

# Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

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## A Conflict or Partnership of Wills

by Dan Trygg

**“He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates (disregards) his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall My servant also be; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.”**

John 12:25,26

**“He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters.”**

Matthew 12:30

**“Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who *does* the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.**

Matthew 7:21

**God has an agenda.** Did you ever think about that? **He has a plan, and is working out His purposes in the world He has created.** God Himself says, “Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, ‘**My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure**’” (Isa. 46:9,10). The apostle Paul describes God as One “who works all things after the counsel of His will” (Eph. 1:11). There are numerous passages that affirm this truth. **God is a purposeful Being. What He intends, He will do** (Isa/ 14:24). What He says, He will perform (Num. 23:19). He is God in heaven and ruler over the nations. In His hand are power and might, so that no one can resist Him, or frustrate His counsel (II Chron. 20:6). King Nebuchadnezzar learned by experience that **“He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and no one can ward off His hand, or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’”** (Dan. 4:35). God is in charge. He is the Creator. He makes the rules, and sets the expectations. He is the God of history. **He is not a distant, far-off, disinterested God. He is actively at work, bringing all things to a conclusion** that accords with His purpose.

**Throughout the Bible we see that God has been working to call people to Himself. He has invited people to come into alignment with His will and His purposes.** Those who have responded to Him have received His support, help and blessing. Those who have opposed Him have received not only the consequences of their actions, but also the judgment of His wrath. This is not His *desire*, but it is a *reality* (Ezk. 18:23,32). **We see this played out in the history of Israel. In His dealings with them, we have a microcosm of His larger purpose,** to call out a people who would live for Him. They made an agreement or covenant with Him to follow His ways and His leading. **He gave Israel the Torah, or “instruction”, so that they could avoid what is harmful and learn to live well,** and so that they could learn how to live in relation to Him. **God desires to warn us of those things that are unhealthy and hurtful.** Unfortunately, Israel did not abide by God’s instructions. They quickly abandoned Him and His ways, and served other gods and the appetites of their flesh. This was no surprise to God. **Even Moses knew that they would not remain faithful, because their hearts were unchanged** (Deut. 29:4; 30:6). **They were still self-seeking in the core of their being.** Through the book of Judges, and the history of the kingdom period of Israel, the inability and unwillingness to serve God faithfully plagued the nation, and it seemed that God’s will to obtain a people who would follow Him and walk in His ways was, indeed, being frustrated. **There was always a “remnant”, a small percentage of people who genuinely gave themselves to serve God, but the nation as a whole was resistant,** stubbornly going their own way. **Instead of partnering with God, whatever forms of religion they maintained were only external. Their hearts, and their wills, were far from Him.** This was quite evident by their life choices. The prophets pointed to their idolatry, immorality and social injustices as symptoms of their spiritual condition. The consequences of their choices were clearly in evidence. **The prophets attempted to call the nation to repent,** abandon their sinful ways and return to following God, before further judgment came upon them. **They were not willing to listen, but continued on in their rebellion, until God removed them from their place,** by allowing their enemies to defeat them. This pattern has been repeated throughout history, not only with Israel, but with other people groups, as well.

**During this same time, however, God was working to lay the foundations for His larger plan for humankind.** He revealed word pictures and specific prophecies to help us recognize and understand this larger plan. Even while Israel was heading for disaster, **God began revealing that He was going to bring about a new opportunity, a new covenant agreement, one that would introduce new dynamics. He would make it possible for their sin to be removed and their hearts to be radically changed, so that they could walk in His ways** (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezk. 11:19,20; 36:22-38). He revealed that He was not done with Israel, or the Davidic line. In fact, He was going to establish a new, everlasting kingdom, one that would eventually fill the earth (Dan. 2:31-45). **This would be a kingdom made “without hands”, that is, not by human effort, but through the working of God. He would send a suffering servant to bear the sins of the people** (Isa. 53). **To clarify when and who this was, God revealed specific information about this Messiah.** He would be born of a virgin of the line of David, from the tribe of Judah (Isa. 7:14). He would be born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2), His glory would be seen in Galilee (Isa. 9:1-7). This would occur *after* Israel was exiled and

brought back to its land. He would show up 483 years after a decree to rebuild Jerusalem (Dan. 9:25; cf. Ez. 7:11 in 458 B.C.). He would come *before* the “scepter” and “staff” would depart from Judah (Gen. 49:10). [The tribal identity and judicial authority of Judah, represented by these emblems, were lost in the first century, just *after* Jesus, “He whose right it is” came.] He would be a miracle worker, restoring sight to the blind, opening the ears of the deaf, healing the paralytic (Isa. 35:5,6), and His teaching would bring good news to the afflicted, bind up the broken-hearted, set the captives free, and proclaim the opportunity for the Lord’s favor (Isa. 61:1). Furthermore, He would be more than just a man. He would be called, Immanuel, “God with us” (Isa. 7:14), Mighty God, Eternal Father (Isa. 9:6). His “goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity” (Mic. 5:2). ***No one else but Jesus of Nazareth even remotely fulfills these predictions.***

