

# Notes for the Ekklēsia Meeting

Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtmnc.org Today's Date: July 20, 2014

## Prepared For Every Good Work

by Dan Trygg

“Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, <sup>21</sup> equip (‘fit-according-to’) you in every good thing to do His will, doing in us that which is pleasing in His sight, by means of Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory unto the ages of the ages. Amen.” Hebrews 13:20-21

“Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, well-useful to the master of the house, having-been-made-ready for every good work.” II Timothy 2:21

“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be prepared (‘fitted’), equipped (‘fitted-out’) for every good work.” II Timothy 3:16-17

“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, <sup>17</sup> comfort your hearts and firmly-establish you in every good work and word.” II Thessalonians 2:16-17

Do you desire to be well-used by God? Do you want to serve Him well and effectively? *Is it your heart to be all you can be for God*, and bring Him glory by your life? This is certainly His desire for you, as well. If this is true, why does it seem that His will is *thwarted* in the lives of so many who profess to know Him? *Why is it that so few come to the maturity that the NT indicates that we should expect?* According to Ephesians 4:13, we should be growing toward a common understanding of the faith, an experiential knowledge of Jesus, and a mature, Christlike character. Why is it that people can claim to come to know Christ, and live for decades in the church, and still never seem to approach these objectives? Why is it that so many are not actively serving Christ? Why do they seem to only go through the motions, or give lip service to Jesus, but never actually *do* anything of any consequence for the Kingdom? **Is the carnal state of the church really God’s will, or is there more to the process of maturity than just the desire of God, or even His willingness and readiness to act on our behalf?** Does God *not* want to do significant things through most of His people, or are *we* falling short on *our* end? **Who is responsible for the immaturity of the church?** Is it *God*, because He does not choose to act to cause us to mature, or is it because *we* do not do what is necessary on *our* part to grow and mature?

This is an age-old debate. It is clear from the passages above, however, that **there are both human and Divine aspects that are necessary for growth, maturity, and usefulness in service to come to pass in our lives. God works, and we work.** Some people don’t like the word “work”. Let’s use different terminology. *God* actively puts energy into our lives to initiate growth and change and to prepare us for His purposes, and *we* must also actively put energy and effort into our lives in order to grow, change and prepare ourselves to become useful to God. **If we don’t apply ourselves to grow or obey God, we will mature very little, or even remain as spiritual infants.** However, if we apply ourselves to study, pray, do works of service *apart from the working of God’s Spirit*, the end result will be only religious pride and the frustrating cycle of trying harder and experiencing failure. **God has created us so that personal maturity, and the fulfillment of God’s designs for our existence, requires a partnership between the working of God’s Spirit and the application of our human will. Apart from Him we can do nothing** (Jn. 15:5), **but He puts the choice before us**, ...life or death, growth or stagnation, movement or inertia, service or laziness, productivity or ineffectiveness, unselfishness or selfishness. **We even have the choice to ask for, seek and wait for His help, or attempt to deal with life on our own.** We have the choice to draw near to Him, or *not*, ...to seek to know Him, or *not*. At times, in the Scriptures, **He expresses amazement that we do not avail ourselves of common means by which to come to know Him and seek His help** (Isa. 59:16; 63:5; Ezk. 18:30-32; 22:30; 33:11).

**In the passage from Hebrews 13, the emphasis seems to be on the Divine side of this equation.** The writer expresses a wish or hope that God would equip them to do His will. (Notice that he does not *declare* that the Lord *will* do these things, or that they will be effective in taking root in their experience. It is a wish, an expression of hope, a prayer, ...not a promise!) Clearly, this indicates that **God has the ability to work in the lives of Christians to bring about the necessary training, preparation, modification, or give the tools that are necessary to accomplish what He desires for them to do.** The language “equip you in every good thing to do His will” is somewhat vague. The Greek word for “equip” is *katarizō*. It is a compound word. The stem, *artizō*, means to “fit out, equip, prepare”. The prefix, *kata*, means “according to”. This modifies the word in two possible ways. **Either we are being outfitted according to our own nature**, entailing the realities of where we are in life compared with the intended design of our Maker, ...or **we are being outfitted and adapted according to the need of our calling**, the need of the mission God intends for us to fulfill. Both of these scenarios suggest that **the equipping process is very individualized.** We are *not* intended to be like everyone else, nor is our life calling the same as everyone else’s. **We have unique gifts and**

