

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

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

What Is The Focal Point Of God's Message To Us?

by Dan Trygg

"Just as I... encouraged you to remain on at Ephesus in order that you might instruct certain people not to teach strange doctrine, nor to hold fast to alleged stories and endless genealogies, which bring about speculative controversies rather than the stewardship of God in faith. Instead, the focal point of the instruction is love out from a clean heart, and a good conscience, and 'unphony' faith, ...concerning which some people, having lost this aim, have turned off toward empty talk, wishing to be teachers of the Law, not perceiving either what things they speak of, nor concerning what things they constantly assert." I Timothy 1:3-7

God intended the Church to be intensely practical, ...to be beneficial, efficient and profitable for real life. He was not just blowing smoke, or putting on an impressive show of affection to get our attention, when He sent Jesus to die on the cross. **He came among us with a very definite purpose in His mind and heart.** He willingly paid a horrendously expensive price to His own heart in order to buy us out of our lost, damaged, and enslaved condition. He did so with an end in mind. It was not just some minor transaction, like some "Sugardaddy" peeling off a few bills from His cosmic money wad to purchase a plaything. It was self-sacrifice. It was, as Jesus said, a laying down of His life for His friends (Jn. 15:13). Or as Paul expresses it, the life and death of Jesus was a *demonstration* of God's commitment of love, in that while we were estranged from Him, and even hostile toward Him, **He willingly gave Himself to die on our behalf** (Rom. 5:6-11). **Why? So we could be set free to live the life He created us to live.** God sees this as an investment. He invested Himself completely in order to bring about a desired result. He came to set things straight. Those of us who have clearly understood and responded to His grace realize that although His offer is freely extended to us, amnesty and freedom come at a price to us. We must be willing to unconditionally surrender our allegiance to Him. **What He has come to set straight is the erroneous notion that we can be wise enough to live life on our own.** Those of us who have come to faith and entered into relationship with our Maker, Lord and King, have come through the door of repentance. We have come to see that we did *not* know best, ... that our self-management was inadequate and destructive to our own lives and to others, ...that "independent living" is not all it is cracked up to be, ...that all our efforts to become like God on our own just created a monstrous caricature of what we really want to be like. **To become a Christian means that we will allow God to be God in our lives.** He will be King. We will serve Him. He will wisely guide us. **We will eagerly respond to His direction, because we know it is better than our own perspective.** He calls. We will come. He sends. We will go. Why? Because we are *robots*? By no means! Rather, it is because we have discovered (or are discovering) that **He is truly good, gentle, loving, wise, and He loves to help us grow and be fulfilled.** He has initiated with us a relationship of interchange. He has reached out to us, and, in faith, we respond. We call on Him and, in love, He listens. **From that relationship of love, trust, and hope comes the freedom to serve without reserve.**

How does this fit with our passage for today?

The King, whom we love has given us important responsibilities:

(1.) **The message of this passage from I Timothy is that God has given us a job to do.** In verse 4, Paul says **He has extended to us a stewardship**, a sacred trust and responsibility. **What is this stewardship?** This may not be so apparent in our English translations, but the word, in verse 5, translated as "instruction" in the NASB, and as "commandment" in the KJV, is a word that signifies a charge being given. It is the word *parangellō*, from *para*, meaning "alongside", and *angellō*, meaning "I give a message to". The idea of "to give a message alongside" someone is that they keep the message there. It is like a charge, or instructions given, which they are to refer to. It is the charge, assignment, or set of instructions given to a steward. Paul says that **the goal of this instruction is to direct ourselves, and others, into discovering and implementing agapē love.** By referring to this as a stewardship, Paul brings up some word pictures for us to consider.

(2.) **A stewardship is a responsibility of oversight given to you by someone else**, who is the actual owner of what you are to care for. A steward is like a manager, developer, or a custodian. The owner hands over the responsibility to the steward, who then attempts to fulfill the owner's desires for the object, property, business or person being cared for.

