

# Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Sundays @ 10:00 a.m. Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc dantrygg@msn.com Today's Date: July 27, 2008

## What Are You Saying "No" To?

by Dan Trygg

"If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him say-no-to himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." Luke 9:23

"For the grace of God appeared bringing salvation to all people, training us in order that, saying-no-to ungodliness and worldly desires, we might live sensibly, righteously and godly in this present age." Titus 2:11,12

"Having a form of godliness, but saying-no-to the power of it: from such people turn away." I Timothy 3:5

"They confess to know God, but in deeds they say-no-to *Him*, being detestable and disobedient, and worthless for any good deed." Titus 1:16

"For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and say-no-to our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ." Jude 1:4

**The vocabulary used by writers generally has a range of meaning.** Almost every word has several different possible definitions. This is easily demonstrable. Just pick up a dictionary and open to any page, and you will see that for nearly every word there is more than one meaning listed. Usually, these meanings are somewhat related, and context will determine what best fits in the sentence. **Effective communication happens when the meaning that the author intended matches what the reader understands.** One of the challenges we face is determining which of the possible meaning options is meant by the author. If we choose the wrong one, we can get a very different picture than what was intended by the writer. This problem becomes more complicated when you consider the metaphorical meanings which often go along with words, ...and can be even *more* obscured when you are trying to decipher the meaning of someone writing at a different time in history, a different culture or sub-culture. **Literature that has been translated from one language to another is especially susceptible to losing nuances of meaning in the process.** An additional problem is that our English is always changing. A word choice that was a good option a generation ago may no longer convey to today's reader what it did even 50 years ago.

I bring all this up by way of introduction for today's study. The complicated nature of communication should not discourage, because we do amazingly well most of the time. **It is important to recognize the "slop" inherent in the communication process, so that we will work a little harder to find what the author did intend.** With a little extra attention, thought and research we can usually get back to what was the kernel of meaning he or she meant to convey. **Remember, the goal of Bible study is not just to "get something out of it". The goal is to get the actual meaning of what God *intended* to communicate to us through the human author.** Peter says, "No prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for not by human will was the prophecy brought, rather people moved by the Holy Spirit *spoke from God*" (II Pet. 1:20,21). Paul also exhorts us to "make every effort to show yourself tested-and-approved to God, a workman who does not need to be ashamed, *handling accurately* the word of the truth" (II Tim. 2:15). **There is a right way and a wrong way to interpret the Bible.** It is not for us to come up with our own *opinions*, rather we are to work hard to discover what the word from God was *meant* to communicate. **God will judge us by *His* standard, i.e., by whether or not we faithfully convey what He meant.**

In the study for today, **the Greek word, *arneomai*, has a range of meaning that is broader than how it is often translated.** Heinrich Schlier, in an article on this word in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, says that **the basic meaning of the word means "to say no".** He breaks *arneomai* down into two basic meanings. **(1.) It means "to say no" in relation to a question, often implying a negative attitude, as well. To disagree, deny or dispute would be synonyms.** The opposite to this meaning would be "to agree". We clearly see this meaning in the three denials by Peter. **(2.) It also means "to say no" in relation to a demand, request or claim made by another person. To be unwilling, to resist, to disregard, to reject or to refuse would be synonyms** for this meaning. The opposite would be to grant, to go along with, to accede to, or to comply with the request or demand. Of the 30 times this word occurs in the NT (Matt 10:33; 26:70, 72; Mk 14:68, 70; Lk 8:45; 9:23; 12:9; 22:57; Jn 1:20; 13:38; 18:25, 27; Acts 3:13f; 4:16; 7:35; 1 Tim 5:8; 2 Tim 2:12f; 3:5; Tit 1:16; 2:12; Heb 11:24; 2 Pet 2:1; 1 Jn 2:22f; Jude 1:4; Rev 2:13; 3:8), **I have selected five passages that become much more understandable with a clearer meaning of *arneomai*.**

The first is **Lk. 9:23**, where Jesus said, "If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me." **What does it mean to "deny" oneself?** I have been asked this question numerous times over the years. From what we have seen above, it would mean to **"say-no-to" your natural tendencies, in**

**favor of obeying God's will.** It would mean being unwilling to give in to natural appetites and lusts, to resist selfish habits and promptings, to disregard self-glory in favor of honoring God with obedience. **It would mean to reject your own selfish plans and self-understanding in order to go along with God's plan for your life.** It means to refuse to continue to live for yourself, and choose to live for God. It means to center your life around Him and His will for your life, instead of around you, your comforts and pleasures, and your selfish agenda.

