

THE UPWARD CALL

Philippians 3:14

INTRODUCTION

- A. Our Year in Review:
 - 1. 5 baptisms and 5 “responses.”
 - 2. Dear friends passed: Kelly Bryant, Larry Davidson, Ken Dunn.
 - 3. No births, but several grandchildren and great grandchildren born.
 - 4. Witnessed the marriage of Matthew and Samantha Tannehill.
 - 5. The Gordons moved away.
 - 6. New members: the Curtis family, Blake Denton.
 - 7. *Moved into the new building, May 5.*
- B. Challenges for New Year:
 - 1. Daily Bible Reading.
 - 2. Perfect Attendance – Bible class and worship.
 - 3. More time in prayer.
 - 4. More service to God – how?
 - a. Stepping out of my comfort zone.
 - b. Showing my love to others.
 - c. Serving only out of convenience.
 - 5. Proclaiming Christ to others.
 - a. Have I told someone about Christ?
 - b. Invited someone to worship or Bible class?
 - c. Talked with someone about spiritual matters?
 - d. Developing “new” friendships – teaching Christ?
 - e. Talking to family?
- C. As we enter into a new year, how will we answer the Lord’s call?

I. GOD’S UPWARD CALL IN CHRIST JESUS.

- A. Faithfulness Answering God’s Call.
 - 1. Learn from Abraham to answer no matter how hard it may be.
 - 2. Learn from Jeremiah to answer no matter how alone we may be.
 - 3. Learn from Daniel to answer no matter how threatening it may be.
 - 4. Learn from Esther to answer no matter how impossible it may be.
 - 5. More examples in Hebrews 11.
- B. The Call Given Must Be Answered and Lived.
 - 1. The call is to faithful obedience.
 - 2. God’s revelation revealed in Christ, John 1:1-4, 14.
- C. The Upward Call is not a Surprise.
 - 1. Paul used similar language in this section:
 - a. Gaining Christ, 3:8.
 - b. Being found in Him, 3:9.
 - c. Having faith in Him, 3:9.
 - 2. Answering the call was about being in Christ – being one with Him.
 - 3. Those of us in Christ must always be about sharing Christ with those who are not.

II. GOD’S UPWARD CALL TRANSFORMS OUR THINKING.

- A. Transformation in the New Testament.
 - 1. Begins from the time of our baptism to our resurrection.

2. We are in a constant struggle between flesh and spirit, Rom. 8:5-8.
3. We are being and we have been transformed by the blood of Christ.
4. Being transformed means we are new creations in Christ, 2 Cor. 5:17.
 - a. We should think differently.
 - b. We should have a transformed perspective.
 - c. Proclamation of identity, Phil. 3:3.
 - d. Declaration of citizenship, 3:20.
5. Effective growth involves:
 - a. Spending time in the Scriptures and in prayer.
 - b. Thinking different from the world, Phil. 4:8-9.
 - d. Encouraged to be loyal and true, 3:16.
6. Focus in our thinking:
 - a. Evaluate situations in life.
 - b. Better equipped to distinguish from error, godliness from worldliness, Spirit from flesh.
 - c. Viewing the world through Christian “lenses”.

III. GOD’S UPWARD CALL MOTIVATES US TO PRESS ON.

- A. The Christian Life is Dynamic.
 1. Words “ahead,” “goal,” “prize,” and “upward”.
 2. Many have weakened in their faith, allowing themselves to become apathetic or stagnate.
 - a. Paul kept on keeping on.
 3. We have been called by God Himself.
 - a. The highest calling possible. There is No Greater Calling!
 - b. Leading to our ultimate destination.
- B. The Importance of Effort.
 1. Words “gain,” “straining,” and “press on.”
 2. Our effort does not take the place of the blood of Christ.
 3. But our effort must show our “all-in” response to the salvation received in Christ.
 4. Jesus said the same, Luke 9:23.
- C. The Christian Life Has Direction.
 1. It is always leading upward.
 2. Contrasted with mutilation and confidence in the flesh in Phil. 3:2-3.
 3. Contrasted with those who walk as enemies of the cross, Phil. 3:18-19.
 4. Our direction is ever moving toward Christ.
 - a. His way of thinking, speaking and acting.
 - b. Living as people already residents of heaven!

CLOSING

- A. I Want to Know Christ.
 1. Phil. 3:10-11
 2. We have received the upward call of God.
 3. Will you continue to answer yes Lord, no matter how hard, how lonely, how dangerous, or how impossible it may be?
 4. Will we help others realize their call and share with them the answer?