

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

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God Has a Plan For Your Life, and Satan Has a Counter-Agenda

by Dan Trygg

"I, Yahweh, am your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt; open your mouth wide, and I will fill it. But My people did not listen to My voice; and Israel did not obey Me. So I gave them over to the stubbornness of their heart, to walk in their own devices. Oh that My people would listen to Me, that Israel would walk in My ways! I would quickly subdue their enemies, and turn My hand against their adversaries." Psalm 81:10-13

"...upon this bedrock I will build My called-out-assembly, and gates of hades will not be-strong-against it." Matthew 16:18

"The thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly." John 10:10

"Watch yourselves, in order that y'all might not lose what (things) we accomplished, but/rather y'all might-take-away a full reward." II John 8

These passages all strongly convey both the sense of mission, as well as of struggle, which *belong to us* as part of the redeemed children of God. Unlike the messages we are being bombarded with on every side from our culture, the meaning of life is *not to sit back, relax, and entertain ourselves*. *We are spiritually born into conflict. We are born into a war zone.* It is largely (here in the U.S., anyway) an invisible battle which rages on around us, but the casualties and tragedies are mounting daily, and they are very real. **Most of us are oblivious to the real nature of what is going on.** Sometimes we are blind to it, sometimes we are lulled to sleep by the unending propaganda designed to direct our thinking away from the unpleasanties of life which are all around us, ...and sometimes we just don't *want* to deal with it. **We would like to just live out a quiet, peaceful life, ...living unto ourselves, ...minding our own business, ...not offending, not being offended, ...disturbing no one, not being disturbed, ...like the proverbial frog in the kettle, relaxing and "numbing-out" as the warmth of the water slowly increases, oblivious to the fact that what feels so comfortable will soon be *cooking the very life out of him!* If the poor frog could only see what was happening, before it was too late, it could simply hop out of the pot. It is not restrained. It is not tied down or covered so it cannot get out. "Ahh, ...but just a few more minutes, then I will jump out," it says. "This feels so good."**

How many of us are like that frog, cooking in our own juices, simmering away in a comfortable pot of pain-relieving, self-comforting, mind-numbing escape? How many of us have sought out a cave of refuge in the storms of life, unaware that *it is the very lair of the dragon!*? **How many of us just don't want to be bothered with the responsibilities and effort involved in piloting our boat, so we have allowed it to drift on the seas of life,** unaware that we are being driven toward a rocky shore, or are being pulled toward a waterfall, or even merely being blown farther away from the destination we had been looking for. While we sleep, or play cards, or watch a video, we wander farther away from the right course. **If we are fortunate enough to evade disaster, we may think we have only lost time, and whatever other resources it will take to get us back on track, ...but, in any case, we have *lost something*, ...something has been *spent*, and is no longer available to be used in a constructive way. It is gone. That part of our lives is spent, gone, used up, never to return. **All that *could have been*, had we made different choices with our time, energy, and resources, *will not ever be*. In some way, the loss is *not recoverable*, because *there is no going back*.** We can come around again, and try it again, ...but we can't go back, and do it over. One more day down, ...one day gone, ...one day spent, ...one less day that we are a threat to the enemy. **Soon, our very lives will be spent, and what will be the outcome?** There will be no second chances. Our opportunities will have passed by like the scenery going by the porthole. **"Watch yourselves, that you might *not lose*... , but you might receive a full reward."** Thankfully, we serve a God who *can* work *all things* together for good, a God who can *multiply resources*, One whose grace is *much more powerful* than our sinful or foolish choices!! (Rom. 8:28; II Cor. 9:10; Rom. 5:15-17). He *is* the great Redeemer, so there is still hope regarding the "misspent past", ...but **let's learn to be more wise about our future.** Let's not keep repeating the same mistakes, or falling for the same lies. *That is insanity!***

I John 5:19 tells us, "We know we are out from God, and the entire world is laid (or *lays itself*) in the evil one." Some alternative translations for the last part of the verse are "the whole world is under control of the evil one" (NIV), or "lies in the power of the evil one" (NASB). The point is that **this world is Satan's territory.** It is his temporary kingdom, but he does have a dominating and/or manipulating influence and control, at many different levels and in almost every area of human existence. **We are not a threat to him unless we interfere with what he has going. Status quo is OK with him, because status quo means he does pretty much whatever he wants.** He does not have to destroy us, he just has to distract us and render us ineffective at messing with his interests. He might hate us, but why put forth all the effort to destroy us? (He has tried that, and it just draws attention and sympathy to our cause.) Besides, there are limitations which God will not allow him to cross (cf. Job 1 & 2). All he has to do, to keep his evil powerbase operating as he wishes, is to keep us from getting involved in *opposing* him. **Jesus' statement about the gates of**

hades being unable to stand against the church describes a situation where the church is laying siege to the enemy's strongholds. Jesus declared that those strongholds will not be able to keep standing *if* we come against them in His power, ...but *if we never answer the call to arms, then there is no threat to the enemy.*

