

# Notes for the Ekklēsia Meeting

Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtmnc.org Today's Date: July 13, 2014

## What Do You Want To Be Known For?

by Dan Trygg

“The sins of some people are conspicuous, going before them to judgment, but the sins of others appear later. <sup>25</sup> So also good works are conspicuous, and even those that are not cannot remain hidden.” 1 Timothy 5:24-25

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely (ensnares us, entangles us, or limits our free movement), and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup> looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. <sup>3</sup> Consider Him who endured from sinners such hostility against Himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.” Hebrews 12:1-3

I am writing from a rented room in a motel near Grand Marais, MN. We left our home in St. Paul about 7:30 on Thursday morning, and passed by most of my life to come here. We passed within blocks of my post-college apartments in Saint Paul, and within two miles of the home of my junior high through college period in Shoreview. We traveled within a mile of my early elementary house in Duluth, and within 60 miles of every other residence of my childhood, including a couple of logging camps my father had owned, while I was a child. Even now, I am sitting within just a few miles of where my father first worked in his older brother's logging camp, after returning home from service in the Second World War. It is a little surreal to be here, but it feels *right*, somehow. It feels like home. Of course, it is *not* home. This area has not been “home” for nearly 50 years. My entire situation has changed. 49 years ago, my family moved from the north woods to the Twin Cities. There have been a lot of changes, and a lot of adjustments, but *the trip here was like a ride through my life in reverse*, in some ways. We moved in 1965. My mom died in 1970. I gave my future life to Christ 1971. I graduated from college in '75, got married in '77, and moved to our current home in 1982, where we raised five children. I have been doing ministry full time since 1980. Most of my work has involved one-on-one discipleship and small group Bible study. I pastored a small, interactive church for about fourteen years, from 1996 to 2010, but handed that off to others. My attempts to develop another group have been ineffective. The strong thread throughout my life has been the discipleship. I seem to attract hurting people, folks who don't fit in well with the “established church”, or who “fall through the cracks”. God has often given me patience, grace and vision to see their good qualities and potential, so I can walk alongside them to encourage and attempt to build them up in Christ. Then, there are always a handful of more motivated, productive disciples that God brings across my path. I am a teacher, and they are hungry to learn, so God uses me to help them sort some things out, or get on a good footing in their journey. Most people stick around for a while, and then move on.

I am feeling kind of reflective. I recently lost my younger brother, Jamie. That gives one pause to evaluate. *His* life is over. *His* work on earth is done. What about *my* life? What have *I* accomplished? How much *time* do I have *left*? What is God calling *me* to do *next*? Then, here at the motel, I came across a book, The One Year Book of Christian History, by E. Michael and Sharon Rusten. It is like a daily devotional book that recounts incidents, or summarizes the lives, of Christians throughout the ages. I have read through the months of January through April in the past couple of days. It is a very challenging, thought-provoking volume, stirring up both *introspection* and *inspiration*. It recounts the victories and tragedies of many brothers and sisters in Christ, who served God faithfully in the face of incredible odds or opposition. It describes how the Lord used the most *unlikely people* to do *great things*, and how simple, quiet, unpretentious people took *bold* stands for Christ. It catalogues *perseverance* in the face of hardship and trial, and the *resilience* of people of faith, as they overcame heartbreak, loss and sorrow. There are tales of martyrs and servants, preachers and housewives, dissolute drunkards and well-heeled millionaires. The common theme is that they *took a stand* for Christ, *served* for Christ, *lived* for Christ, and, in many cases, *died* for Christ. The book is about 6” x 6”, and each story is told on two facing pages, so each selection is very brief.

The book is not just about the “saints”, it includes the stories of some “stinkers”, as well. There was the Roman emperor who tried reinstating pagan worship. In the name of Jupiter he led his forces in a charge against his opponent, and perished in the battle. His body was trampled underfoot in a muddy field, and was never found. In another scenario, a poor widow betrayed a dissenting pastor for a loaf of bread. As he was led to the gallows to be hung, he forgave her, the priests, bishops, judges and rulers who persecuted and condemned him, and even the hangman, who was to kill him. *Many people were complicit in allowing evil and injustice to continue*. There were many ignorant and arrogant people who did unspeakable things to those who simply wanted to live for Jesus. For every saint who did great things, or through self-discipline and perseverance overcame great self-limitations and obstacles, or through sacrifice and hard work helped many others, there were also people who were selfish, boorish,

pleasure-seekers, who cared only for themselves, their personal advancement and self-comfort, and the justification of their lifestyles. So many have done *nothing* in life, except to escape into immediate gratification and status-quo living. They seek only life's pleasures, and do not wish to move outside the limits of self-comfort, whether for God or for other people. They did not discipline themselves to be godly, so they capitulated to temptation and evil, when it came.

