

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

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Pressing Through Resistance

by Dan Trygg

“Jesus said to him, ‘If you wish to be mature, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.’”²² But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieved; for he was one who owned much property.”

Matthew 19:21-22

“Therefore, let us fear lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it.”² For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not benefit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. ...Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall through following the same example of resistance.”

Hebrews 4:1-2,11

“And after they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch,²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, ‘Through many tribulations it is necessary for us to enter the kingdom of God.’”

Acts 14:21,22

A major theme of Christian teaching is that **God has a plan for your life.** He desires to make something valuable and significant of our lives. It doesn't matter where we came from, or what we may have done, **God has great and mighty things He would like to accomplish through us.** In fact, He challenges us, “Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things which you have not known” (Jer.33:3). **God has created us to glorify Him,** to bring Him honor and praise through our very existence (Isa. 43:7). We are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psa. 139:14). **He has gifted us with unique abilities, and placed us in our individual circumstances or settings, so that we could reveal His beauty and greatness. He desires to produce lasting fruit through our lives** (Jn. 15:16). Sometimes we may feel like we have screwed up, or missed out on the opportunities God has brought into our lives. Never fear, however. **God does not have only one plan for your life. He has “plans”** (Jer.29:11). **He is continually working to bring opportunities to develop us and use us to accomplish His will.** In one sense, you *yourself* are His plan. He has created and formed *you*. **You are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, ...beneficial acts that will cause people to bless Him for your place in their lives** (Eph.2:10; Matt. 5:14-16). He will bring these opportunities to bless others and glorify Him into your life. **You just have to respond to the leading of His Spirit that is within you, and you will accomplish His will in each circumstance He brings to you.**

In spite of the fact that God is continually working to develop us and to bring opportunities to reveal His heart and character through us, most of us only experience and express a very weak and superficial level of God's Revealed And Continuing Enablement (GRACE). **Most of us are unwilling to let go of what we know, have and habitually do, in order to discover and express more of God's heart. There is resistance, within and without, which hinders and blocks God's stirrings in our lives.** We hold back, and the promptings to invest ourselves toward God, or extend ourselves to love others, are soon obscured by our own busy agenda or swallowed up in the distractions of our lives.

When we read the story of the rich young ruler, we can relate to the difficulty he had in giving up everything to follow Jesus. We read that last part of the encounter, “...he went away grieved; for he was one who had much property.” We read on as Jesus comments, “How difficult it is for a rich person to enter into the kingdom of heaven”, and we can both relate to the challenge the young man faced, and at the same time possibly judge him for his materialistic resistance. **If we read on in Mark's version, however, Jesus universalizes the statement, “Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God!”** (The phrase in the KJV of Mk. 10:24, “for them that trust in riches” is not in the best manuscripts.) **Why is it difficult?** Why do we want to judge the rich young ruler, when we *all* have our own areas of “difficulty” where we balk at responding to the challenge of God upon our lives? Doesn't Jesus say, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me” (Lk. 9:23), and, “If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple” (Lk. 14:26), and, again, “...no one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions” (Luke 14:33)? Suddenly, the rich young ruler does not seem that different than we are, does he? Unquestionably, these *are* hard sayings. They cut right through any sense of self-congratulation we might have had, and they expose the hidden underbelly of self-interest or fear. **Do you feel that inner struggle? The flesh dies hard. If you want to follow Jesus, you have to face that inner resistance.** You must choose to put aside that self-interest or fear in order to follow the Master. Now, **it is important to note that Jesus did not say to the rich young ruler that he had to sell everything to be saved. No. Salvation does not come through works which we do, but by the washing of regeneration (rebirth) and renewal of the Holy Spirit** (Tit 3:3-5). Jesus was talking about *maturity*, not *salvation*! **How does one become mature? He or she grows up! There is a process of development required.** Peter could not face death for Christ, even after three years of following Him.