**In Christ, the invitation is to everyone to join the people of God.** It matters not what one’s past history or ethnic background may be. **In Jesus, every obstacle has been removed. The offer of grace is real.** In Christ, the debt of sin has been paid, its power broken. A new agreement or covenant with God is offered to us. **If we will agree to lay down our agenda in order to embrace God’s calling upon our lives, He is willing to accept us, cleanse us, and radically transform our inner nature. It is important to clearly understand what this is about, however. The grace of God is not just a free pass to avoid consequences or judgment.** God is still looking for people who will align themselves with Him and who will seek to fulfill His purposes. **Grace is the activating power that enables us to do His will. It is still about doing His will, however.**

The passages at the top of this handout are all quotes from Jesus. They all clearly portray the same dilemma, ...the same issue of choice, direction and purpose of will..., that has defined and determined Divine-human relationships since creation. **The issue is not whether we are “in” or “out”, whether we are “good” or “bad”, or whether we are “righteous” or “unrighteous”. The issue is whether or not we are willing to give up a self-centered life in order to serve God’s purposes.** Are you willing to live for God and His purposes in this world, or are you going to rebel and stubbornly resist His will? **Which direction are you going? Are you pursuing God and His will, or are you setting yourself against His purposes for your life?** Do you *want* to follow Jesus, or not? Note carefully what Jesus said: **(1.) You must be willing to disregard your life here.** To “disregard” something means to “take no notice of, dis-count, ignore, pay no attention to, forget about, be indifferent to, or place little importance on”. That means you must be willing to give up your plans, your agenda. **(2.) Jesus tells us what kind of service He wants from us: He wants us to follow Him.** He is not looking for piecemeal acts of service here and there. He is to be at the *center* of our lives. He is not to be an afterthought. Serving Him is not some religious obligation we can do when convenient, or a “good work” that brings us some kind of “credit”. **He does not want simply “acts of service”; He wants us.** He wants us to partner with Him in His work. **(3.) If we are not actively working with Him, then we are hindering His work, and we are actually against Him.** Indifference, complacency and laziness are not only *non-productive*, they are *counterproductive*. Hypocrisy is one of the greatest hindrances to the cause of Christ. **If we say we want to serve Christ, but do nothing, doesn’t that make us look like we are phony?** **(4.) Not everyone who professes Jesus will enter the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom is reserved for those who DO the Father’s will.** Talk is cheap. **God is looking at our walk, not just our talk.** Judging by Matt. 25:31-46, religious meetings and activities do not rank high on the list, either, ...unless that is where God has called you to serve. It is too easy to become a “meeting junkie” and never actually get around to *doing the Lord’s will* in other areas. We are to be judged by our *deeds* (Matt. 16:27), whether we have done good or evil. This idea occurs repeatedly in the Scriptures. **Faith should lead to action, ...real, tangible change.** We are not just talking about cleaning up our lives, either, though that is an important part. **The question is, are we doing the Father’s will? Are we actively responding to His leading and direction?**

You are not in this alone. God has not given you a list of “do’s” and “don’t’s”, and left you to figure it out on your own. No. The Christian life is not like that. **The new agreement or covenant is about God changing your heart and coming to dwell inside of you to lead you and empower you to do His will.** How do we know our faith is real? In I John, the apostle points to the fruit, the resulting changes produced by the indwelling life. We should see new love, new obedience and a growing awareness of the Spirit in our experience (2:3-6;7-11,27). **The Spirit has come to lead us in a different direction than we would have gone in our selfish flesh. Partner with Him in this.** Work out what *He is working inside* of you, or change does not occur. He is preparing us to be partners with Him in His work. He brings the opportunities to us, and expects us to walk out the promptings He puts within us (Eph. 2:10; Phil. 2:12,13). **Working together with Him, receive the grace of God to grow into His full purpose for you.**