

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

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Become Established and Productive in Your Faith

by Dan Trygg

“The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; ⁵⁷ but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brethren, come to be firmly-settled, immovable, overflowing in the work of the Lord at all times, knowing that your toil is not without effect in the Lord.”
I Corinthians 15:56-58

The resurrection of Jesus is *the* central fact upon which all Christian belief and teaching rest. If Jesus did not rise physically from the dead, then our faith is baseless, and we are actually misrepresenting God. If, on the other hand, He *did* rise from the dead, then the ramifications are HUGE!! If Jesus rose from the dead, then the good news the early Christians preached is true. **Paul said that the message of the death and resurrection of Christ was a matter of first importance for them to know and be established in.** They needed to know *what the message was*, so that they could faithfully communicate it to others. **They also needed to know *what the basis for belief was*.** What factual foundation does this message stand on? Is this some myth, some fairy tale, or is it rock-solid fact? How do we know? **Then, the facts are not enough. We also need to understand *what the significance of these events is*.** We need to grasp *why they happened as they did*, and we need to realize *what they have accomplished, or made available to us*.

In a nutshell, Paul began the chapter with a succinct declaration of the good news, “Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” (vss.3,4). **Then, to support this incredible declaration, he briefly rattles off five of the twelve resurrection appearances recorded for us in the NT.** In these five different instances, there were over 500 eyewitnesses who would testify that they saw the risen Christ, most of whom were still alive at the time Paul wrote. **He himself was one of these eyewitnesses, and his experience of meeting Christ turned *his* whole life around.** He went from being one of the chief persecutors of the church of God to become one of its most hard-working and dedicated spokespersons and advocates. He started churches in major cities all over the eastern Roman empire, traveling great distances by land and sea, and endured extensive opposition, hardship and persecution himself. He worked harder than all the rest of the apostles. Why? Because Jesus really *did* rise from the dead, and revealed Himself to Paul! Thus it happened that **he came to Corinth and preached to the Corinthians, and they believed. The *factual basis* of Paul’s message, the *compelling reasoning* of his arguments, ...especially showing from the OT that the events of Jesus coming, ministry and mission were predicted *centuries before* by the recognized prophets of old..., **alongside of the vibrancy and integrity of Paul’s own testimony and manner of living had convinced them**, as it had hundreds of others before.**

Now, however, some had come in among them questioning the whole idea of the resurrection of the dead. *The resurrection, however, is the core, the lynch-pin of the entire gospel message.* If there is no such thing as resurrection, then not even Christ has been raised. If Christ wasn’t raised, then the entire message of the good news is empty and pointless. It would mean that Paul and the other apostles, who had sacrificed so much for the gospel, were not only deceived, they were misrepresenting God! Moreover, all those who have trusted in Christ believed in vain. **If there was no resurrection of the dead, no life after death, then, what’s the point? We may as well live to get what pleasures we can, because we are just going to die, anyway.** “Eat and drink, for tomorrow we die”, right?

Paul returns to the facts. He emphatically declares, “No!” **The fact is that Christ *has* been raised from the dead!** Hypothetical arguments to the contrary are pointless. Jesus *did* rise from the dead, ...and that changes *everything!* **His resurrection was to be the *first fruits* of a *much larger harvest*.** He brought the resurrection from the dead to all men. **The reality is that all people will rise from death to face accountability and judgment for what they have done here in this world. *No one is exempt.*** No one can opt out. We don’t have a choice about that. We *do* have a choice about what we do here. We have a choice to honor and serve God, or to live for selfish pleasure. Jesus’ resurrection not only proves that He is the Messianic Deliverer, it also gives credence to His claim that He is the Judge of all people. **Jesus taught that the whole field of humanity will be harvested, weeds and all. Afterwards, there will be a sorting out.** God’s purpose was to harvest a *good* crop. He is not looking to raise a crop of weeds. **God is looking for a harvest of righteous ones.** Unfortunately, they grow up together in the same field as the weeds. [Jesus’ parable of the tares in the field is so powerful (Matt. 13:24-30,36-43). Tares are a kind weed that looks virtually identical to wheat in its early stages. When it comes to maturity, however, it can be distinguished by the small black seeds in the head, instead of the larger, golden kernels of wheat. The tares, when ground up in the wheat flour causes nausea and paralysis. In order for the crop to be of any value, the tares *must* be separated from the wheat.] At the end of the age, *all* will be gathered up and sorted out.

