

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 24, 2008

Earthlings on a Heavenly Mission

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. ²⁰ For our commonwealth exists in the heavens, out from which also we eagerly await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Anointed-King; ²¹ who will transform the body of our humble state into the same form as the body of His glory, according to the inworking whereby He is able even to subject all things to Himself." Philippians 3:14-21

We have been looking at the issue of pressing on after God's purpose for our lives. Paul had discussed how he had given up everything in order to know Christ and be found in Him. Since he had made that choice, he persisted in carrying out what God's mission for his personal life was. That was, for him, a learning process, just as it is for us. In his B.C. days, he had zealously stood up for what he thought was good and right, only he had things all backwards. When he found Jesus (Actually, Jesus apprehended *Him!*), he began to realign his life to correspond with His new understanding of what his life was all about. Not all of us have as dramatic a conversion experience as Paul did. There was no question that *he* was chosen for a purpose. Jesus told him so, personally (Acts 26:16-18). What about us? Does the Bible address this? **Has God told us that we have any special calling or purpose for our lives?**

In fact, there are numerous examples where the Lord has told us this very thing. In Jn. 15:16, Jesus said, "You did not choose Me, but **I chose you and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit**, and that your fruit should remain..." If we abide in Jesus, His indwelling life will produce "fruit" in our lives. God is looking for, and expecting, some kind of results of the life of Jesus operating in us. In Matt. 28:19,20, He gave us the great commission, our general marching orders as God's people, "Going about therefore, disciplize the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to do all that I commanded you, and behold I am with you all the days." **We are to be recruiting and training active followers from every people group on the planet.** In Eph. 2:10, Paul spoke of how God has personally designed and shaped us for specific work, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which He prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." **God has made each one of us in Christ, and is finely tooling, shaping and equipping us for specialized work in His Kingdom enterprise.** He will bring into our lives the opportunities to serve. We just need to obediently walk according to the prompting and inworking of the Holy Spirit within us in order to successfully carry out His will in our lives. Then in Eph. 4:12-16, the apostle described how **we all are to be equipped to do the work of service, so that we might build up the Body of Christ.** This happens as we each learn to express the truth in love to one another according to our individual giftings. We become especially effective when we are able to function together as a team, learning to listen to and trust one another, discerning and yielding to the initiatives and leadings of the Holy Spirit in one another. God designed us to be like a body, each part doing its specialized function, so that the entire body would be strengthened, built up and healthy. **We have a calling, responsibility and purpose to discover and carry out our function in this spiritual Body.** If we do not do our part, not only will we remain immature, and fall short of God's purpose for us, but also others will suffer because our input will be missing. The team needs each member to do its work.

These are just some places where God has told us we have a purpose, an important and necessary function in His Kingdom enterprise. When Jesus first described the church in Matthew 16:18, He had said that the "gates of hades" would not be able to stand against it. For people of that time, this description would have been immediately recognizable. It was descriptive of an invasion force attacking a city. Jesus set His "called-out people" (church) as the aggressors laying siege against the powers of hades, spiritual forces of wickedness which are entrenched here on planet earth. **It is the church's calling and responsibility to take back planet earth from the powers of darkness** who have occupied the planet since Adam and Eve yielded to the serpent in the garden of Eden. Here in Philippians 3, Paul adds another image to this picture. The church is not only to take back territory in the lives of individuals, in families, in neighborhoods, cities, regions and countries, **we are to see ourselves as aliens, foreigners, members of another country and culture, sent here to claim, conquer, occupy and colonize the territory we capture for the Kingdom of God.** In other words, we are to introduce the mindset, values and culture of the Kingdom of God wherever we go.

