

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Sundays @ 10:00 a.m. Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc dantrygg@msn.com Today's Date: August 17, 2008

How is Your Walk?

by Dan Trygg

"I press on according to the goal (target) for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Therefore, as many as are mature, may we think this way; and if y'all think any other way, also God will reveal this to you ¹⁶ however, unto what we have attained, let us walk-in-an-orderly-fashion (in battle order). ¹⁷ Come to be imitators of me, brothers and sisters, and keep on the lookout for the ones walking according to the pattern you have in us. ¹⁸ For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* enemies of (or, hostile to) the cross of Christ, ¹⁹ whose end is destruction, whose god is *their* appetite (belly), and whose glory is in their shame, the ones setting their minds on earthly things."
Philippians 3:14-19

Last time we looked at how Paul indicated that **those who are mature in Christ have a mind set on pursuing God's purpose for their lives.** They put aside the things from the past that could deter their progress in the faith, and stretch themselves to discover and fulfill what God had laid hold of them for. God has a purpose in mind for each of us. **In order to grasp that and fulfill it, we have to put off our old comfortable habits and push ourselves to grow. Paul was confident that God would reveal to us if we have not been following this "mature mindset".**

Let's consider what *that* might look like. The word picture for "reveal" is to "uncover" something. God will uncover something to us so that we become aware of it. The fact that it is *necessary* that it be "uncovered" is that we would otherwise be oblivious to it, or the missing insights would be outside of our own perception. So, **if we are not walking in the mindset of the mature, we might not realize it.** God might have to "show us" this, in order for us to really become aware of it. The important thing to realize, however, is that **even though God may uncover this to us, we still have to grasp what He is attempting to show us, and make the adjustment to profit from it.** Sometimes we simply don't *want* to see what He is trying to show us. This happened to the Pharisees and scribes of Jesus' day. According to Luke 7:30, they rejected, ignored, nullified or set-aside God's purpose for themselves by refusing to be baptized by John the Baptist. In other words, God revealed some things to them about themselves through John's preaching. They were convicted, and knew that what they were hearing was true. But, because of their friends, and their comfortable self-identity, their respectable situation in life, they wouldn't humble themselves to submit to baptism by John. As a result, they missed out on what God had in mind for them, and *they actually came to speak and work against the ministry of John, and later of Jesus.* They *thought* of themselves as "the people of God", but they *actually became* the enemies of God, by opposing the more radical and authentic teachings of John and Jesus.

Moving on in the passage here in Philippians 3, Paul makes a statement that is in contrast to this tendency to ignore or nullify the purpose of God. Instead of being among those who refuse to put the past behind them, who are unwilling to stretch, grow and press on to the calling of God, we are not to shrink back from the battle line, or the spiritual growth line. **Whatever we have attained to in our spiritual walk, we are to move ahead in a consistent and orderly fashion, as in battle formation.** In fact the Greek word used here is not the common word for "walk". It occurs four other times in the NT (Acts. 21:24; Rom. 4:12; Gal. 5:25; 6:16), and refers to walking in an orderly fashion, following a pattern or example, like going out in ranks to battle, or advancing in a battle line. **To go backwards, to take the pressure off the enemy, is to give ground, to give him time to set up traps and to organize his defenses.** We lose the advantage of keeping on the offensive. It also means that we become lazy and idle, and the enemy is quick to lure us into lethargy and distraction. This is what happened to David in II Samuel 11. He did not go out to fight with the army, and was quickly ensnared into the affair with Bathsheba. We cannot "take breaks" in our warfare. The enemy is prowling about like a lion, watching for the opportune moment to attack. **We either move ahead, or we give up the advantage. We either move ahead, or we become ripe for being ensnared or attacked.** The other concept carried by this word picture is that we proceed together in orderly fashion. We stay in ranks. We don't run ahead, and we don't lag behind. We advance together.

Next Paul encourages us to come to be imitators of him. **What are we to imitate? The determined mindset he exemplified** and described in vs. 7-14. Like Paul, we are to be willing to put aside all things, good or bad, which would keep us from maturity in Christ. Whatever things had been gain to us, or pleasurable, we are to be willing to put aside in order to gain Christ, to be found in Him, and to be filled with the power of His life. We are to be willing to face hardship and persecution, loss of friends and family, if need be, in order to discover and walk in the fullness of Christ's power. As Paul said in I Cor. 11:1, "Be imitators of me, as I also am of Christ." Paul's singleness of heart and determination were as focused as Jesus' own had been. Luke 9:51 says that "He set His face to go to Jerusalem". He

knew that He was facing persecution and death there, but He was determined to fulfill the purpose for which He had come, no matter what it cost (Lk. 22:39-42; I Pet. 2:19-24). We are to be as determined and clear minded as they were.

