

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Sundays @ 10:00 a.m. Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc dantrygg@msn.com Today's Date: September 7, 2008

To Find the Plan of God, You Must Become the Man or Woman of God

by Dan Trygg

"I am the Vine, you are the branches; the one who abides in Me and I in him/her, that person bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. ...You are My friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what the Master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give to you. This I command you, that you love one another." Jn. 15:5,14-17

"For the grace of God, salvation to all humans, appeared, training us, in order that denying the un-devotedness and the worldly strong-desires, we might live as healthy-minded and as righteous and as well-devoted in this present age, awaiting the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Messiah Jesus, who gave Himself on our behalf, in order that He might redeem us from all lawlessness and He might cleanse for Himself a special people, zealous for good works." Tit. 2:11-14

We have been considering the fact that **God has made, and is making, each one of us for a unique purpose.** No one else has the same personal characteristics, spiritual giftings, life experiences and circumstantial placement that you have. In the grand enterprise of the Kingdom of God "leavening", or spreading throughout, this renegade world system, **each of us has been "placed" in a unique set of circumstances and relationships.** If Esther, the OT heroine, came to her set of circumstances by the overseeing providence of God "for such a time as this" (Est. 4:14), we have no less a sense of call, purpose and possibility in our lives. The extent of the potential impact may not be as readily evident to us, as it was in her case, but the outreach of God's hand through our yielded lives can affect those around us in ways that are no less dramatic, or life-changing, than was the impact of her choice to obey God. **Both the hurts and wounds inflicted on us by others, as well as the lessons of our own poor choices, which have brought us pain, can be transformed by God into powerful tools that can bring hope and healing to others.** Joseph, who spent 13 years of his life in slavery, because of his own arrogance and the betrayal of his brothers, could see the overseeing providence of God in his placement in life circumstances. This insight prompted him to say, even to those who had sold him into slavery, "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, *to preserve many alive*" (Gen. 50:20). In fact, it was Joseph's faith in God, evidenced by his faithfulness throughout those dark and difficult times, which not only carried him through his trials, but molded him into the person that God could use, regardless of his circumstances.

The key in these lives was that there had been established in each of them enough of a foundation of belief and trust in God that they were *able* to do what was required of them *when the opportunity arose*. They were prepared and ready for what God brought into their lives to do for Him (Eph. 2:10). The same principles are before us as were at work in their lives. **In order to be ready for the "larger works" of God, we must be prepared, equipped, aware, available, and responsive to Him.** This "readiness" is facilitated through the choices we make in our everyday lives. God will bring training opportunities into our lives, and the enemy will bring whatever tests and temptations he can. **The direction of our lives, and the growth of our "readiness", are determined by the *investments* we make toward our maturity, and the *responses* we make in the thick and thin of life's barrage of "options" which unceasingly come into our experience. If we are faithful in the little things of life, we will be prepared to be faithful in the bigger things.** If we are unrighteous in little things, we are being shaped to be unable and/or unresponsive, and cannot be trusted with much (Lk. 16:10). ***We are in the training school of the Holy Spirit every day of our lives, whether we realize it or not.*** God may indeed *have* great things He would like to do with us, but we sell our birthright for the cheap trinkets and momentary pleasures of this life. We must be on our guard against this, because *the critical opportunities of life can be lost, with no possibility of regaining them* (Heb. 12:15-17).

God desires a relationship, a partnership with Him. He does not want automatons, mindless machines that simply do His bidding. He wants us to use the free will He gave us to enter, maintain, and develop a relationship with Him. **We need to see ourselves as important partners with Him in His Kingdom work, and devote ourselves to that end, consciously setting about to develop our personhood and skills to become more effective in His service.**

**The development process does not simply involve *the education of the mind.*
It involves *the building of character,*
*and the growth of relational skills.***

These can only mature through a process of training which involves actual use, because they require not only the mind, but the will, and the coordination of the body to effectively communicate the intent of the heart in response to the Holy Spirit (Heb. 5:11-14). **There are skills involved in knowing God (Eph. 1:17), and skills involved in learning to work with people (Prov. 15:1; 16:23)**, and express the inworking of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 14:26). Reading books, doing devotions, going to church meetings, attending seminars, doing drills, etc. are not "real life application". They are activities which can *help* in the preparation, if the heart is right, ...but they are only a means to an end. Without the "being" of the new birth and the abiding relationship with God, the "doing" of even so-called "good things" will always be misguided, and usually "un-empowered". Without the "doing", however, the "being" of that new person will never grow and develop. **"Doing" needs to come out of "being" in order to be effective**, and in order that the inner person can mature. **However, without the "doing" the inner life stagnates, and the inner person remains undeveloped.**

Let's take a look at our passage from Titus. It says that the grace (*charis*) of God appeared, or was manifested (at a point in time), training (and ongoingly training) us in two areas: (1.) in order that (for ourselves) denying the undevotedness and the worldly lusts; (2.) we might live in this present time in a manner consistent with healthy-mindedness, righteousness, and good-devotedness, mindful of and expectantly waiting for Jesus' return, a people zealous for good deeds. There is a great deal here to consider.

