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UP....

There is a two-letter word in English that may have more meanings than any other two-letter word. That word is **UP**.

It is easy to understand **UP**, meaning toward the sky. But when we awaken in the morning, why do we wake **UP**? At a meeting, why does a topic come **UP**? Why do we speak **UP**, why are the officers **UP** for election, and why is it **UP** to the secretary to write **UP** a report?

We call **UP** our friends on the phone. We decorate to brighten **UP** a room. We warm **UP** the leftovers and clean **UP** the kitchen. We lock **UP** the house. Some fix **UP** an old car.

People stir **UP** trouble; line **UP** for tickets; work **UP** an appetite; and think **UP** excuses. To be dressed is one thing, but to be dressed **UP** is special.

It can be confusing: A drain must be opened **UP** because it is stopped **UP**. We open **UP** a store in the morning, but we close it **UP** at night. We seem to be pretty mixed **UP** about **UP**!

If we look **UP** the word **UP** in a large dictionary, it takes **UP** considerable space and can add **UP** to about thirty definitions.

If you are **UP** to it, you might try building **UP** a list of the many ways **UP** is used. It will take **UP** a lot of your time, but if you don't give **UP**, you may wind **UP** with a hundred or more.

When it threatens to rain, we say it is clouding **UP**. When the sun comes out we say it is clearing **UP**, and after a rain things dry **UP**. One could go on and on, but I'd wrap it **UP**, my time is **UP**, so I'd shut **UP**!

Some time ago, after receiving an email with wording similar to the above, I put together a sermon based on the word **UP** as used in the Bible. As I began that message, I mentioned there are well over 2,000 **UP** verses. I sensed a sigh of relief as I promised I would not preach on *all* of them! I recalled the prayer of a little southern preacher:

øLord, fill me with your stuffø and nudge me when Iøve said enough!ø

As I thought about hymns for that service, a number of wonderful hymns that use the word **UP** came to mind:

Lift me **UP** above the shadows,
Lift me **UP** and let me stand
On the mountaintops of glory,
Let me dwell in Beulah land.

Stand **UP**, stand **UP** for Jesus!
Ye soldiers of the cross;
Lift high His royal banner,
it must not suffer loss.

Lord, lift me **UP** and let me stand,
By faith, on Heaven's tableland,
A higher plane than I have found;
Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.

UP from the grave He arose,
With a mighty triumph øver His foes,
He arose a Victor from the dark domain,
And He lives forever, with His saints to reign.

Fill my cup, Lord; I lift it **UP** Lord;
Come and quench this thirsting of my soul.
Fill my cup, fill it **UP** and make me whole.

As a young preacher, a message I gave various places I called ø7-**UP**ø WAKE **UP**, SHAKE **UP**, PAY **UP**, MAKE **UP**, FIRE **UP**, CHEER **UP**, and SHUT **UP**. Probably not my best, but years later I met people who said: øWe remember hearing you preach on 7-**UP**!ø

A story is told about three fathers-to-be who were waiting in the hospital maternity room. A nurse rushed in and congratulated one of the menø his wife had just given birth to *twins*. He found this interestingø he played for the Twins baseball team! In a little while, a nurse came in and told the next man his wife had just given birth to *triplets*! He was amazedø he worked for the 3-M Company! About that time, the third man got up to *leave*. A nurse asked if everything was alright. In a nervous voice he replied, øI work for 7-**UP**!ø ☺

More seriously, though, we will now consider some of the numerous biblical **UP** verses:

We recall the account of Zacchaeus who learned that Jesus would be passing on the Jericho Road. But, because he was a short man, he knew the crowd would prevent him from seeing

Jesus. So he ran ahead and climbed UP into a sycamore tree to see Him (Lk. 19:4). He rose UP above the circumstances, he saw Jesus, Jesus saw him and called him *by name*, and went to his house bringing salvation to him. Some fail to see Jesus because there are too many things between them and the Lord. They need to rise UP higher. Some say, there's a hypocrite in the church. But if there is a hypocrite standing between you and God, *he's closer to God than you are!*

In John 2:14-17 we read that Jesus made a whip of cords and drove those who sold oxen, sheep, and doves out of the temple; he overturned the tables of the money changers, declaring: "Do not make my Father's house a house of merchandise!" These actions reminded the disciples of a passage in Psalm 69:9, "Zeal for your house has eaten me UP." Today, we might use similar wording: He was FED UP!

