

Notes for the Ekklēsia Meeting

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Taking Hold Of Life

by Dan Trygg

“But you, person of God, flee these things; pursue righteousness, good-devotion, faith, agape-love, endurance, gentle-affection. Be wrestling the good wrestling of the faith; take-upon (yourself) the age-type life unto which you were called, and you confessed the good confession before many witnesses.”

I Timothy 6:11,12

“...y’all will (for yourselves) take power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

Acts 1:8

“Instruct those who are rich in this present age not to be high-minded or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. ¹⁸ Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹ storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, in order that they might (for themselves) take hold of the real life.”

I Timothy 6:17-19

Sometimes when I am reading along in the scriptures, I will notice something unusual in the wording of a passage that grabs my attention. This recently happened when I read I Timothy 6:12. The phrase, “...take-upon (yourself) the eternal life...” seemed peculiar. In a different context, this wording may not seem strange. To me, it sounded like, “...believe on Jesus and get eternal life”. When you look at the setting in this passage, however, it becomes clear that this *cannot* be what Paul is referring to. This letter is written to Paul’s long-time disciple and associate, Timothy. He had been traveling with Paul for *years*, as a joint minister and evangelist. **Whatever this phrase means, it cannot be an invitation to salvation. If that is not what it is about, then what does it mean?**

I Timothy is an especially practical letter. In it, Paul uses the phrase “these things” on numerous occasions, usually referring to the truths, standards and practices that Timothy is to stand for, practice, teach and prescribe to other believers (3:14; 4:6,11,15; 5:7,21; 6:2). In 6:12, however, the phrase is used for those things Timothy is to flee from. In the context, *this would refer to the unhealthy, divisive teachings of those who advocate “other” doctrine*, ...teaching that is *not* consistent with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Messiah, or with the instruction that is according to good-devoted hearts (6:3). Those who advocate other doctrines are “blind, understanding nothing, but are being-sick, drawn-into controversies and ‘word-battles’, out from which come envy, strife, injurious or slanderous speech, evil suspicions or conjectures, continuous arguments of people whose perception has been thoroughly ruined and filched of the truth, *and who presume religion to be a way to gain wealth*” (6:4,5). In verses 6-10, Paul deals with this perverse lust for money. Good-devotion actually *is* a great source of advantage with obtaining contentment. Why? Because we know that just as we brought nothing into the world, we are not able to bring anything out of it when we die. But having food and covering, we will be satisfied. However, the ones wanting/purposing to be wealthy, fall into temptation and snares and many unperceived and harmful desires, which plunge people into destruction and ruin. For the love of money is a hidden-root of all the evils. Some people, stretching-out-after-it, have been led away from the faith, and they pierced-themselves-through with many sorrows.

Instead of unhealthy speculation, unprofitable arguments and a selfish lust for money, Paul encourages Timothy to pursue six qualities:

- (1.) Righteousness.** This refers to moral uprightness, or meeting *God’s* standards for good character, as well as justice and equity in dealing with other people.
- (2.) Godliness.** I have translated this word as “good-devotion”. This is actually a literal rendering of this word. It refers to a healthy respect, reverence and honor toward God, reflected in acts of devotion, piety, and service toward Him.
- (3.) Faith,** or faithfulness. The Greek word can be translated either way. Faith is being able to trust that God’s word is trustworthy, and He is dependable. It becomes visible when we choose to act in obedience to what we think He wants us to do. How would you pursue faith? Faith is developed by knowledge of the word of God (Rom. 10:14,17), and is exercised in acts of obedience (Jas. 2:22). Faithfulness is developing integrity, reliability, consistency and commitment. It is learning to follow through with what we say we are going to do.
- (4.) Agapē-love.** Agapē is a character quality that is produced by the inner working of the Holy Spirit in those who are born again. This kind of love is willing to graciously, consistently value and help others, in spite of their failings, inconsistency or “worthiness”. Pursuing love is a matter for prayer, watchfulness, and obedience. Like every other “inworking” of the Spirit, we must choose to express outwardly in action, what God is initiating inside of us.
- (5.) Endurance.** The Greek word means “abiding under”. It is the ability to remain consistent under pressure, and to persevere in the face of opposition.
- (6.) Gentle-affection,** or “meek-passioned”. The word combines the concepts of “humility” or “gentleness” with the word for “passion” or “suffering”. To be “meek-passioned” means to develop the ability to empathize with others’ pain or struggle. Being able to open oneself up to experience or feel their struggle requires being able to put aside any pretense or sense of

superiority. You must be able to come alongside them without judgment, in order to truly empathize. Jesus was able to have compassion and empathy for others in need, or in pain (Matt. 9:36; Jn. 11:33).

