

# Notes for the Ekklēsia Meeting

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## Working Out Your Salvation

by Dan Trygg

“...work out your salvation with fear and trembling; <sup>13</sup> for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”  
Philippians 2:12-13

**If Jesus is your Lord and Savior, your life can be an adventure.** The possibilities are endless, but what you make of those possibilities depends to a large degree on you. **Following are four general areas of growth and discovery** that I would present to you as areas to pursue. **Your Christian life is a pursuit. It is not a static or passive thing. It is to be an active endeavor. It is to be the center of your life.** Everything and everyone else should revolve around God and His will for your life. **If you honor God with the first and best of your life, ...if you give Him the place of preeminence in your goals, thoughts and interests..., then He will honor you and care for you accordingly.** If you disregard Him, ...treat Him as unimportant and give Him the “leftovers” of your interest, attention and value..., then He will disregard you, as well (I Sam. 2:30). You see, **you have a choice. You can either make God the central focus of your life, or you can marginalize Him.** You will either give Him the place He deserves (and demands!), or you will tend to treat Him as an afterthought, ...and He *will not* be brushed off in this way! **He will withdraw from those who shut Him out, but will disclose Himself to those who seek and value Him.**

**The first area of pursuit is to know God, ...I mean to experientially-know Him. God has offered to you a great gift, the opportunity to have a personal relationship with Him.** This is not just some religious party line. This is what the Bible *teaches*. He instructs sinners in the way to know Him, and to the humble He reveals what He is like, and how He operates (Psa. 25:8,9). To those who *truly* reverence Him, however, He will share His *secret thoughts* and *counsel* (vs. 14). **He is intimate with those who humbly incorporate His values and teachings into their day to day lives** (Prov. 3:32), **and He discloses Himself to those who obey Him** (Jn. 14:21-23; Acts 5:32). To those who *seek* Him and *draw near* to know *Him*, He will reveal Himself and draw near to *them* (Jas. 4:8-10; Jer. 29:13; I Chron. 28:9). **Remember, before we took Christ for our Savior and our Life, we were spiritually dead in our trespasses and sins, and were without God** (Eph. 2:1,5,12). **We, who were distant from God, have been brought near to Him by the blood of Christ** (Eph. 2:13). We, who had been estranged and alienated from Him, have now been reconciled to God (II Cor. 5:18-20). We now have peace with Him, and have *access* through Christ into our Father's presence (Rom. 5:1,2). **By His grace, we have been made alive toward Him.** He has forgiven us (lit., “gracing to us”) all our transgressions, and erasing the record of debts and legal decrees that was against us, nailing them to the cross (Col. 2:13,14). **The purpose for all that He has done has been to remove every obstacle, so that we might know Him. Jesus said that the Father gave Him authority to give eternal life, ...“age-type life”, life of the Kingdom to come given to us now..., in order that we might know God and Jesus the Messiah whom He had sent** (Jn. 17:1-3). What this indicates is that *receiving “eternal life” is just the beginning of a larger objective. Receiving this “Kingdom-life” opens our spiritual eyes and quickens our hearts, our “spiritual-receptors”, so that we can begin to recognize God’s activity and communications with us.* It is important to recognize, however, is that *this is a life-skill sharpened through pursuit, practice, experimentation and persistence.* It does *not* just come automatically, or as a fully developed ability. We must *devote ourselves* to seek to know God and discern His voice. Paul diligently prayed for Christians to come to know God in this way (Eph. 1:15-17). He prayed that God would give people a spirit of “skill” and of “uncovering” in the true-knowledge of Him. This obviously means that **there is skill involved in knowing God. How do you develop a skill that you do not yet have?** You have to *do research* in order to gain information and discover techniques that may have worked for others. Then, you have to *experiment* and *try things* until you begin to find what works for you. Next, you have to practice, practice and *practice*, until you become proficient at whatever skill you are trying to develop. **Then, there is the other half of what Paul mentioned: Some things are “covered” or “hidden”. In order for them to become known, they must be “uncovered”.** They either become “uncovered” as we are doing our research, or they must be “uncovered” by God Himself, as He responds to our pursuit of Him. **He says He will draw near to those who draw near to Him, and He will reveal Himself to those who seek Him, so can we not trust Him to do as He says He will? He will “reveal” Himself to us as we seek Him.**

**The second area of pursuit is understanding the big picture.** Again, this is *not* something that comes automatically. Nor does it just drop into our head somehow. **We have to pursue an ever-increasing perception of what God has shared with us in His word about the big issues of life.** What is *really* going on? What has God revealed about Himself? ...about the spiritual conflict that has been initiated by Satan? ...about who Jesus is, and why He came? ...about what salvation means? ...about God's purposes for humankind? ...about what history is all about?

