

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Sundays @ 10:00 a.m. Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: January 13, 2008

Getting Equipped For God's Will

by Dan Trygg

“Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, *even* Jesus our Lord, ²¹ equip y'all in every good thing to do His will, doing in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen.”
Hebrews 13:21

The underlying message in this passage is that God has a purpose for your life. He has things He wants to accomplish in this world, and He is recruiting you and me to get the job done. **The secondary message of this verse is that we do *not* into come this world, or into our walk with Christ, with the equipment and training required to effectively do what God intends for us to do. We have to get equipped.**

The Greek word, translated as “equip”, *katartizō*, means “fitting-out-according-to”. The root word, *artizō*, means “to make a joint (*artos*), to prepare, adapt, shape, fit, join, complete, restore or arrange in an orderly pattern.” This stem is intensified and modified by the preposition, *kata*, added to the front of the root word. *Kata* means “according to” or “down”, depending on the context. *Katartizō* is used in a variety of ways in the NT.

(1.) It is used to describe the process of mending, repairing and maintaining something. For example, in **Matthew 4:21** and Mark 1:19, it is used to describe the “mending” of the fishing nets of James and John, sons of Zebedee. This required **cleaning out** any seaweed or other refuse, **untangling** any knots, **patching up** any tears in the net, and **setting it in order** so that it could be let down from the boat without getting tangled.

Interestingly, this word is used in **Galatians 6:1** for how to deal with a brother or sister who has been “caught up” in a sin problem. We are to “restore” such a person. Such a person needs to be cleaned out, untangled, patched up and set back into a healthy orderly arrangement within themselves, as well as with others in the Body of Christ. He or she also needs to be “equipped” in some way. They need something that they do not already have. It may be healing care, but it will also likely entail some new understanding and insight, so that they learn how to avoid getting “caught up” in a similar problem. They didn't come equipped in heart, mind and spirit to be able to stand strong in the face of temptation. Without some mending, to close up the gaps of vulnerability in their lives, and some new equipment to fight the spiritual battle, they likely will get caught again in the same scenario. Failure does not necessarily indicate a lack of desire, or mean that you are a bad person. It *does* mean that you need to change the recipe, if you want victory.

(2.) It is used to describe the training, equipping process that a disciple undergoes.

In **Ephesians 4:11,12**, Paul tells us that God has appointed certain people to help equip (*katartizō*) the other believers to enable them to do the work of service that will build up the Body of Christ. In the following verse, he mentions three areas of growth that are part of this equipping or “fitting-out-according-to” process. **The goal is that we might come to (a.) a oneness of understanding in regard to our faith (theology), (b.) a unity in our experiential knowledge of Jesus (mystical communion and communication), and (c.) that we might fully grow up to be like Jesus in the way we live and operate (character).** We are to grow up into Jesus in every way, so that we might become able to honestly minister to each other in love, each of us functioning according to our God-designed gifts and abilities (vss. 15,16). Again, we don't start our journey with these skills or experiences. Furthermore, *we can expect to need the help of “equippers”* to teach and guide us along the way, as well as the interactive support of the Body of Christ.

Paul uses the same word in **I Corinthians 1:10** to describe a maturity in which we would no longer be divided into factions. This will happen when we are “having been equipped in the same perception and purpose”. We do not come to Christ “fitted-out” that way. We have a variety of opinions, partial understandings, and misperceptions regarding what life is all about, why we are here, and what God wants of us. It is the nature of our natural selfishness to be divisive (Gal. 5:19-21). **There is a process of cleaning out, untangling, patching up, and setting in order our thinking, as well as a process of supplying us with new information and insight, so that we might come to have a common understanding** regarding these questions. This is called “renewing the mind” (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23).

Isn't this what Jesus said we should expect from discipleship? In **Luke 6:40** He taught, “a disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone having been fully equipped (*katartizō*) will be like his or her teacher”. If we are truly following Jesus, **we will come to be like Him.** Part of that would seem to include what He told His disciples, “Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men” (Matt. 4:19). Again, the obvious implication of that statement was that He was

going to teach them something that they did *not* know how to do. He was going to equip them to know how to interact with people, develop spiritual conversations, and lead people to God. We will be like Him, if we follow Him.