Jesus assured him, however, that he *would* eventually be able to face that challenge and overcome (Lk. 22:54-62; Jn. 21:18,19). **How did Peter eventually overcome this fear of death? (1.) He recognized and acknowledged his failure; (2.) responded to Jesus' gracious invitation of restoration; and (3.) recommitted himself to following Christ once again. The victory that overcomes the world is our faith** (I Jn. 5:4). Peter *failed* in his commitment to Jesus, but *overcame* his self-deprecation by *responding once again to the call of God* upon his life. Three times Jesus *reinstated* him, and called him *back into relationship* with Him, and *back to the work* God had for him to do (Jn. 21:15-17). **Then, within a matter of just a few moments, Peter's resistance was already rearing up.** It came in the form of a question, "Lord, what about *this* man?" He was referring to John, who was following them down the beach. **Peter was falling into the trap of comparing himself to others.** We are responsible for our *own* walk before God. We are stewards who are entrusted with our own gifts, abilities, and our own calling before the Lord. No one is just like us. **We must not be distracted by what other people are doing, ...or not doing.** Jesus put Peter's focus back on track *immediately*, "...what is that to you? You follow Me!"

The passage in Hebrews 4 is talking about pressing through the resistance of unbelief and disobedience, to discover a deeper, more fruitful walk in the Spirit. The writer describes it as a life of rest, a life where we have ceased from our self-striving and learn to abide in the energizing life of God within us. In chapters 3 and 4, the writer makes a case for there being a life of rest which had been spoken of by the prophets, but had never been fulfilled. **Now, this life is available to us in Christ. He warns us, however, to take care not to miss out on this tremendous blessing by falling into the same kinds of traps that Israel of old did.** God had offered them the life of rest, but they never came to experience it, because they did not trust Him. Because they did not believe, they did not put forth diligent effort to obtain what God promised. Instead, they disregarded God's calling, became complacent and began to dabble in sin. God rejected them, and they missed out on His provision for them. The writer uses this tragic example to warn us to make sure we do not also miss out on the powerful life of the Spirit. What traps did they fall into? **(1.) They heard the word of promise, but they did not believe.** In a similar way, God has told us that there is more for us in Christ than what we have yet experienced. The promise did not help them, because they did not believe it enough to effectively seek God for the life He wanted to give them. **Knowing about the promise of God does us no good, if we do not believe it enough to seek God diligently to obtain it. (2.) They did not obtain the promise, because they were stubbornly-resistant to change.** God sent the message to them again and again, but they were *unwilling* to change their lifestyles enough to make room for God's agenda. In a similar way, **we will not obtain the life of rest, if we are not willing to adjust our lives to fit with God's priorities and leading for us.**

The last passage, Acts 14:22, is very interesting. Paul and Barnabus had come through these towns, preaching the gospel. People responded to the preaching and believed in Christ. After a matter of months, these same apostles came back through, strengthening the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "through many tribulations *it is necessary for us to enter into the kingdom of God.*" What is Paul saying? I thought **these people were already Christians, so why would Paul say that it was necessary to enter the kingdom of God?** You see, when we hear those words, "enter the kingdom of God", we tend to think in terms of whether a person has salvation or not. We tend to think of the kingdom of God as being *a place*, and you are either in or out. If that were true, then *where is the kingdom of God?* How could you *tell* if you were "in" or "out"? **There is another meaning for the word translated as "kingdom". It is the reign or rule of God. It is wherever God's will is done, and His presence is manifested.** Jesus said that God's kingdom was among them, in their midst (Lk. 17:21). He demonstrated the power and presence of the kingdom by healings and by deliverance from demonic oppression. In John 3, Jesus had said that unless a person was born from above, he or she could not *see* the kingdom of God. Unless they were born from above, they could not *enter* the kingdom of God. **What does this "enter the kingdom" mean?** One more clue, from John 5:19, "The Son can do nothing from Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing, for whatever the Father does, the Son also does in like manner." The success and power of Jesus' ministry seems to be related to His ability to recognize what God is doing, ...the reign and rule of God *in expression*. **Jesus could "see" the kingdom, and He got involved in what the Father was actively doing.** Whatever He did, He did in a way corresponding to what the Father was already doing. **As He did this, the Father worked through Him in powerful ways.** In the Acts passage, **Paul seems to be saying that it is necessary for us to enter the reign and rule of God, ...to see what God is doing, and to join with Him, ...to get into the "kingdom zone", as it were. In order to learn to do this, we will have to overcome the tribulations and tests of the world around us, as well as the doubts and resistance we feel inside.** It is necessary to come into this "kingdom life" to truly express the heart of God and fulfill His calling. This is available, if we trust God and are willing to try. **Don't be among those who fall short, those who drop off in unbelief or get stuck in the pride of selfish resistance. Be diligent and focused. Press through the resistance to come into the power of life in the Spirit. Don't settle for what you are comfortable with, or what you can imagine for yourself. God is bigger than that. Let Him show you the great things He has for you.**