

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 31, 2008

The Power to Live

by Dan Trygg

"Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, 'Which,' *He said*, 'you heard of from Me; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.'⁸ '...but you will lay hold of power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.'" Acts 1:4,5,8

"Brethren, what shall we do?" ³⁸ Peter *said* to them, 'Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.'" Acts 2:37-39

Many people misperceive what true Christianity is all about. They hear bits and pieces of things talked about in churches, and what people have said about their faith. They may even have attended churches at some point in their lives, and been exposed to some teaching about Jesus Christ. Sad to say, however, that **many have come away with a very confused jumble of ideas, or a very truncated concept of what the whole thing is about.** To most, being a Christian means believing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, who came to die for our sins. Through faith, we can have forgiveness of sins, and gain entrance into heaven when we die. While we are here, we ought to try to be good people, loving God and loving other people.

Sadly, while all of that is true, it does not at all capture what the Christian movement is all about. It totally skims over the fact that **the people of God are set at war with the powers of darkness,** ...that our mandate as the Church is to assault the strongholds of the enemy, uproot them and set people free to follow Christ (Matt. 16:18; Lk. 4:16-19; Matt. 28:18-20). This commonly-held viewpoint does not come to grips with the notion that **God has a purpose for each of our lives, and that we are accountable to actively pursue Christ in order to find and fulfill our personal destiny.** It conveniently ignores the reality that "Christ" means "Anointed-King", and signifies that we are to be obedient servants to our heavenly Master. We are *not* masters of our own lives; He is (Phil. 2:9-11; II Cor. 5:10). It totally misses the big picture that **we were created for a personal relationship with a living God,** a relationship that was lost to us through sin, but is available to us through Jesus Christ. This is not just religious *talk*; it is *real*. **God wants to communicate with you. Really.** No joke. The eternal life which comes through Jesus Christ opens the lines of communication, but that relationship has to be developed by your personal pursuit of Him (Jn. 17:3). As you draw near to God, He promises to draw near to you (Jas. 4:8). Finally, this kind of religious teaching does not take seriously what the Bible says about sin, or our *utter inability* to fulfill God's will in our own strength.

This is the real significance of the term translated as "eternal life". The Greek word is *aiōnion* life, an adjective form of the word for "age" or "eon". **"Eternal life" refers to a quality of life, not just ongoing life.** It signifies life from the age to come, the heavenly age, brought to us *now*. **This inner power enables us to live an entirely different kind of existence,** a life energized by the power of God within us. **This "age-to-come life" is planted within us through the Holy Spirit, when we are "born from above"** (Jn. 3:3-15). It is a dynamo of energy, enabling change and empowering us to become like Jesus in character and conduct (Gal. 5:16-24; Rom. 8:1-3). The Holy Spirit will also instruct us, revealing to us the things of Jesus that apply to us, and will empower us to do the powerful works that Jesus did (Jn. 14:12,25; 16:13-15; I Cor. 2:12). **It is this inner power to live and be led by the Holy Spirit that is to be at the core of our Christian experience.** Jesus called this dynamic **"the promise of the Father"**, because God had spoken of this centuries before as the centerpiece of the new covenant (Ezk. 11:19,20; 36:26,27), a new arrangement with God that would enable change to come from the inside-out (Heb. 8:7-10).

You see, most religious institutions may pay lip service to the necessity of the Holy Spirit for daily living, but **most people just go about their lives without any serious thought of the Spirit's presence or leading in their lives.** This is drastically at odds with Jesus' admonition to His followers, as He prepared to leave them and ascend to the Father in heaven. He told them to stay where they were until they had received the promise of the Father. They were to wait until they were clothed with power from on high (Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:4,5). **The indwelling power of the Holy Spirit was so essential to the life and mission of His disciples that Jesus told them not to go anywhere or do anything until they knew they were consciously aware of His presence.**

Furthermore, Jesus taught His followers that their effectiveness in their future ministry depended on **their ability to take hold of His power.** The Greek word translated as "you shall *receive* power" would be better

translated as “you shall (for yourselves) lay hold of, seize, grasp, take by violence, carry off as a prize, catch, grab, acquire, obtain”. Translating it this way indicates a strong, definitive effort on our part to obtain the power or ability of the Holy Spirit. The word for “power” also means “ability, capability, strength, might, a faculty or capacity to do something”. It is clear that **when the Spirit comes upon a person, that person can take or obtain a strength or ability to do things that they did not have before.**

