

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 14, 2008

The Training of the Grace of God

by Dan Trygg

"For the grace of God appeared, salvation to all humans, training us, in order that denying un-devotedness and worldly strong-desires, healthy-mindedly and righteously and well-devotedly we might live in this present age, anticipating the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and Savior of us, Messiah Jesus, who gave Himself on our behalf, in order that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and He might purify for Himself a special people, zealous for good works." Titus 2:11-14

God has made, and is developing, each of us for a unique purpose. Our personal characteristics, skills, life experiences, spiritual gifts and placement in life circumstances cause us to be unlike any other person.

God has sent His grace into this world to free us from the things that would oppose or restrict the fulfillment and utilization of our potential here in this present age. The depth of His grace has been demonstrated by His love commitment which caused Him to come as a human being to ransom us from captivity to sin. He, as the Word made flesh, laid down His own life on our behalf, a payment which both satisfied the righteous requirements of God's justice and also forever removed any basis for an accusatory charge or debt to be successfully held against us by our spiritual enemies (Rom. 3:21-26; 8:31-39; Col. 2:12-15). We were set free from sin and Satan in order to serve God.

The grace of God is also evidenced by the sending of the Holy Spirit to walk with us as our ever-present Helper and Counselor. It is His working that takes the spiritual blindness from our eyes, and draws us to God (Jn. 6:63). It is also His mission to show us the things of Jesus (I Cor. 2:12), to direct us into the will of God (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:16,18), and to supply us with the power of Heaven in order to do the works of the Kingdom (Jn. 14:12; Acts 2:32,33; I Cor. 12:4-11), and to live lives which reveal the "other-worldly" quality one would expect of those who are indwelt by the God of Heaven (i.e., that we might be "light" in the midst of a dark world -- cf. Jn. 12:35,36; Eph. 5:8-16; Phil. 2:12-16; Mt. 5:14-16).

The grace of God is not only the *undeserved attitude of favor* of His heart, but also the *unearned action of His hand on our behalf*. The word in Greek, *charis*, means not only "unmerited favor" (the attitude of the heart *toward you*), but also "graciousness, kindness, beauty, or goodwill" (descriptive of the heart attitude *of the giver*), as well as "a favor, a gift, a blessing or provision" (describing the *expression* of the gracious heart in a tangible manner). As you can see, the range of meaning of this word can be quite broad, and our interpretation of it will color our perception of its usage in various passages. If we too narrowly define it, we may miss a key part of what the Holy Spirit meant for us to understand. For example, the author of the letter to the Hebrews writes, "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace *to help in time of need*" (Heb. 4:15,16). The focus of vs. 16 is on receiving some kind of *practical provision* from God to meet a specific momentary need. Finally, spiritual gifts (*charisma*) are expressions of grace (*charis*) conveyed to and through God's people (I Cor. 12).

Looking at Titus 2, it is clear that **the grace of God is a present and active teacher/trainer in our lives.** The sentence Paul wrote is intriguing. If you were to simplify it, you would have "the grace of God was made visible... teaching us (ongoingly) [how] we might live in this present age." **There is a purpose for the training work of God's grace in our lives. The purpose is to show us how to successfully live our lives, "Kingdom-style",** in a world filled with evil and corrupting influences. We looked last week at the *negative side* to this "counsel of grace", i.e. *we must turn away from* the disregard for God and living for selfish desires. It is a necessary part of the whole picture, because **you cannot do the positive side of the "grace equation" without turning aside from the negative attitudes and behaviors of the old life.** The two are diametrically opposed (Gal. 5:17). You cannot do both at once. If you think you can, you are only kidding yourself. Many people fall into the trap of rationalization, saying, "What is one little sin?" The truth is if you are holding out on God in one area of your life, you have not yet made Him Lord. Lordship is an absolute, all-or-nothing thing. Either Jesus is Lord *of* all, or He is not Lord *at* all. You have either surrendered to Him, or you are trying to negotiate an "arrangement", something which He categorically rejects (cf. Mt. 12:31; Lk. 9:23; I Jn. 1:5b,6). **There is no "middle ground", no compromise, no "having it both ways" with God, or the spiritual life. The grace of God will teach us to deny a God-less heart-orientation and worldly lusts, because they will keep us from discovering and walking in the life of God's Spirit.**

What is the contrast? **What is the positive side of the "grace equation"?** What is grace attempting to train us to do? **There are three adverbs employed by Paul to clarify how we can live our lives "Kingdom-style".** They are translated in the NASB as "sensibly", "righteously", and "godly". Let's take a closer look at each of these:

