

# Notes for the Ekklēsia Meeting

Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: February 23, 2014

## Growing Into Our Priestly Calling

by Dan Trygg

“...the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, that shines brighter and brighter until the full day. <sup>19</sup> The way of the wicked is like darkness...”  
Proverbs 4:18-19

“Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, <sup>2</sup> like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it y’all might grow unto salvation, <sup>3</sup> if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord. ...y’all are a chosen family, a royal priesthood, a people for God’s own, that y’all might proclaim-out the excellencies of Him who called y’all out of darkness into His marvelous light... Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.”  
I Peter 2:1-3,9,11

“My covenant with him was life and peace, and I gave them to him as a basis of reverence; so he revered Me and stood in awe of My name. <sup>6</sup> True instruction was in his mouth and unrighteousness was not found on his lips; he walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many back from iniquity. <sup>7</sup> For the lips of a priestly-mediator should preserve knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth; for he is the messenger of Yahweh of hosts.”  
Malachi 2:5-7

**How is it that we have come to believe that all God requires of us is to believe certain ideas about Him, or to attend church meetings?** How is it possible that we have come to accept that *the most critical and important decision* in life would *cost us so little*, and *make so insignificant a difference* in how most of us live our lives? **How can we possibly think that we can dismiss God with a few words of praise or loyalty, and go about living *our* lives *our* way, giving no serious regard to Him, His interests or claims upon our lives?** Yes, God loved us first, and sent Jesus to die a horrific death in our place. **He *freely* offers salvation to any who will accept it ON HIS TERMS. And what would *those* be? That we would stop living for ourselves, and that we would choose to become *His* people, ...a people who live to honor and serve Him.** We don’t have to fix up our lives to come to be acceptable to Him, BUT He expects us to align ourselves with Him as our King, to learn His ways and His values for our lives, and obey His directives. The good news is that, in spite of all we have done that is offensive to God, He loved us enough to send Jesus to die in our place, so that we could escape judgment and live lives that will be honoring to Him. **All we have to do is repent (change our minds about Him, about life, and about our agenda in life), and trust God. “Trust God”, two little words with HUGE ramifications.** We are choosing to become God’s people, a people for *His* own possession and purpose. Yes, He *does* have plans and a purpose for each of us. **Those who really do “trust Him” will set out to discover what it means to be one of “His people”, and live that out.** In the Psalms, He said, “To him who ‘orders’ or ‘sets’ his way aright, I will show the salvation of God” (50:23). **We can set a direction for our life that will determine how we grow and develop, both personally and in our relationship with God.** Jesus told the Jews who had believed in Him that the one who “abides in My word” is truly My disciple. He will come to know the truth and the truth will set him free from bondage to sin (Jn. 8:31-36). He told the apostles to “disciple the nations, baptizing ...and teaching them to do *all* that I said” (Matt. 28:18-20). In the I Peter passage above, the apostle instructed new converts to get into the word of God, like new-born babies long for milk, so that they could grow up in their salvation. **There is no question – God has an expectation that those who choose Him for salvation will also choose to change the direction of their life to honor *Him* and accomplish *His* purposes in their lives.**

I remember very clearly when God came to me in the summer of 1971. He said to me, “Dan, **I want you to give Me your future.**” I knew it was an **unconditional surrender of all my plans and purposes for my life.** I knew it meant to give Him *everything*. I had already been moving toward God, investing time in trying to read the Bible and pray, but **after agreeing to give my future to God, there was a new drive and impetus to my pursuit of knowing Him, and following Him.** I was more determined to get time in the word. I invested time in prayer, and began to attend church regularly. When God opened up opportunities to serve Him, I stepped right in, even if I felt uncertain or unqualified, because **I expected God to work and to lead me, ...and He did!**

**As I invested in my growth in God, He began to change me.** *My interests changed.* Where I invested my time changed. *My values changed,* and *my expectations of myself changed.* Swearing and profanity began to disappear from my regular vocabulary. I chose healthier and more wholesome entertainment. *I found myself hanging out with different people, ...people who helped me grow in my faith.* I found the talk and attitudes of some of my old friends to be distasteful to me, now. I still loved them, but I couldn’t get into what they often wanted to do. While I was growing and changing for the better, some of them were definitely choosing paths that led them to sorrow and ruin. Even our time schedules began to change. I became more of a morning person, while they continued hanging out late into the night. *I had been hard and angry, but God began to make me more compassionate and loving.* I