This is part of what the study of the scriptures is for. **II Timothy 3:16,17** tells us that these inspired writings have been given to us from God, and are profitable to teach us, to reprove and admonish us, to straighten us up in correction, and to train us in righteous character and living. The *purpose* of all of this instruction, discipline and training is that the man or woman of God might be equipped (*artios* – prepared with all the tools, and proficiency to do the job), toward every good work, having been thoroughly-fitted-out (*exartizō* – another form from the same root word!). Notice the overlap. **Studying the scriptures is not just a mental exercise to inform our theological opinions.** It will do more for us than that, if we will embrace its teachings and implement them into our lives. **We will be changed in our character, and we will gain the tools we need to do the works God has in mind for us to accomplish** (cf. Acts 20:32). We begin our spiritual journey with great gaps in our understanding. The world system has been programming our minds since birth. If we want to become spiritually mature, we need to learn to perceive things differently. We also need to become familiar with the way God works, and the promises He has made, so that we can do things His way.

The passage from **Hebrews 13:21** (at the top of this study) is a *prayer to God to equip us with every good thing in order to do His will*. God alone knows where we are bound. He alone knows the totality of what our gifts are, and how to prepare us our future. He can bring experiences, resources and opportunities into our lives to help us grow. Paul knew this quite well, and regularly asked God to work in the lives of His people to equip them. **II Corinthians 13:9** is one example, using a related word, *katartisis*, “...**this also we pray for: your equipping.**” The importance of prayer for our spiritual growth is based upon the reality that *apart from God we can do nothing* (Jn. 15:5). We must not think we can live the Christian life by our own effort, or equip ourselves by our own wisdom or self-understanding. God’s plan for us is much more than we could imagine on our own. **Christianity is not about religious people living for God, trying by their best effort to do His will. Instead, true Christianity is fundamentally super-natural. God intends to display Himself through our lives, as we respond to Him.** We are like clay lamps. God wants to use us as lights to the world, but, as you know, clay does not glow by itself, or even burn. Only by the light of God’s life inside of us can we accomplish the mission (II Cor. 4:6,7). God living through us. We MUST have His infilling, which can only happen if we cooperate with Him. **Our equipping is all about learning to recognize and respond to His leading, and staying in obedient dependence upon that leading.** Notice, however, that only two verses later, Paul exhorts the Corinthians to “be equipped”. Here we have the Divine/human interplay at work. **If spiritual growth is to happen, we must put forth effort to grow, and God must touch us with His life, too.** As Paul said in I Cor. 3:6-9, some people plant, others water, but God causes the growth. If we are to become equipped, we must put forth effort, yes. Our effort alone does not cause the growth, however. Otherwise we could boast in *our* works. No, apart from the life flow of God’s Spirit, we are lifeless clay pots. Our best efforts can’t produce the glow of God’s Spirit. God wants us to ask Him to give us the Spirit (Lk. 11:13). The very title Jesus called Him, the Helper (Jn. 14:16), means “one invited alongside to help”. **We must pray for God to equip and empower us for what He wants to use us to accomplish.**

Finally, *katartizō* is used to describe the adaptation or “shaping” of parts, so that they will fit neatly together, or will be more effective in their use. We see a hint of this meaning in the **Ephesians 4:11-16** passage. **God wants the Body to be a “fitted-together and knitted-together” interactive community of interactive limbs and organs.** Each part has its own unique functions. The entire community will be blessed and strengthened by its contributions, just as it is to receive nurture, encouragement and sustenance from other members of the community. As we are filled with the Spirit and engaging in service to other members of the Body, other members will also be having positive input into our lives. **As we do minister to one another in love, the world around us will see the unique nature of our life together, and they will be drawn by the goodness of God to ask, “How is it that you love one another so openly and honestly? What makes you serve one another as you do?”** By our love all people will recognize that we are followers of Jesus. **In order for that to happen, we must be “shaped” and “adapted” to “fit together”.** **Face it, we all have our rough edges. It is hard for us to get close and honest, without hurting one another.** This kind of equipping is the shaping caused by love. **As we love one another, we will become willing to change and adapt to get close to one another.** We will be more tolerant of other’s quirks, and more willing to adjust ourselves to them, so that we can have input into their lives. It is the same concept as I Cor. 9:19-27, where Paul says that he was willing to become all things to all people, that by any means he might save some. Here, in the Body, we become willing to adapt ourselves, as well, that we might be able to get close enough to minister to one another.

Do you need mending, equipping or shaping? Don’t we all? Go after it. Work hard at it. Cry out for it. **Your future impact on the lives of those around you depends on you choosing to get equipped and mobilized.**