(3.) **There is an expressed outline of direction given to the steward.** It may not be broken down into specific details, but it is definitely understood what the steward is to do, in the big picture. This idea of being given a

specific responsibility is inherent in the title itself, in the Greek language. The word for steward is oikonomos, stewardship is oikonomia. These are derived from the word for "house, home, or household", oikos, and the word for "law, or principle", nomos. **A stewardship was the responsibility of carrying out "the law of the house", meaning the prescriptions and wishes of the master.**

(4.) The effectiveness of one's stewardship is evaluated by how well he or she carries out his or her assigned tasks. In the parable of the talents (Mt. 25:14-30), each slave was entrusted with a certain amount, according to his ability. Upon the master's return, he asked for an accounting of what they had done with their assignments. The first two had worked to develop their money into twice what they had received. They were commended, and promised promotions, i.e., "...you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." The third slave, however, was rebuked, labeled as wicked, lazy, and worthless (vss. 26,30). He did not do even the simplest thing of bringing his master's money to the bank. Out of fear, he buried it in the ground to keep it safe, but did not do as the master had intended for him to do. He was stripped of his job and thrown out. This is a parable, not an allegory, so we must not attempt to make it say more than it was intended to communicate. However, it is clear that **these slaves were given responsibilities that they were to fulfill, and they were judged according to how they carried out their responsibilities.**

In the previous chapter, Mt. 24:45-51, Jesus again uses the analogy of a steward to communicate to us the awareness that we are given specific responsibilities to carry out. **He warns against losing perspective, and forgetting one's calling.** In the parable, the slave begins to abuse his authority. He mistreats his fellow servants, and begins to live for sensual pleasures, partying and carousing. Consequently, not only does he *not* fulfill his stewardship, but *he is caught off guard* by the unexpected return of his master, and is *severely judged* and thrown out "with the hypocrites", i.e., the phony ones who *proclaim* their godliness, but actually are only concerned about impressing others.

The point of bringing up these examples is to illustrate the nature of what a stewardship is, and to emphasize that, **no matter what our motives or excuses may be, we will be evaluated based upon what we do in regard to carrying out the expressed wishes of our Master.** The point is not to motivate us by fear, ...that would go against the spirit of the entire thrust of what it is that God is seeking from us. He wants "love out from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and an unhyphocritical faith." In I Cor. 3:10-15, Paul describes how people will build upon the foundation of Jesus Christ (i.e., the basic Gospel message), with different materials, some lasting and some only temporal. **In the end, the quality of every person's work will become evident as it is tested** by fire. Some things will endure through the fire, others (e.g., wood, hay, stubble) will be consumed. The apostle states that "if any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss, but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire." If we are genuine children of God, even if we are irresponsible and wasteful during the time of our earthly sojourn, we will not be eternally damned for our foolishness. **The consequences of disobedience are real**, however, and **if we do not carry out the stewardship given to us, we will miss out on the benefits of what "following the law of the house" would produce**, ...both here and now, and in eternity. I Cor. 4:1-4 restates the important truth, that we are stewards entrusted with a task, and God will evaluate us on how well we responsibly adhere to His charge and His direction. "It is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy."

(5.) The specific danger Paul warns against in I Timothy 1 is the danger of distraction. There are a million and one topics of discussion that we could be distracted with that would tie up our time and attention, and are unproductive and unprofitable toward furthering the "law of the house". Without even beginning to evaluate the accuracy of those who would stir up controversy, we must ask on the most practical level, **"Does this honestly further the goal of discovering and implementing love?** Will this help me to have a clean, undistracted, confident heart toward God and people? Will this assist me in truly discovering a good conscience? Does this teaching give me a better ability to be genuine, down-to-earth, and unpretentious, ...or does it tend to set me up to elevate myself above others? Does it bring me to a place of peace, ...or a place of fleshly arousal? Does it cause division, ...or does it promote unity?" In I Cor. 4:6, Paul specifically warned against "going beyond what was written, in order that no one might become arrogant in behalf of one against the other." **The things we are warned about in I Timothy are things that are not made "crystal clear" in the scriptures.** They are debatable, or speculative. **We have enough to do if we focus on what is clearly taught.** We do not need to be researching, or being distracted by, other debatable or enticing ideas. **We have a job to do. Let's stick with the basics, and keep focused on the task at hand, developing a community of people that do agapē.**