The Bible makes a distinction between three different relationships to the Holy Spirit, represented by three different prepositions: The Holy Spirit can be *alongside of*, *in*, or *upon* a person. Before Pentecost, the Holy Spirit dwelt *alongside of* people, and occasionally He would come *upon* people to empower them for specific tasks. In John 14:15-17, Jesus stated, “If ever you might love Me, you will keep My commandments; and I will ask the Father and He will give to you another Helper, in order that He might be-being *with* you unto the age, the Spirit of truth, whom the world is not able to receive (take), because it does not behold Him nor experientially-know Him. You experientially-know Him, because He abides *alongside* you and *will be in* you.”

There are some significant insights which are suggested by this passage. First, **the unbelieving world cannot receive or “take” the Spirit of God. They often do not recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit, and do not generally experience Him.** Why is this? Because a natural person does not receive or *welcome* the things of the Spirit of God (I Cor. 2:14). To him or her, they appear as foolishness, silliness, uselessness or stupidity. Hence, they do not *value* them and dis-regard them. Even though the Holy Spirit is around them, self-oriented people are largely impervious to His leadings, and do not *look for* or *respond to* His promptings.

Secondly, **Jesus told His disciples that they had experientially-known the Holy Spirit,** because He had been dwelling *alongside* of them in the person of Jesus, and would come to be *in* them, after Pentecost. These men had been spiritually minded *before* Jesus came along. We see this, because several of them had been followers of John the Baptist, and among their friends there was a common pursuit of the things of God revealed in their interaction with one another (Jn. 1:35-51). Their hearts were open to the truth, and they had already set themselves apart to pursue the things of God, so the Spirit of truth and holiness had no problem getting their attention. **Because they valued the things of God, and were looking for them, they had little difficulty recognizing what was God when they experienced it.** Of course, as they had traveled with Jesus, their experiences only deepened, as did their sensitivity. The Bible says that the one who “sows to the Spirit, will reap age-to-come life”. Don’t deceive yourself, however. God will not be mocked (Gal. 6:7,8). *The Holy Spirit is given to those who obey Him* (Acts 5:32). **If you are not obeying Him, how are you welcoming or respecting Him?** If you are living in rebellion against Him, in open, known sin, and you are unwilling to change, then don’t expect Him to reveal Himself to you. If you *want change*, however, He has come to help the powerless find victory. He will work in you to desire and to be able to do God’s will (Phil. 2:12,13).

At Pentecost, when the Spirit came, He came to dwell inside of us, and to become like a fountain of living water. He came to cause us to be born from above, making possible an entirely new life. This is so radical, so real, that Paul says we are *new created things*, creatures that had not existed before, with an entirely new and different nature (II Cor. 5:17). Jesus had spoken of this decades earlier when He said, “Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree bad, and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit” (Matt. 12:33). **The power of the Spirit to recreate our inner person is the foundation for living the Christian life. God has made us fundamentally new at the very core of our being.** Paul tells us that this new nature has been created in holiness and righteousness of the truth (Eph. 4:24). We are offspring of God, made afresh in His image, even though it might not be readily apparent to outsiders (I Jn. 3:1,2). **The transformation process in our experience happens as we learn to recognize and respond to the Holy Spirit, who is the inner force that makes us alive and vibrant with the power of God.** We must put off the old way of living life and learn to operate in agreement with the inner leadings of the indwelling Spirit.

At Pentecost, the coming of the Spirit was referred to in a variety of ways. It was called the baptism of the Spirit (Acts 1:5; 11:16), receiving the gift of the Spirit (Acts 2:38; 10:45; 11:17), a pouring forth of the Spirit (2:18,33; 10:45), that the Holy Spirit “fell upon them” (10:45; 11:15), and that they were “filled with the Holy Spirit” (2:4). **The word picture is not so important as the reality that He has come, and He has come to stay.** He lives inside the believer to teach, guide and lead us, as well as to empower us to do what we could never do on our own. Jesus told us that **it is the Spirit who makes alive, the flesh (a self-directed life) profits nothing** (Jn. 6:63). **If we live by the Spirit, let us walk by the Spirit.** If we do, we will not carry out those old, selfish desires. We must put off the old to make room for the new life. **If we are mindful of the Spirit, if we are praying for Him, watching for Him, expecting Him, welcoming His promptings, we will recognize His leadings, and we will be able to live a power-filled life.**