had graduated from a well-known very fundamentalist university that stresses a legal, literal view of the Bible. One day, I told him that I saw the Bible as a springboard into God's heart and into His Son. I thought he was going to have a heart attack. This was so much against his teaching that it was like heresy to him. Don't get me wrong; there is great value in studying scripture, and I do a lot of it. But, in spite of all my studies of written scripture and the thousands of pages I have written based on these studies, I continue to believe the Bible is a springboard. It is not an endpoint, but a starting point to a new life.

Scripture is not a closed book of many chapters, but the opening of many new chapters, yet to be revealed. Mere words on paper cannot give us life; only that which is God-breathed can do it. Scripture is a springboard to life and that life is the life of God's Son expressed through His spirit. Its purpose is to bring us into union-life with the one who is life!

Of course, there are many other things that go along with coming into union-life, such as faith, the spirit, experience etc., so don't take this to mean this as the only path. But clearly, we must start with scripture.

This raises a vital question: What is the word of God? The answer is not a what, but a who.

In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God (John 1:1). And the word became flesh and tabernacles among us, and we gaze at His glory, a glory as of an only-begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14). That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, at which we gaze and our hands handle, is concerned with the word of life. And the life was manifested, and we have seen and are testifying and reporting to you the life eonian which was toward the Father and was manifested to us. That which we have seen and heard we are reporting to you also, that you too may be having fellowship with us, and yet this fellowship of ours is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. (1 John 1:1-3)

The word of God is the word of life, and this word is none other than the Son of God, our Lord Jesus. He is God's word! God has spoken to us in His Son (Hebrews 1:2). It is Jesus who gives us life and who is our foundation in all that God the Father is doing. Thus, the Bible is simply a tool, a springboard to catapult us into His life, so that our new life is not based on words but on the *Word*, on *Life* itself, on *being*, being in love and being in union with God. It is to spring us into union relationship with the active and living creator and Lord and Savior of ALL.