...about the deceptions most people live under? ...about the traps and snares that Satan uses to keep people from fulfilling God's purposes for their lives? ...about the kind of lifestyle God expects of His people? ...about what it means to be a Christ-follower? ...about what a mature Christian should look like? ...about what the purpose of the church is supposed to be? ...about how and why we, as God's people, seem to continually get pulled off task? ...about where God is taking us in history? These and other similar questions are vitally important. **As we search out God's word for information and ponder these matters, we become more discerning, and it is more difficult for us to be deceived.** Unfortunately, most believers *never invest the time and effort to study the word of God for themselves* to develop a clear understanding about these issues. They are easily deceived and entrapped by the enemy. As the prophet Hosea wrote, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hos. 4:6).

**The third area of pursuit is to come to know what God has made available to us to live the Christian life and do His will.** Again, **I am appalled that so few Christians really grasp how the Christian life is supposed to work.** They are "trying the best they can", ...but "the best *they* can" was *never* God's plan! In fact, the "best they can" was so unacceptable to God, so ineffective and mixed with self-interest that God thought it was necessary to reject *all* human effort, and send Jesus to die on our behalf (Rom. 8:3). **No one can ever be justified by self-effort, by works of self-will, or by good deeds** (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16,21). Just as we cannot hope to be acceptable to God for salvation through good works, or self-effort, **in the same way we cannot be matured or perfected by self-will or good works, either** (Gal. 3:21). The Scriptures are very plain about this, yet so many believers are still "trying to be good", totally missing out on God's plan for learning to walk in victory in Christ. God never intended to leave us to our own devices. **He has provided everything we need to live the victorious Christian life.** As Peter wrote, "Grace and peace be *multiplied* to you in the true-knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, just as **all things of His divine power that pertain to life and godliness have been granted to us...**" (II Pet. 1:2,3). What did he say? *All* of the power and resources we need to live the Christian life have *already* been made available to us. They are ours for the taking. **God is not withholding these things from us. He wants to give them to us, in fact He already has!** This mirrors Paul's language in Ephesians, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who *has* blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (1:3). He has *already* given us *every* spiritual blessing! **Paul prays that we might know the hope of our calling, the riches of our inheritance, and the surpassing greatness of His power toward us** who believe (1:18,19). **How great is that?** He says, "If you can grasp the awesome power that it took to raise Jesus from the dead and exalt Him to the Father's right hand, far above any rule, authority or dominion, then you have a *clue* as to how great is *your* calling, inheritance and the power available to *you*" (1:19-22). **Not clear enough?** Well, remember that *you* were once *dead* in sin, and He *made you alive* in Christ and seated YOU with JESUS in the heavenly places in Christ. You are His carefully-crafted implement, created in Christ for good works, which He will prepare and bring into your life to fulfill (2:1-10). **Still not enough?** "Well," says Paul, "I have been specifically called by God to preach to the nations the *unfathomable riches of Christ*, and I am praying that you would have an experience of God's boundless love that would so transform you that you would be *filled up to all the fullness of God!* And God is *able* to do exceeding abundantly *beyond* anything we could imagine, according to the power that is *already* operational inside of you!" (3:1-21) **Does it sound like there is something to be discovered here?** Doesn't it sound like Paul really is *desperate* for the people of God to grasp what God *has already made available* to us? You see, **Paul was running into the same problem we have. People do not apply themselves to find out and utilize what God has made available to us.** Peter was, too. He exhorts his readers, "Make every effort to *add* to your faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godly character, brotherly love and agapē love" (II Pet. 1:5-10). **Learning to walk in the promises of God and the power of the Spirit is a process that requires pursuit, discipline and relentless application. Most of us are not motivated enough to pursue past the level of inconvenience and discomfort.** Yet, Jesus said, "If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me" (Lk. 9:23). **Being a disciple is pursuing a discipline, a strategy for growth. It is like mining for gold. You have to dig through a lot of rubble sometimes to find the nuggets.**

**The final area of pursuit is to come to know what God is calling you to do.** We touched on this above. Paul prayed that we would "know what is the hope of His calling". In the general sense, this means what He has called *all* of us Christians to be and do. There is also a personal calling, however. This is what God has gifted and called *you* specifically to do. Generally, He wants us to be givers. He wants us to be generous and to help others. He wants us to demonstrate His love and grace to others. Specifically, however, **He has given you a unique set of spiritual gifts and abilities to use to build up the Body of Christ. He has things for you to do, and lives for you to touch, that are unique to you.** In Colossians, Paul prayed that "you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual skill and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God..." (Col. 1:9,10). **Again, this is a pursuit. If we are not attentive and applying ourselves to know God and discover His will, we may miss what He intends to do with us.**