(1.) Sensibly -- The Greek here is a compound from the words meaning, "sound, healthy, sane, safe" and "mind", hence, "**sound-minded-ly**". The common usage of the term tended to emphasize a calm-mindedness, a *restraint of one's feelings, emotions and desires in light of what one knows to be true*. Thus, the word is often translated as "soberly" or "with temperance". What is very clear in *this* passage is that *this is in direct opposition to thoughtlessly giving oneself to fulfill "worldly strong-desires"*. It is important also to see that the Bible is not telling us to simply "stuff" these strong-desires, ...or to merely deny them, with no practical counsel or alternative. That would be like trying to shut off part of your inner self that is feeling something strongly, with no inner processing or "working through" of those feelings. Such "white-knuckling it" does not work for long. **What Paul is advocating is that instead of giving yourself to fulfill worldly lusts, which is living life from your emotions and sensory feelings, that you choose to think things through from a healthy perspective.** This "sane perspective" or "healthy-mindedness" will evaluate feelings in light of the larger reality, and will help put the brakes on lust-fulfillment, because it can reason that to fulfill these sensual desires will lead to unhealthy, unhelpful behaviors. **Some of these behaviors have obvious negative consequences, and are thus put aside.** Although negative consequences are not always apparent, **other behaviors are avoided out of trust that God's way is the best way, regardless of what I may feel, or my limited understanding.** This is not "stick-in-the-mud conservatism" or "hell-fire-and-brimstone legalism". It is calm-minded sensibleness and healthy reasonableness that the God who loves me will lead me in the best way for me.

(2.) Righteously -- This is a form of the most common Greek word for "justice, righteousness, or equitable dealing". **It deals both with living a morally pure and upright life before God, and also addresses the need to live fairly and equitably toward other people.** Again, this flies directly in the face of "lust-fulfillment", because it reminds us that there is a moral standard, a moral measuring stick, outside of ourselves. God's moral will is revealed in the OT and NT scriptures, and is unchangeable. **God's grace is at work to teach, discipline and train us to live in a way consistent with His ways, and fair toward others. God hates arrogance and anything that smacks of injustice, unfairness, or taking advantage of others.** His Kingdom is one that lifts others up, and values them. To be unjust is to put our *own* interests or needs *before* others' (cf. Phil. 2:3-11). **God's grace is here to teach me that the way of grace will bring greater blessing than the way of self-serving.** It is more blessed to give than receive (Acts 20:35).

(3.) Godly -- This is a compound formed from the word meaning "well, good, healthy" and that meaning "devotion, or worship". **It is describing more the orientation of the heart, than the outward actions, although the actions will flow from the heart** (Prov. 4:23). **A better translation would be "good-devotedly"**. The grace of God is at work to direct and train my heart to *become* steadfastly devoted to God, so that *all* I experience would be interpreted through my relationship with Him. **A "goodly-devoted" heart would be one that puts God, His interests, His values, and His feelings, His will, before anything else.** A "goodly-devoted" heart would be quick to bring everything to the Father in heaven, every concern, every temptation, every hurt, every longing, etc., trusting that the Father in heaven will reward those who diligently seek Him with what is good and beneficial (Heb. 11:6; Rom. 12:2). **Again, this is directly oppositional to the general spirit of this age, a god-less, lack-of-God, orientation.**

(4.) Expecting -- There is one other phrase which Paul uses to describe the teaching effect of the grace of God. After saying that "we might live sanely, righteously, and good-devotedly", he employs a participle (an "-ing" verbal form) to indicate another aspect to successful living for God. **Those who would be effective for God are those who are "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our God and Savior"**. Traditionally, this has been understood as a reference to the second coming of Christ. Certainly, **an awareness of the transitoriness of this life would be a valuable help to keep our perspective.** Life is *not* primarily about the here and now; Jesus is returning. He will end this present age, and we will have to give an accounting for what we have spent our life energy and resources on (II Cor. 5:10; Acts 10:42). Did we live for Him, or for our own lusts? Note, however, that the text is *not* about the appearance of Jesus, but the appearance of *His glory*. **It may be that Paul is encouraging us to look for the revelation of God's glory in the here and now, expectantly watching, waiting and praying for God to reveal Himself and His power in and through our lives.** Jesus Himself said that He did nothing from Himself, but watched to see what the Father was doing, and joined with Him (Jn. 5:19). Jesus gave Himself for us in order to redeem us from sin, and to purify us for His purposes, i.e., to make us a people ready and eager to serve Him in practical ways. In Galatians 5:5, Paul notes that instead of trying to keep the Law by self-effort, "we, through the Spirit, by faith are waiting-for/eagerly-watching-for the hope of righteousness". He was waiting for and expecting the empowering of the Spirit to guide and enable him to live the Christ life. Thus, **we should be expecting His glory, the power of the Holy Spirit, to "show up" to fulfill in us the purposes for which Christ came into our lives** (Eph. 2:10). **When He does, we must be quick to respond to what He is doing.** Then God's power is released in *practical acts* of love and grace.