Then Paul exhorted Timothy to focus on the right objective. We are to fight the *right* fight. We are not to expend our energy in the “be right” fight, or the “get more” fight. **We are to struggle to win the fight of faith.** It is a struggle, a wrestling contest, because *we are working against the pressures and propaganda of the world system, the temptations of the flesh, the interference and opposition of false religionists, the siren-call of the rich and prosperous, and the opposition of spiritual powers set against us.* **How can we possibly win?** How can we possibly overcome? We can win because ***Christ has already overcome the world*** (Jn. 16:33). **The victory that overcomes the world is our faith.** Because we have believed in Christ, joined with Him, and have been born from above, we *can* overcome the world (I Jn. 5:4). We can overcome Satan himself in our day-to-day struggle, when we draw near to God in submission and obedience, and resist the devil (Jas. 4:7,8). When we trust the blood of Jesus for our salvation, and stand firm in our personal faith-commitment, then Satan *can't* defeat us (Rev. 12:11). God does not expect us to overcome the world simply by *our* self-will or determination. No! **He has made available to us the power of His life to enable us to experience victory!**

This is what Paul was referring to when he charged him to “take upon (yourself) the age-type life unto which you were called.” He was not calling him to salvation in Christ; Timothy already *had* trusted in Christ, *was* born of the Spirit, and *had* eternal life, as his inheritance and present possession in Christ. **What Paul was exhorting Timothy to do was to *consciously choose to live in, and draw upon, the power of God's Spirit in him.*** The reason we are having so much difficulty with this is that we misunderstand the nature of “eternal life”. When we hear “eternal”, we think of “everlasting”. That is not at all what the original readers of the NT would have understood. **The word translated as “age” in 6:17 is the Greek word “aiōn”.** It means “age, eon, dispensation, era, world order, epoch”. Currently, *we are living in “the present evil age”* (Gal. 1:4). This age began on planet earth when Satan enticed Adam and Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit in the garden. Since that time, sin entered this world-system, and it was corrupted with evil and death (Rom. 5:12; 8:20). *There is another age, however, an age to come* (Matt. 12:32; Mk. 10:30; Lk. 18:30). This present evil age will come to an *end* (Matt. 13:39,40,49; 24:3; 28:20). *Things will be different in the coming age* from what is common here (cf. Lk 20:34,35). Those who get to live in that new age are those that “attain to the resurrection of the dead”, which includes everyone in Christ (Lk. 20:35; I Cor. 15:20-23; I Thess. 4:13-17). The significance of all this is that **the word translated as “eternal” is the Greek word, “aiōnion”, an adjective derived from the word for “age”.** Thus, instead of “eternal life”, ***what Jesus came to make available to us is “age-type life”, or “life that is characteristic of the age to come”.*** This is way more than simply “everlasting life”; this is the **POWER of the Kingdom of God come to dwell and operate within us NOW!** The Holy Spirit within us, and within the gathered church, comes to make available the powers of the age to come (Heb. 6:5; I Cor.12:4-11).

We see in Acts 1:8 that **Jesus taught the apostles that they were to “take” or “seize” power when the Holy Spirit came upon them,** and they would be His witnesses. It was not enough to have the Holy Spirit come upon them. **They had to partner-with the Spirit.** In John 15:26,27, Jesus said that the Spirit would bear witness, and so would they. They needed to work-together to get the job done. It is not enough to *have* the Spirit, nor is sufficient to have the Spirit *operating within you.* *You must also operate with Him!* **The same is true for this age-type life.** It is not enough to have it within you as an inheritance; nor is it sufficient to have it operational within you, present to give you life and power. **What Paul is telling Timothy is that he must “take it upon himself”.** I think the “age-type life” *is* the inworking power of the Holy Spirit. Peter says that “all things of God's power *have been granted* to us that pertain to life and godliness. These things come through the recognition of Him who called us. What did He call us to? “...to His own glory and excellence”, “...to become sharers/partners in the divine nature” (II Pet. 1:3,4). To experience this, we have to be actively, intensely pursuing a deeper walk in Christ, as well as learning to develop the outworking of that walk in new expressions of Christlike attitudes and service. **God makes His inner life and power available, but we are to “take it” and “apply it” in partnership with Him.**

Paul concludes the chapter with another word of admonition to the wealthy. They may be rich in this present age, but as we have seen this age will pass away. **They should not think that they are anybody special, or be conceited, nor put their hope in the uncertainty of riches, but on God.** *He* is the One who is the True Source of what any of us have, and enjoy. **The wealthy are to do good with what they have, to be rich in good works.** They are to be generous and ready to share with others. By doing this, they store up for themselves a treasure for the future, the age about to come. **By doing these things, they may escape the traps and snares mentioned above, and lay hold of what is the real life, the “age-type life”.** Jesus said that it is difficult for the rich to enter the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 19:23). Why? They cannot “take to themselves” or “seize” ***the life of the age to come, if their eyes, hearts and hands are full of the riches of this present age.***