

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Sundays @ 10:00 a.m. Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: April 11, 2010

The "Me" Below the Surface

by Dan Trygg

"Look! What sort of love has the Father given to us, in order that we might be called children of God? And we *are!* On account of this, the world does not recognize us, because it did not recognize Him. ² Beloved, *now* (Yes, at this present moment!) we *are* children of God, and not yet has it been made visible what-thing we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is."

1 John 3:1,2

"...every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree *cannot* produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit.

Matthew 7:17-18

"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. ³⁴ You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. ³⁵ The good person brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil person brings out of his evil treasure what is evil."

Matthew 12:33-35

"But someone will say, 'How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?' ³⁶ You fool! That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies; ³⁷ and that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else... ⁴² So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable *body*, it is raised an imperishable *body*; ⁴³ it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power..."

1 Corinthians 15:35-37,42,43

"And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."

1 John 3:3

My notes last week were inspired by a conversation with a server at Perkins. When I mentioned this in the notes, another server came up to me and said, "I want to be in next week's!" Interesting how we all want our little moment in the sun, isn't it? We want to be significant, ...to be important, ...to be noticed, ...to make a difference. **Did you know we were all destined for greatness? Something inside of us knows that**, ...calls out for that. On the one hand, it is a remnant of God's original purpose for us. We were created to have dominion over this planet. We were to have a special relationship with God like no other creature, ...even beyond what the angels experience. Even though we lost that through human sin, there is something within us that still longs for what was our original purpose for being, ...to be sons and daughters of God and to bring Him glory. On the other hand, **this inner longing is a silent witness of what we inwardly know God is calling us to**. He has never given up on His intention that we might be His, and that we might know Him and once again take our place in the outworking of His great plan. As the writer of Ecclesiastes observed, "He has put eternity in their hearts..."(3:11). **Something inside of us knows that we are destined for more.**

As is often the case in things pertaining to the greatness of His love and the wonder of the Divine plan for humans, **what God has made available to us in Jesus is much, much greater than most of us could ask or imagine**. God seems to always be a step or two ahead, always doing things that are better than we might think. I hesitate to get into this, because it is sooo radical, sooo mind-blowing, sooo nearly unbelievable that I fear you will find it in-credible. Actually, it *is* incredible, in the positive usage of that word! Unfortunately, **the genuine message of the NT has been so under-perceived, under-played and under-expressed that when you actually speak out what it really is saying, people look at you like you are crazy!** I have been studying NT Greek for 35 years now, and I'm telling you that the good news is *amazingly better* than what 95% of churchgoers in America ever grasp!

I have to say, too, that **the church's lack of understanding of the greatness of what God has provided for those who trust in Him has also resulted in a horribly low level of genuine spirituality in our culture**. The evidence of healthy faith is a new heart, ...expressed outwardly by moral change, obedience to God, forgiveness, love for others, and acts of service. Those who have a healthy, vital faith are actively pursuing intimacy with God, a growing understanding of Him and His ways, and are eager to join in what He is doing around them. **Jesus and the apostles warned how Satan would infiltrate the church, planting counterfeit Christians among the genuine, as an attempt to retard the spiritual vitality of a group of believers, and to discredit the testimony of the church** by their lack of integrity (Matt. 13:24-30,36-43). When these counterfeits are finally removed at the end of the age, then "the righteous will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father". So, **we should not be surprised that there will be people claiming to be followers of Jesus who show little or no real evidence of His life at work within them**. According to the parable, for awhile they look very much like the Christians. Eventually, their *lack of fruit*, ...or their bitter, poisonous fruit..., *will reveal their true inner nature*.

This gets to the crux of the issue. Jesus put His finger on an important principle of nature. It is true both in the physical world and the spiritual world. This principle is that **things produce according to their inner nature**. They bear fruit according to their kind, ...in accordance with their inner DNA. Jesus said, "You can't get grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles, can you?" (Matt. 7:16). It is because of this principle that Jesus says that we will be able to detect what is phony, "You will know them by their fruits."