Let me hasten to say that this concept has been horribly abused in church history. Whenever the Church has tried to impose Kingdom values *by force and domination*, we have often unwittingly played into the very hands of the enemy. **One of the clearest messages of the OT, and church history, is that the rule of law is *not* able to truly transform the hearts of people.** When there were good kings who “cleansed the land” of evil practices, the benefits were only temporary. **The fact that God chose to come as a Suffering Servant instead of a Conquering King speaks to the fact that He wants to *win peoples’ hearts, not just control their behaviors.*** Satan’s kingdom is ruled by force, domination and fear. God *wants* people to *choose* to follow Him out of love, loyalty and respect, ...because He is good, and His ways are healthy and beneficial. Make no mistake, consequences *will* come to those who ignore or defy God’s counsel, but God has chosen to appeal to us to *voluntarily* turn from our sinful, selfish ways and choose to embrace His will and His ways. Sin always produces loss, inner pain and spiritual death. It is destructive to us and to others. **That said, whenever there is a community of sin-infested people, there will be a need for law to expose sin and limit its infectious and destructive influence.** Law, however, cannot change the human heart, or give us the ability to overcome sin. Nevertheless, we find that even within the community of those who profess to know Christ, there is a need to confront sin, and even at times to expel those who refuse to yield to Christ’s Lordship, and are destructive to others or to the effectiveness of the mission. **Understanding the place of law and grace within people’s lives, and within community, is a delicate thing. It is easy to err on one side, or the other,** if we try to figure things out on our own. Paul tells us to attempt to restore those who are caught up in sin. Our attitude and approach should be steeped in meekness, not judgment, recognizing our own areas of weakness and vulnerability to sin.

In this passage in Philippians 3, Paul had been encouraging the believers to be imitators of him, and others who were pushing aside the hooks and distractions of their past lives, and were stretching themselves to push forward in order to fulfill God’s purpose for their existence. **Then he warned of those who may have started well in Christ, but who had gone astray from their calling.** Instead of being examples of devotion and godliness, they had become examples of hypocrisy and practical atheism (acting *as if* God does not really exist). **Instead of moving forward on the battle line, they had left their comrades and gone home.** Paul grieves over the fact that they had turned to become enemies of Christ’s cross. **Their potential for the Kingdom was being wasted.** They were living for their appetites, instead of for God’s purposes. Instead of delighting in God, their minds were set on earthly things. **They had lost sight of the big picture, both who they were and what God’s purpose for them was.** They were citizens of another realm, a heavenly realm. They had been sent here as ambassadors and settlers. They were to capture territory for God, to stake their claim for the Heavenly King, and introduce the culture of the Kingdom into this new territory. Unfortunately, **like the Israelites of old, they were compromising with the unbelievers in the surrounding culture.** They were compromising Kingdom morality, embracing the moral standards of the world system. They were not maintaining purity in their doctrine, embracing teachings and ideas that originated in the imaginations of people, or were incorporated from the surrounding culture. **Instead of keeping a clear focus of living for the Kingdom of God, they began to focus on living for prosperity in this life.** Instead of being willing to suffer the loss of all things, like Paul and the other apostles (I Cor. 4:9-16), they supposed that godliness was a means of gain, and focused on accumulating and glorying in material things. James 4 and 5 speak clearly that friendship with the world system is enmity toward God. Resources are to be *used* for the Kingdom. This meant helping the poor and enabling workers to bring the message (Acts 2:44,45; 4:32-35; I Cor. 9:14). Those who store up riches for themselves, and live lives of luxury and wanton pleasure, will receive harsh judgment when the Lord returns (cf. I Tim. 6:3-19).

By saying that our commonwealth was in heaven, Paul was reminding us that **this world is *not* our home.** We are sent here on a mission. **We are to live as Kingdom people in Kingdom relationships, exemplifying by our love and goodness the power of the Kingdom to change lives. That is our primary focus.** We make a mistake when we try to make the world follow our morality. They can’t. That doesn’t mean that there is a lesser standard for them, but we can’t change the world from the outside in. **The power for change comes from the inside, by spiritual rebirth and the transforming power of God.** God alone can change hearts. He can transform cultures. In order to effectively minister, we must effectively *live* by the power of the Spirit. *Our lives should look radically different.* We should look like people set apart to God. We should look like light in the midst of darkness. **We should stand out, ...not as religious legalists, or pious prudes..., but as lovers of people, ...those liberated to love and lit up by joy through Jesus Christ.** We should *be* Good News to people, so that when we *speak* of the Good News, people will know what we are talking about, and the testimony of our lives will affirm and beautify the testimony of our mouths. The scandal of our lives should be the scandalous grace and the amazing love by which we embrace the outcast and help the helpless and so-called “undeserving”.