Paul wrote to Timothy, "The sins of some people are conspicuous, going before them to judgment, but the sins of others appear later. So also good works are conspicuous, and even those that are not cannot remain hidden." The word in Greek for "conspicuous" means "clear, evident, known to all". In many cases, this is true. People can see what we are made of, what our values are, and what the fruit of our lives consists of. Our "walk" often speaks as loud, or *louder*, than our "talk". Our actions will either belie or amplify our words. They will either minimize Jesus, or they will magnify Jesus. As in the parable of the soils (Mk. 4), we will either lay hold of the word of God with an honest and good heart, bearing fruit with perseverance, or the word will become unfruitful in our lives. People can tell. They know if we are seriously living for God, or not. They know if our hearts are His, because *our lives bear witness to our hearts*. If you *think* you love God, but there is no outward evidence of that, ...or no effort made to grow in your relationship with Him, then, ask yourself, "Is it *real*?" or, "*How real* is it?" People will see our sins. They notice our cross words, or our impatience. They remember when we gossip, or see our negative attitude. They recognize when we cut corners, tell lies, or are dishonest. When the sins get bigger, the level of judgment increases. Some people are known more for the sins they have committed, than the good things they did, or the accomplishments they made. For example, when we hear of Richard Nixon, most of us think of Watergate, and the pride, arrogance and paranoia that spawned such a plot. Most of us don't know much about his spiritual life, and many don't remember his positive accomplishments. We don't know that he knew Billy Graham, or prayed to receive Christ, or that he often privately sought Graham out for personal prayer, and for guidance from God. The positive things about his life are smeared with, and overshadowed by, the negative things in his life. Sometimes we think we can hide our sins, or our good deeds, but the truth is that both the evil and the good will come out in the end. Either in this life, or certainly in the day of judgment, *every* misdeed or good deed will become known. We will stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and give an account of what we have done, either good or bad (Rom. 14:12; II Cor. 5:10).

The writer to the Hebrews exhorted his readers to "lay aside every weight, and sin which entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us..." He likens our lives to running a race, and tells us to travel light, to put off the extraneous weights we carry, ...whether they are unimportant opinions, unproductive habits, persistent sins that entangle and hobble us, or whether they are just extra and unneeded baggage..., these "weights" get in the way, and hamper our walk in Christ, the outworking of our faith in concrete actions, and the resultant fruit of our lives. We must *put them aside, strip them off*, so we can run our race more effectively. Our lives are like ships, ...they gather barnacles. Things come into our lives that tend to take up time, attention, and resources, and add to the clutter and drain going on around and inside of us all the time. *Sometimes we need to make a serious effort to clean up our lives afresh*. We need to remove the barnacles, get rid of the clutter, and jettison the things that waste our time, energy and resources. We need to "look at Jesus", who endured so much to accomplish His purpose for coming. *We need to evaluate our lives* in light of those who have gone before. There are many, good, heroic examples to *challenge us* and *stir up our determination*. It is amazing to read of what *others* have accomplished, because they had *vision, purpose* and *perseverance*. *They committed themselves to a task, and kept at it, day after day, without wavering*. As a result, *they did great things for God, and helped many people*.

Step back. Evaluate *your* life. Where are you, *right now*? Are you *stuck* in the thick of thin things, *wasting* your days, hours and money on things that don't matter, or *are you living for Christ every day*? Is your life *weighed down* with habits or excesses that are *robbing you* of your health, your energy or your drive? Does your definition of "living for Christ" involve *real action* and *interaction with others* for His name's sake? Are you *making a difference* for Jesus in someone's life? Or does "following Christ" only entail *self-edification*, ...reading for *yourself*, praying for *your* needs and desires, talking "Jesus talk" *with other Christians*, and *being entertained* by Christian media? Most Christians are only talking *to themselves*! Most churches are gatherings where we talk and sing *to ourselves*! We are having very little impact in our neighborhoods or communities. *Edification* is not translating into *activation* in our lives. Where is the *growth edge* in your life? Where is the *battle line*? What are *you* doing to serve Christ by serving others? What steps are *you* taking to *get prepared*, or to *get involved* in real ministry?

What do *you* want to be known for? If someone were to write a summary of *your* life, what would it say? What do you *want* it to say? Would it describe someone who started well, someone who was excited for Christ, but slowly ran out of fervor and focus, ran out of gas, and got mired down in everyday things? Or, would it describe someone who kept up the fight, kept throwing off obstacles, "weights", entangling sins, ...a person who continued to press forward with and for Christ, ...one who continued to grow deeper and deeper in Him, and grew in His grace and the fruit of His Spirit, ...a person of principle and purpose, one willing to take risks for Jesus? *You* decide.