God has a plan, and it includes you. He is at work in the world around you, and He wants you to join Him in that work. The ultimate end of things is assured. Christ will come back, and will clean house. The final battle will be won by Him and His heavenly host. Your participation in that final battle may not seem crucial. However, **there are now many battles happening every day, within the boundaries of your own life, and within the sphere of your influence, where your participation is crucial. If you do not rise up, the opportunity will be lost.** The enemy will go unchallenged, ...or your lack of readiness will make the outcome only too predictable. **The problem is not a lack of ability or resources on your side. God Himself has gifted you, and He is with you to enable you.** "Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid, ...for Yahweh your God is the One who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you" (Deut. 31:6). **The problem is that we do not recognize the opportunity, or we are afraid to get involved, or do not want to inconvenience ourselves** (i.e., we allow Jesus to be Lord when He asks us to do what we want to do, when we want to do it), or we do not know what to do (and therefore do *nothing*), or we do not truly believe that God can work through us to meet the need. **In short, we do not step up to the plate and get involved.** Sometimes we may go so far as to recognize the need, and attempt to rise to the occasion, but bring some pre-planned, pre-canned, pre-judged, religious answer to the problem. **We do not effectively evaluate the situation, and allow ourselves to be the tool for the Holy Spirit in that situation.**

Satan knows that God has chosen to use human beings as partners with Him in His kingdom work. It was part of the original creation commission. God gave people authority over this planet, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and rule over [it]" (Gen. 1:28). The devil's dominion was stolen *from us*, by our disobedience to God, and the choice of our first parents to listen to and obey the lying serpent, Satan, the world's smoothest con man. **From ages past he has been the thief, stealing from, killing and destroying people** (Jn. 10:10), because he hates those made in the image of God, and because he knows that "the seed of the woman will crush the head of the serpent" (Gen. 3:15). **From the very beginning, he has seen us as an enemy to be exploited, debased, and kept under his control.** He has tried to destroy the people of God repeatedly throughout history, in an effort to frustrate the plan of God. **Jesus came and birthed a resistance movement within the enemy's camp.** The coming of the Kingdom of God was visibly seen by the powerful signs, wonders, miracles and deliverance from demonic bondage which we read about in Jesus' ministry, and which continued with the early church. **Satan knows very well that the power of the Kingdom of God is much greater than his own. From the beginning of the church at Pentecost, he has stepped up his efforts to counteract and contain this group of "renegades for God".**

Satan's strategy for containment and control has taken two very different approaches: (1.) He uses force, fear and hurt to crush, cripple, wound, deface and disrupt our lives to shut us down emotionally, and to plant negative messages deep into the fabric of our lives to hold us captive; **(2.) He uses flattery, manipulation, and sensual pleasures** to lure and entice us into distractions, addictive and dangerous behaviors which are designed to keep us from looking for the deeper questions of our existence. He is the master of the "shell game", adroit at all manner of fabrications and sleight-of-hand tricks to happily draw us into his web of distraction and bondage. **He uses these two basic methods in ways that range from the ultra-subtle to the grossly-crushing, ...always with the intent of either keeping us from finding our potential in Christ, or wrapping us up in a web of bondage, or somehow crippling us to keep us from being a threat. Once your eyes are open to his agenda, and his methods, it is often quite easy to spot, at least in the lives of others.**

One key ingredient to not being defrauded of our potential has to do with our own will, our own determination to not be a victim any more to the enemy's trickery. **We must be actively seeking to draw near to God.** That means we must be investing in the personal spiritual disciplines that will help us grow in Christ. **We must pursue healing** in those areas where we have been hurt, crushed or wounded, for healing is available in Jesus. Often this is painful and difficult, in the short-term, but the benefits of freedom and wholeness far outweigh the cost. **We must confront the lies, and hold fast to the truth,** even when the old messages "feel" more accurate, because we have lived with them for so long. **We must choose to be attentive,** watchful, to make certain that we do not permit the prevailing currents of our culture to draw us away from God's calling for our lives. **We must choose to not allow the enemy to steal away our lives by the many distractions that surround and press in upon us.** I think that this is the *biggest danger* for many of us in today's culture. Entertainment is the biggest and most effective tool the enemy has to "nickel and dime us" to death. Like the frog in the kettle, "just a little while longer" may soon rob us of our ability to ever realize the potential God has designed us for.

We need to resolve to go against the flow, who will be clear-minded, circumspect, and determined to discover and live out God's plan for our lives. Satan will oppose us, but in Christ we can overcome (Rev. 12:11).