

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

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The Necessity of Positive Vision

by Dan Trygg

“Now these are the numbers ...equipped for war, who came to David..., to turn the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of Yahweh. ...of Issachar, men who understood the times, with knowledge of what Israel should do...” I Chron. 12:23,32

“For this reason, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the true-knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the true-knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. For He delivered us from the domain (lit., *authority*) of darkness, and transferred us to the Kingdom of His beloved Son...” Col. 1:9-13

“Now Yahweh said to Abram, ‘Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’And Abram went forth as Yahweh had spoken to him; and Lot went with him.” Gen. 12:1-4

In Proverbs 29:18, Solomon observes that “where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained...” **Unless we understand who we are, what we are about, and that there is a purpose that is higher than our own immediate self-comfort, we will not be motivated to discipline ourselves** to grow, ...nor will we be able to rally ourselves as a "fighting force" for Christ, as the sons of Issachar did for the cause of King David. It is just a reality of our human nature that **our motivation for action is dependent on our awareness of need, or expectation of benefit**. The first requirement in raising an army is recruiting the troops and convincing them of the need to train and make ready for war. Part of our earthly experience indicates that we tend to continue in what is comfortable, and go on in the path of least resistance, unless motivated by a higher or more urgent need for change.

Often in life, we are motivated by fear, pain or circumstances to make changes. These are not the highest or best stimuli, however, and certainly are not sufficient to rally people to a cause that goes beyond the immediate boundaries of their own lives. We react to fear. We react to pain. We adjust to new circumstances. **These may incite us to change, but none of these call out the most noble parts of our being to reach beyond ourselves.** Self-protective, self-preserving incentives drive us to make uncomfortable choices in order to avoid still more unpleasant consequences. **Generally, these will motivate only the minimal effort required to stave off the threat.** *They do not motivate true devotion*, because when the immediate threat is allayed, or forgotten, the tendency is to shrink back into what is “normal”, or comfortable to self. *Nor do they generally motivate self-sacrifice*, because *self-preservation* is at the core of fear and pain as motivators. **When the threshold of pain becomes too intense, the tendency will be to retreat**, because there is no longer a motivation present that is stronger than the price of the pain being experienced. In the case of external threats or pressures, **the response is more of a “have to” response, rather than a “want to” choice.** If the danger, the pain or the circumstances are removed from pressing on my life, I would not be motivated to continue in pursuit of change. **Legalism tends to rely upon fear or the pain of guilt for adherence to its rules.** Once fear or guilt are temporarily assuaged in some fashion, there remains no motivation to continue following the rules, and the behavior slips to the point where fear or guilt prod one again into action. **Legalism is a roller coaster ride between fear and forgetfulness**, because the rules themselves cannot truly capture the devotion of the heart.

Far better than fear or pain, however, is a positive vision that captures the imagination and fires the spirit to devote one's energies to a beneficial end, ...especially an end that reaches *beyond* oneself. **A positive vision rallies all that is best within the human heart** to commit oneself to a person or cause worth supporting. **There is a “want to” flavor to this kind of motivation.** Since the vision is for a better result, *the cause continues to motivate us as long as we want something better* to come to fruition, ...and something in us *always* wants what is better. Furthermore, since the cause is outside of myself, **it continues to incite my motivation and dedication even if my personal life becomes comfortable and prosperous.** It is not about my immediate personal comfort anymore, it is about the cause or vision which is beyond the scope of just *my* personal existence. **The more clearly convinced I am of the value of the vision, the more completely devoted I become to its fulfillment**, and the more I am willing to dedicate my time, efforts and resources to its accomplishment. I do this because I want to, ...not because I am being forced, guilted, or coerced.

Like a father, **God will use the entire range of motivators to move us toward what is beneficial for us.** We find that God came to people throughout human history with *both* kinds of motivators, negative *and* positive. In