The next statement is significant, “take note of those who walk about according as you have a pattern in us.”

We are to notice whenever we come across such a person. We are to observe them, consider them, and scope them out. Why? Because such people are fairly rare. When we come across such a person, we are to take a special interest in them and in learning from their example. They can stimulate and encourage us to press on, to go deeper and farther than the majority of churchgoers are willing to go. Their example, though imperfect, will point us to the level of intensity we need to press on in our calling. **We need examples. We need modern-day, flesh and blood people to rouse us from the mediocrity of the church around us.** God raises up such witnesses in every generation, but to many they appear to be foolish and extreme. **We need to watch for them and evaluate what is of God, and what is not.** I Thessalonians 5:12,13 restates this general theme, “But we ask you, brothers and sisters, to come to know the ones laboring among y’all, and standing before y’all in the Lord, and reminding y’all, and to consider them as earnestly as possible in love on account of their work.” Note that it may not be those who have a title, but Paul admonishes us to **think about those who are actually doing the work**, the ones who are laboring-to-exhaustion, standing before them as servants or leader-examples in the Lord, the ones who ongoingly remind or admonish them. **We are to be thinking of them and valuing them, because they are the ones we are to emulate.** The writer to the book of Hebrews said the same thing, “Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate the faith.” Note that we are not to mindlessly do as they say, or unthinkingly follow their example. No. We are to “think of them” and “carefully watch (examine) the outcome (fruit) of their habitual conduct, and imitate what it ‘the faith’”. The writer assumes that not everything about our leaders or mentors will necessarily be perfect, but what is good and soundly in line with the true, biblical faith ought to be followed. **What can we learn from their example?** What kept them passionate and pressing on after Jesus?

I mentioned that such people are rare. I would say that **the vast majority of people that I have known who have started out well with Jesus, who were at one time on the battle line with me, have washed out.** They are no longer fighting the fight. They are no longer pressing forward against the enemy. They have compromised, and are out of the fight. I can identify so strongly with Paul’s emotion here, “For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you *even weeping...*”. **I have many brothers and sisters, friends and family members, who were at one time passionate about Jesus, who began well and seemed sincere, who are no longer living for Him.** They either found that being a disciple was more difficult than they thought, and were unwilling to pay the price, or they have been distracted by the pleasures of this world. **Their lives have been consumed and spent on the so-called “good life”, but they have done very little for the Kingdom of God.** They have little lasting fruit, though they may be financially secure. **They have piddled their lives away on sports, hobbies, entertainment, and material goods, but they have done little of significance for Jesus. They have broken ranks. They have left the battle and gone home.** What do you call someone who does that? What is the term used for people who leave the battle? Are they thought of kindly? No. They are called “traitors” and “deserters”. They have become enemies, instead of compatriots. Does this sound too strong? Look at what Paul writes, “For many walk about, of whom I have often told you, and now I say even weeping that they are *enemies* of the cross of the Anointed-King.” Why? Jesus put it this way, “The one who is not for Me is against me; the one who does not gather with Me scatters” (Matt. 12:31). In Jesus’ mind, we are either working for and helping His cause, the Kingdom of God, or we are not. We are either gathering people in, helping them grow and keeping them active in Kingdom work, or we are not. **We are either on the battle line, or we are not. We are either truly living for Him, or we are not. We are either stewards of God, or we are not.** There is no private property in God’s Kingdom. It is all the *King’s* property. There are no private people in God’s Kingdom, only those who are His servants. We are either faithfully overseeing and managing the lives and resources He has given us according to His interests, or we have absconded with what does not belong to us, and we are living out our own agenda. Which is it?

The outcome of the lives of those who leave the battle will be destruction, loss and waste. What they built their life around will come to nothing. Instead of being commended by God, they will be reproached. Paul says that their God is their belly, their fleshly appetites. What they are known for here will be their shame. They set their mind on earthly things. They had chosen to occupy their thinking with creature comforts and worldly delights, instead of God’s Kingdom. What about you? Where are you in this contrast? Are you on the battle line, proceeding with God’s army into battle, or have you retreated into some comfortable nook far away from the disciple-making challenge? Are you living for God’s Kingdom, or are you living for creature comforts and entertainment? **Who are your heroes and mentors? What is the outcome of their lives? You will become like those you follow.**