learned new songs, and often found myself singing during the day. *My days were generally joyful and positive, where I had been sour, jaded and negative.* I had been a loner; now, I found myself surrounded by people who I shared my Christian life with, taught, mentored, and who were drawn by the life of Christ in me. *I had been shy and withdrawn, but God enabled me to be outgoing and articulate.* I was able to speak in front of groups, preach at churches and do street evangelism. **By the grace of God, I became a person for God's possession, and He made my life fruitful.** My life went from darkness and heaviness to light and joyful. *I became an advocate for God,* and proclaimed His greatness to scores and hundreds of people. **I became known for being a reliable student of the scriptures. People began to seek my opinion about passages, they sought my counsel,** and, by God's inworking guidance, I have been able to help many overcome problems and find freedom in their faith-walk.

My purpose in sharing these things is not to draw attention to myself. It is to add supportive testimony to the passages at the top of this study. **In my life, I have experienced the gradual progression of growth pictured in the Proverbs 4 passage.** I didn't have to be *militant* about it, but I *did* invest in growth consistently, and in multiple ways and avenues. **These investments toward growth and obedience changed my focus and interests, and eventually I found that God had changed ME!** The Lord led me in paths of righteousness, and made *me* righteous! I experienced life and peace, and was drawn to respect and honor God. **I could easily proclaim the excellencies of God, because I was experiencing the blessings of obedience and growth.** I found God and His ways enriching, rewarding and delightful, so it was not at all difficult to talk about Him, or even to preach about Him! **He grew me up, healed my hurts, stretched and developed me, and made me a sounder, healthier and better person.**

This did not happen to me because I was some kind of special individual. You can see from the texts above that **this is what God wants to work in the lives of all those who choose to follow Him.** Proverbs 4:18 is a *general observation* about the lives of those who are "righteous", a term commonly used in the OT for those who seek to follow God. Like Abraham was, they were counted as "righteous" because they believed or trusted in God (Gen. 15:6). Obviously, "righteous" cannot mean that they have *arrived*, ...that they are already *mature* and *upright* in all their behavior..., or the entire word picture of progress, ...of *increasing* light until the full day..., would not make much sense. The entire point of the verse is that **those whose hearts are set on seeking and obeying God will gradually grow and change, until they become like Him in their character.**

In the I Peter passage, you will note that **there are conditions to the growth process** that Peter is describing. **The calling is the same.** God has called them *to be a people for Himself*, a people who are chosen to be part of His family, people called to be priestly-mediators of the King, a people set-apart for God. **In order to experientially get there, however, these new believers have to put aside certain attitudes and behaviors that can stunt their progress, ...and they have to invest in learning and living God's word.** They have to put off ill-will, deception, being-fake, making-jealous-or resentful-comparisons with others, or talking-negatively-to-or-about-others, in order to have hearts that can be receptive to grow. *So many people get stuck right here!* Their motives are not right, or they are looking at others, instead of simply coming with open and honest hearts to God. **You cannot benefit from studying the word of God if you are always taking other people's inventory. You need to come and ask Daddy to teach YOU!** You must *humble yourself* and recognize *you* need to learn and grow, or you WON'T learn and grow! **You are not able to be taught, until you are teach-able.** You have to *check your heart and motives*, put aside selfish motives and self-comparisons, and *humbly ask God to help you* become the person *He* wants you to be. **Then, you need to invest in learning.** You can't *do* anything different, if you can't *think* anything different; and you can't *think* anything different, if you *have no new ideas* or *information*. **Both Old and New Testaments emphasize the importance of learning and studying the word of God.** It may not be easy, especially at first, but if you will invest the time and effort, you *will* begin to benefit from studying the scriptures. **Sharpen your study skills. Learn to be a careful reader.** God wants us to *clearly understand* His word, so we don't *misunderstand* or *misapply* it in our lives, nor *misrepresent* Him to others.

The passage from I Peter indicates that God has not just called us to better *our own* lives, or to become righteous for *our own* sake. Our pursuit of growth and righteousness is *not even just to please Him*. **He has called us to be priests, mediators between Him and other people.** God desires to use us to reach out to other people. **If our walk with God is healthy and positive, we will have no difficulty in sharing our joy with others.** It will be easy to "proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into light". **It is important that our walk matches our talk. People should be able to see the change in our lives.** Even if we *aren't* perfect, **if people can see positive change, they will take a second look at what we are talking about.** Because we are responsible to be messengers of God to others, it is all the more important that we clearly understand what the Bible says, so we can teach it accurately to others. **If you are following Jesus, people will notice, and they will begin to ask you questions about God.**