The good news is that *we can be transformed*. We can be turned from a tare into the best wheat. We can be turned from one who is in the image of Adam, ...a fallen, self-oriented human being..., **into one who is in the image of**

Christ, ...a righteous, good human being, who delights to do the Father's will. In fact, **this is the gospel promise!!! We WILL BE like Him!!** Paul put it this way, "...just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." **Our resurrected bodies and selves will not be like the fleshly bodies and selfish character we struggle with here. There will be no weakness or defect.** The miracle is that, like planting natural seeds, what is sown looks nothing like the mature plant that is eventually harvested. It takes faith to believe that those little seeds we put in the ground in the springtime could *ever* grow up to become the mature plants we are looking for, yet farmers and gardeners do this every year, year after year. Paul is saying that the transformation of our inner and outer being will be even *more* radical and extensive. **Every part of us will be changed. We should not be shocked or surprised. We should accept and embrace this concept, because the power that will work this incredible transformation is already operating within those who have accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior.**

You see? We always come back to this. **The Bible always brings us around to the transformation of the soul.** This has always been God's purpose. There is no preaching of *salvation* apart from *sanctification*. There is no preaching of *forgiveness* without teaching about *transformation*. God is looking for a good crop, a crop of righteous, loving people. **WE GET IT ALL BACKWARDS, however. We try to get the old flesh to be better. That is a losing battle!** "Flesh and blood will *not* inherit the kingdom of God," Paul wrote. No. **That is a complete misunderstanding of what the Christian life is all about.** That is trying to live by the Law. **No. Our flesh, our old Adam-nature, is permeated by sin. There is nothing we can do to eradicate it. The fruit of that old nature will always be corrupt.** God knows that, that's why He provided a way to *save us* and *destroy us* at the same time. **We are put to death with Jesus, separated from the flesh, the power of sin, and the jurisdiction of the law. Then, we are raised with Jesus, made alive to God, born from above with a new heart and indwelt by the Holy Spirit.** The Spirit is able to prompt and guide us through this new inner self, who *already* has been created in holiness and righteousness and truth. The victorious Christian life is produced by *His* prompting, *His* empowering, but it requires *our* response to come to activation and expression in outward action. **God works in us to will and do for His good pleasure, but we must choose to cooperate with that inner initiative,** by "working out" what He is "working in us".

God has set us free from the principle of sin and death (Rom. 8:2). He also set us free from the jurisdiction of the Law, by putting us to death with Christ. **Now we are to live by the working of the new life He has put within us.** We live by the stirrings of grace, the leading and empowering of the Spirit He has put within those who have trusted in Christ. It is the power of resurrection life that is already at work within us. **We are no longer to "try to be good". We are to operate out of that new Holy Spirit life within us and live in the resurrection power now. You see, that is the part that so many are missing.** The new life, the resurrection life, the life of the Spirit, is available to us *now*. The apostle John wrote, "Beloved, *now* we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 Jn. 3:2,3). **How are we supposed to do that?** "And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. No one who abides in Him sins..." (1 John 3:5-6). **We don't do it by striving to be good. We do it by learning to abide in Jesus.** "Abide" means to "live in, continue in, dwell in, remain in". John's logic is very simple. If there is no sin in Jesus, and we remain in Him and live out from His life which is inside of us, then we will not express sin. **As long as we are abiding in Christ, we will not sin.** If we stop abiding in Christ, and live by our own self-effort, then we can *expect* sin. This does not, and will not, surprise God, ...nor should it surprise us. In fact, you can count on it. It is in the nature of things. The *old* nature versus the *new* nature. That is why God had to do such a radical thing to save us.

"God gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ". Never forget that. Meditate on that. Immerse yourself in that thought. The Greek is very vivid. God is "the one giving to us the victory". **This is a moment-by-moment battle, won by a moment-by-moment appropriation of the victory that Christ purchased** once for all, in His death and resurrection. We were somehow gathered up into Christ, put to death *with* Him in His death so that all debts and penalties are forever paid and removed, ...buried *with* Him in His tomb, marking the finality of this death, ...raised *with* Him to a new, recreated life on that resurrection morning, so that the power of a fresh and totally different kind of life could be imparted to us across the centuries, and be available to us *right now*. **It is this resurrection life, which God dispenses to us moment-by-moment as we abide in Christ, that gives us the victory and enables us to live a supernatural quality of life today.** Paul's admonition is "*Come to be* firmly settled and established in this reality. *Come to be* immovable, rooted and grounded in this realization. And, *come to be* overflowing in the work of the Lord at every occasion, knowing that your labor in conjunction with His inner working will be effective, productive and eternally significant." The language he uses clearly expresses that **we don't start out with that kind of clarity and consistency. We grow into it. That should be our goal, however.** Established, immovable regarding our convictions, and overflowing in the fruit that comes out of our responses to God's leading in our lives.