order to stave off a crisis, or to motivate an immediate response in behavior, He *will* use pain and fear. He will discipline with a rod, bringing severe consequences against sinful behavior in order to motivate change. **He knows, however, that we will never have a mature relationship to Him, and we will never fulfill our potential, unless He is able to instill in us a positive vision**, like His own. **Thus we see Him continually coming to His people with a positive vision, something to live for, not simply something to avoid.** With Abram, it was the seven-fold promise of blessing that would reach way beyond the boundaries of his life to touch “all the families of the earth” with blessing. It was not enough to leave the land of his fathers, even if he had wanted to leave. Abram needed something to live *for*, something that would *draw out* the deeper aspects of his character and would *motivate him* to seek Yahweh. *Because of this promise*, we see that not only did Abram *leave* his old life behind, but *he began to devote himself to Yahweh*, building altars to worship Him and calling upon His name (Gen. 12:8). With the children of Israel, it was not enough to get freedom *from* slavery in Egypt, *God gave them the positive hope of a new land, and a new life*, as His people. He offered them *many blessings for their obedience*, and warned them of the consequences of disobedience. Those who saw His greatness and His goodness were motivated by trust (faith) and love to acknowledge God in their day to day lives, and to draw close to Him. For them, the law was a guideline for developing a relationship with God, and they embraced it as a way to enable them to know Him better, and to honor Him. To others, who did not have a positive vision, but were motivated *only* by fear, obligation, or tradition, the Law became a burden which they resented, ...ritual performance which was hollow and empty. **With each succeeding generation, the problem of motivation to live for God came down to whether or not people grasped who God was**, or whether they forgot Him (Dt. 8:11-20; Jg. 2:10f). **Without a vision, the people became unrestrained, and went after their fleshly appetites and comforts.**

Without a noble aspiration, we quickly degenerate to living for selfish creature comforts, ...and God did not make us for that. That is not “all there is”. That is not our destiny. That is not “what life is all about”. **We need a higher target, a focus that captures our imagination, that inspires us** to step beyond the immediate, visible limits of our experience. **That is exactly what Jesus proclaimed.** He called people to reexamine their perspective of reality. **He told them there was more to life than what they were living for.** The Kingdom of God came to liberate people from the oppression and darkness of this world system. He gathered followers and called people to join up. He demonstrated the power of this Kingdom through life-changing acts of love, healings and deliverances which God gave Him to perform, ...and He trained others to do as He did. He said things like, “Don’t go to sleep. Wake up! Be watchful! Be ready! Be on the alert!” to warn of the danger of complacency, of being lulled to sleep by losing one’s focus and giving in to mere creature-comforts. **You cannot read the Gospels without catching the sense of mission and purpose which pervades Jesus’ actions and teachings.** His last directive was to disciple all the nations (Matt. 28:18-20). He placed this commandment in the hands of those He had specifically trained to “catch people” (Matt. 4:19; Lk. 5:10; Mk. 3:13-15). They, in turn, *employed His methods* and *proclaimed His vision* to equip *all* the followers of the Way to do ministry. **The early Christians clearly knew that they were part of a much larger vision. This sense of call, purpose and destiny motivated them to “devote themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to the sharing, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” in neighborhood home groups** so that *everyone* would be equipped and built up to take their place in the Lord’s strike force, the church (Matt. 16:18,19; Acts 2:42-47). **They had a job to do, and they knew it.** They were *at war*, and they *knew* it. This “higher calling” motivated them to “lay aside the old man..., be renewed in the spirit of their minds, and put on the new man” (Eph. 4:22-24). They could not be *effective*, if they did not.

The apostle Paul also appealed to the higher motivations of our hearts. In Eph. 1, he prays that we might know *what God has made available* to us, the *hope* of our calling, the *inheritance*, and the *power* that are ours in Christ, ...strong word pictures that capture our imaginations. In Col. 1, **he prays that we might come to be filled with a true-knowledge of God’s will, so that we might walk worthy of Him** who has delivered us from the authority of darkness and transferred us to the Kingdom of His Son. **We have been set free from darkness, but we have been set in His Kingdom to do His will, and to bear fruit for His glory, ...to know Him intimately, so that we might display His love and proclaim His heart accurately.** Like Abraham, we are given a positive calling. Like Joseph, we have been placed where we are to “save many alive” (Gen. 50:20). You personally could make the difference in the lives of dozens, maybe hundreds, of other people. Do you believe that? **If you really got serious about your life, ...if you really applied yourself to deepen your walk with God, developed your skills, and stepped out in obedience to Him, you could be a blessing to hundreds of other people.** What if I told you that God *has* plans to use *you* to rescue and help dozens of other people, *if you will obey Him*? **Do you understand the times, ...your time in history?** Do you know what to do? Will you respond to the positive opportunities that God is offering *to you*? **You must be willing to let go of the past, ...even let go of the present..., if you want to move on into God’s future plans.**