Someone said if the companies FedEx and UPS were to merge, their new name could be FED-UPS! ☺

A little further on in John, we read about Jesus talking to the woman at the well: "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give...will become in him a fountain of water springing UP into everlasting life" (John 4:13, 14).

The whole setting runs contrary to uninspired, man-made traditions. Imagine, Jesus, a Jew, having a conversation with a Samaritan! And not only this, that Samaritan was a woman. Rabbis did not talk to women in public, and, besides, this woman had been married five times and was now living with a man she was not married to! Even Jesus's disciples, upon their return from town to obtain food, had doubts about Jesus talking with this woman. But Jesus saw the thirst in her heart, and divine love won out over fruitless legalism.

Turning to his disciples, Jesus said, "Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest?' Behold, I say to you, lift UP your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!" (verse 35). The actual harvest was still four months away, but spiritually it was already harvest time! The experience of this woman was proof.

Jesus said, "And I, if I am lifted UP from the earth will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). We have often heard it said possibly at the beginning of a church service: "We need to lift up Jesus this morning. Jesus said if he is lifted up, he will draw all men unto him." But when Jesus spoke about being lifted up, he was speaking of his death that he would be killed by crucifixion! "This he said, signifying by what death He would die" (verse 33, see also John 18:31, 32).

Jesus would not die from sickness. He would not die from old age. He would not die from being stoned or thrown over a cliff. He would not die by being drowned. He would die by being lifted up by crucifixion. But this amazing prediction is minimized when it is misapplied, even though well-intended.

At the beginning of John 17 we read that Jesus lifted UP his eyes to heaven and said... "Don't we usually think of prayer as a time to bow the head and close the eyes? But, here, Jesus was not looking down, he was looking up!"

Right at the close of Luke the longest book in the New Testament we read about the Ascension of Christ: "And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted UP His hands and blessed them" (Luke 24:50). Other biblical verses mention lifting up hands (Psalms 134:2; 1 Tim. 2:8; cf. Exod. 17:12). Here, we notice, Jesus lifted up his hands and pronounced a blessing on the disciples. And then what happened?

Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried UP into heaven (verse 51).

Because we read that the disciples returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:12), some assume that Jesus ascended from the Mount of Olives perhaps from the top of it. But why the top? Since he had a long distance to go, did he need the summit as a launching pad?

Actually, as we read in Luke, the Ascension took place at Bethany. This does not conflict with the return being from the Mount of Olives, for Bethany was located on the southeastern portion of this hill area but not on top.

When Paul wrote to the young preacher Timothy, he said: "Stir UP the gift of God which is in you... For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:6, 7).

No doubt God can help us overcome all different kinds of fear. But what is specifically mentioned here was fear regarding the use of a ministry gift. Fear tells us: "Don't try to do something for God, you might fail." But if we do not try, we have failed already!

Over the years we have sometimes sung a little chorus: "Down in the dumps I'll never go." Sadly, that's where some folks are. They are really down. But God provides a formula for this problem: "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you UP" (James 4:10).

Jude, having mentioned all kinds of negatives ungodly people who murmur, complain, and mock goes on to say, "But you, beloved, building yourselves UP on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit..." (Jude 20). Though we face all kinds of things that might pull us down, we can rise above those things, building ourselves up by prayer. Some people take a coffee break, or (unwisely) a cigarette break. Why not take a prayer break? And through that, we can be built UP!

Some say they are too busy to pray. If that is the case, they are too busy! Well, if you are on a tight, busy schedule, how about reading the book of Jude? It is a small book packed with truth it can be read in just over 3 minutes!

So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you UP and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified (Acts 20:32).

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