A second passage, **Titus 2:11,12**, declares, "For the grace of God appeared bringing salvation to all people, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and live sensibly, righteously and godly in this present age." **What does it mean to "deny ungodliness and worldly desires"?** Well, before we get any farther, the word, "ungodliness" refers to an attitude of the heart, not so much to the moral character of a person. **An "ungodly" person was someone who was not devoted to God.** They had little time for, or interest in, the things of God. So, to "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts" means to say-no-to the attitude and mindset that does not value God. It means to be unwilling to be drawn in by and molded by such a disregard for God. **It means to resist the tendency to mock or devalue God, and to reject the values and activities that He opposes.** It means to refuse to go along with others who are running after worldly pleasures and entertainments which are not honoring to Him. Paul even tells what this would look like in the last part of the sentence. Instead of disregarding God and living for worldly pleasure, we are to live sensibly (with a sound and healthy mindset), righteously (being examples of upright, fair and just behavior), and godly (having hearts that truly *are* devoted to God). Refusing to go along with the world is not enough; we must show by our lives what a positive difference following Jesus will produce.

A third passage, from **II Timothy 3:5** describes the kind of people that will arise in the latter days (read verses 1-4 to get a better understanding). As the apostle Paul lists all the aberrant and negative attitudes and character traits of these people, he shocks us with the statement, "having a form of godliness (good-devotion), but denying the power of it". **These are religious people! They undoubtedly include church people!** They may be ones who call themselves "born-again Christians", but their lives are in contradiction to their so-called religious claims or hopes. **What does it mean that they "have an outward form of godliness, but they deny its power"?** It means **they follow some sort of religious rituals or duties**, some outward forms that people who have hearts that value God practice, **but they say-no-to, or resist, the actual enablements of change that come to them.** They are just going through the motions, so when the opportunity comes to live life differently in the times between religious activities, they snub God, reject the promptings of conscience and the Holy Spirit, and refuse to actually do anything different with their lives. To combine this verse with the one from Titus, **they are still living without true devotion to God, and they are still pursuing worldly lusts. They just take religious "time outs" to fulfill some sense of religious duty** or obligation. The whole tenor of their life evidences that they do not truly have a devotion to God, or value what He values. They do not "go along with" God, they "go along with" their selfish and worldly lusts.

A fourth passage, from **Titus 1:16**, describes people who "profess to know God, but in deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient, and worthless for any good deed." Here is a good example of how we have to think about the words we read. Which is it? Do they profess God, or "deny God"? See, to say they "deny" Him in the sense of verbal renouncing Him does not fit the context. **These people are also claiming to know God, or even agree to know Him as new converts, but they say-no-to God when it comes to their outward behavior.** They are unwilling to obey Him. They resist taking risks or making changes for Him. As a result, their walk belies their talk. **They refuse to get involved in the King's business, and therefore are useless to His service.**

Finally, **Jude 1:4** describes people who sneak in among the believers and turn God's grace into a license to sin. Notice that **they, too, are "ungodly" or have no true devotion toward God.** They "deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ". Again, this cannot be a verbal renouncement of their faith, as we often think of "denying the Lord". No. **They are pretending to be Christians, but they are saying-no-to Jesus.** They are unwilling to serve Him. They resist Him, and refuse to go along with His leading. They disregard Him and what is important to Him, in effect rejecting His Lordship in their lives. **They are even working against Him, undermining the faith of others!**

**How about you? Who or what are you saying "No" to?** Are you saying "No" to yourself, so that you can say "Yes!" to God? Are you saying "No" to the pernicious and pervasive attitude that devalues God and exalts worldly pleasures, ...or do you fill your mind with things of *this* world, rather than things that will bring you closer to God? Are you looking for and embracing the leadings of the Holy Spirit, or are you resistant to taking risks for Him? Are you unwilling to get involved for the King? **Who is the real King in your life?**