First of all, **the grace of God, that showed up at a point in time in the past, is still operating among us. It is working to train us.** The word translated as "train" means both to "instruct" and to "correct" or "discipline". The idea is that it is more than just teaching information, it is also at work to bring about a specific outcome, both *correcting what is amiss*, as well as *guiding, developing and affirming what is positive*. It is hard to imagine a *concept* doing that. The grace that was revealed and is now working, would cover the entire work of Jesus' death, resurrection, and the sending of the Holy Spirit. *All of that was God's gift to us.* It is easier for us to envision the Holy Spirit at work to do this, but we must never lose sight that His inworking is the result of, and the expression of, God's wonderful grace to us, the love and favor which He has toward us that we did *not* deserve.

Secondly, **the grace of God is training us to deny things** that Paul lumps under two general categories. The word translated as "deny" also means to "disown (meaning that you once "owned" something, or at least claimed it for yourself, and now you are rejecting it); renounce, and refuse". To deny means to turn away from something that was once very familiar, and is an ongoingly present possibility for us to involve ourselves in again. The particular form of the word here means that **we choose voluntarily to turn away from these things**, but doing so will require intense effort or personal change on our part. It is not a flip, easy, "cost-less" thing. It requires something costly from us to reject these things.

What are we being trained to reject?

(a.) Ungodliness. The word literally means "not-devotedness" or "un-devotedness". "Ungodliness" sounds more like negative behavior, but the Greek word really identifies a negative orientation, actually **an absence of a healthy orientation of one's heart toward God**. The ungodly behavior springs from this underlying problem. A lack of awareness, or lack of respect, toward God will remove all restraints upon animal and self-centered satisfactions. Since there is no concern for an outward sense of morality or meaning in life, the way is opened up to an unrestrained seeking after the second thing which Paul tells us to reject:

(b.) Worldly lusts. Actually the word translated in many versions as "lust" just means "strong desires". Sometimes a strong desire is OK (cf. Lk. 22:14; Phil. 1:23; I Thess. 2:17), but most of the time the Scriptures warn us of strong desire that leads us astray, or is evil (Mk. 4:19; Jn. 8:44; Rom. 1:24; 6:12; 7:7,8; 13:14; Gal. 5:16,24; Eph. 2:3; 4:22; Col. 3:5; I Thess. 4:5; I Tim. 1:14,15; II Tim. 2:22; 3:6; 4:3; Tit. 3:3; Jas. 1:14,15; I Pet. 1:14; 2:11; 4:2,3; II Pet. 1:4; 2:18; 3:3; I Jn. 2:16,17; Jud. 1:16,18; Rev. 18:14). The adjective "worldly" clarifies that these are strong desires that are consistent with this present evil world. **Many natural and healthy desires have been perverted and over-accentuated by this fallen, empty-hearted world.** The unending pursuit of pleasure in order to cover-up one's inner emotional/spiritual pain or emptiness has fueled much of this unhealthy emphasis on the sensual. Unfortunately, the thing that we have found to temporarily anesthetize ourselves also distracts and draws us away from what is truly the only answer to the need of our heart. **As long as we continue to pursue sensual pleasures in order to cover pain, we tend to ignore or short-circuit our relationship with God. Because of this, these worldly lusts "wage war against the soul"** (I Pet. 2:11).

In another study, we will look more closely at the positive elements which the grace of God is attempting to work into our lives. For now, it is important to see that God's grace, His-working-of-love-when-we-do-not-deserve-it, is what is operating in our lives. When we feel inadequate, or we have failed, remember His commitment of love. He is *for* us (Rom. 8:31). He has shown us that in the sending of His Son (Rom. 5:8). Let there be no misunderstanding. **He does not require changes in order to love us; rather, He wants us to know His love so that we would want to make the changes that are good for us, and which prepare us to know and walk with Him better.**