There are two other corollaries to this principle, however. The first is that if our inner nature is unsound, or bad, we can never make ourselves good. We can only produce what our flawed, defective inner selves can produce. Jesus put it this way, "How can you, *being evil*, speak what is good?", and, "The mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart." This helps us to understand our dilemma as sinners. **We are sinners by nature, which becomes outwardly evident when we become sinners by our errors or choices. It's just a fact. It is what it is.** Since the fall of Adam and Eve, our inner nature was changed. The OT Hebrew says that we became "bent", "distorted" or "twisted". It was understood that our twisted or perverted nature would result in perverted thinking or actions (I Sam.20:30; Prov. 12:8; Jer. 3:21). We are not just at the mercy of our sinful drives. We can curb and control much of our selfish behavior. We can't however totally remove that inner twistedness that spawns selfish thoughts and perceptions (Gen. 6:5). God asks the question, "Can a person change the color of his or her skin? Can a leopard change its spots? Neither are you able to do good, being accustomed to do evil." This was our dilemma as sinners. We could not escape our inner nature, a nature that tends toward selfish, sinful thoughts and behaviors. We were sinners *by nature*, as well as by choice, ...and this made us also children of wrath in the eyes of our holy and just God (Eph. 2:1,2). **No amount of positive outward behavior could change the inner nature**, the wellspring of self-centeredness within us. **Thus we see the hopelessness and bankruptcy of any attempt to make ourselves acceptable to God by virtue of good works or religious acts.** These outward behaviors do *nothing* to fix our defective nature. Such outside-in methods are as effective at changing our inner nature as tying grape clusters to thorn bushes could transform *their* DNA. It just doesn't get at the real issue.

The other corollary, however, is that if our inner nature was good and sound, it would naturally produce what is good. Just as inevitably as the thorn bush produces thorns, not grapes, so it is also inevitable that a grape vine will produce grapes, not thorns. Like a seed that pushes up through the ground, and grows up into a mature plant that produces fruit according to its DNA, **we can be assured that a new heart, ...a new righteous inner nature..., would produce good fruit in our lives.**

This was exactly the plan of God. This is *exactly* what the apostle John was trying to get across to us in I John 3:1. He was marveling at God's great love that has made it possible for us to become *His children!* I mean, who would have thought of *that?* He says, "Look!" This exclamation is meant to get us to stop and pay attention to what he is about to say. **The mind-blowing, staggering, incredible reality is that God has loved us enough to save us and transform us from children of wrath to children of His delight, members of His own household!** He offers us this *as a free gift*, knowing that we are totally incapable of "fixing ourselves", or undoing the damage of our sinful choices. **The good news is that we can be born from above now, and become a new person inside**, even though our old exterior self continues on with little visible change. John puts it this way, "Beloved, *now we are* children of God, and not yet has it been made visible what-thing we will be." **God changes the inner nature, the spiritual DNA of who we are at the core of our identity.** This new person is the "good tree" Jesus had been talking about. **It will bear good fruit. It can do nothing else. It is its very nature to produce good and righteous desires, inclinations and choices.**

So, why do Christians still sin? Because they have the dynamics of both natures at work in them at the same time. This does create conflict within the minds and lives of Christians. Paul says, "For the strong-desires of the flesh (old, sinful orientation) are against the Spirit (new, righteous nature), and the strong-desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are set against one another, to keep you from doing the things you want to do" (Gal. 5:17). The important thing, however, is that the *identity* of the believer has changed. He or she *is* the new person. The new self will persist into eternity, but that old mindset and thinking will pass away. To continue in sin goes against all that God has done to free us, and plays into the schemes of the devil to discredit Jesus. **A true believer will never be content to continue in sin.** That new heart will be grieved, and God will work to discipline His child so that he or she will grow in holiness (Heb. 12:1-11). **As the new person develops, the darkness of old sin patterns will dissipate** (Prov. 4:19).

John had mentioned that we who have trusted in Christ are children of God *now*. He then makes an interesting statement, "...it has not yet been made visible what-*thing* we will be". Sounds intriguing. **It is like we have an alien life inside of us, ...and in a way, we do.** When Paul talked about the resurrection of the saints at the end of the age, he talked about how the resurrection body will be very different from what we have now. **Just like a seed looks nothing like the mature plant it eventually becomes, we will also be transformed, and will become like Jesus** (I Cor. 15:49-53). **Destined for greatness? We are destined to reign with Christ for 1,000 years, and will even judge angels! ...And that's just the beginning!** Is it no wonder that "he who has this hope, purifies himself as He is pure"?