**abilities given to us by God that need to be discovered, developed and utilized.** Then, our mission may require very specialized sensitivities, skills and abilities that will require individual training to acquire. In a general sense, we are all to become like Christ in our character, but **we might be called to work with a specific target group of people that will require special preparation to reach or help.** The word, *katartizō*, can mean “adapt”, as in to prepare for a special task. **Another reality is that we do not start out in the same place.** Some of us have come up in healthy backgrounds that have laid a good foundation for our relationship with God and other people in the Body. Others of us have a personal history of abuse, brokenness, woundedness or addiction that requires some growth and healing. “*Katartizō*” also is used in the sense of “fitting us out” with what was lacking or missing along the way, or of “mending” what was torn, broken or stripped from us as we grew up (Matt. 4:21). *Here is where our understanding of the Divine/human partnership is so critical.* Many times people are resistant to address past hurts, or deficiencies. It can be painful, uncomfortable to deal with such issues, but, *if we do not address these areas, we will be limited by them*, and we will not experience all that God intends for us. I have often seen God bring opportunities to people, with unusual grace and availability, only to have these individuals bypass them or reject them, because it was too painful, or because they did not believe it was necessary to get “mended”. As I have followed these individuals through the years, I see how their lives have been defeated by these same unaddressed issues over and over again. Remember, in Jesus’ parable the wise man dug deep to build his life upon the bedrock, while the foolish man was in a hurry and threw together his house on the sand (Matt. 7:24-27). When the storms came, the house built on sand was ruined, but the one on the solid foundation stood firm. **Sometimes we have to “dig deep” into the foundational experiences and beliefs our lives were founded upon to establish a firm, sound base upon which to build our future lives in Christ.** It is well worth the extra time and attention to get “mended”. It generally requires *effort* on our part.

**The two passages from II Timothy definitely lean toward the human side of the equation. Interestingly, both passages deal with studying the word of God, and developing a sound understanding of the faith.** Chapter 2, verse 15 says to “be diligent, or make every effort, to present yourself to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately (lit., ‘cutting straight’) the word of truth.” **In 2:14,16,17,23,24, Paul warns about foolish arguments, worldly and empty talk, foolish and ignorant speculations and quarrels.** These things will lead to the ruin of those involved, and leads to further undevotedness toward God. It can even upset or destroy the faith of some. **In order to not get caught up in such unprofitable things, you need to study to know what you believe, and why. There is a correct way to understand and interpret the scriptures.** As Peter says, “no prophecy of scripture is a matter of *one’s own* interpretation, because no prophecy was brought by human will, but people moved by the Spirit spoke from God” (II Pet. 1:21). We need to learn to rightly get at the truth *God intended*, not impose our own understanding on the text. **It is important to recognize that when people argue, it is not always because they are honestly searching for answers.** Often they argue to keep truth at arm’s length, or for the sport and stimulation of the interaction, or even for the feeling of power they get as they bully or mentally dominate others. **Paul advises Timothy to not argue with such people. Pray for them. By cleansing yourself from wickedness, injustice, youthful lusts and these foolish arguments, you can focus on devoting yourself to God and becoming ready to serve Him.** Then, in II Timothy 3:16,17, Paul teaches about the *purpose and benefit of reading the scriptures.* They are uniquely inspired by God (‘God-breathed’) to teach us, to convince us of error, to set us straight, and to train us in righteousness. **Their purpose is to help us become proficient and capable, to fully equip us (‘fit-out’) for every good work.** Jesus Himself had said that those who would continue in His word, would come to experientially-know the truth, and the truth would set them free from the bondage of sin (Jn. 8:31,32).

**The passage from II Thessalonians seems to emphasize the Divine side of our spiritual growth, again.** Note, once again, that this is a wish, desire or prayer. This is *not a declaration* that God *will* comfort their hearts and establish them in service. It definitely implies that He has the *ability* to comfort them and establish them, but Paul does not quite say that He *will* do that, apart from any activity on their part. In fact, **in the previous verse Paul commands them to “stand firm” and “hold fast” the traditions they were taught. This is the human side of the equation.** He doesn’t say “do this, so God will do that”. He says, “do your part” and “may God do His part”. **You can’t control or manipulate Him into doing what you want, by a certain number of prayers, or by a series of religious acts.** There is no causal connection that can be made between your religious acts and God’s action, BUT look again at this God we are describing. He is “our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father, the One having-loved us and having-given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace.” **We don’t force God to work in our lives. He does so, because He already loves us and has already given us comfort and hope, by virtue of His grace.** Paul argued in Romans 5, “If God showed us His love while we were yet sinners, *how much more* can we expect Him to act on our behalf, now that we are His” (Rom. 5:8,9). “May He establish you in every good work and word.” **We are to do our part, and we can expect that God will do His part. He will establish us in the work He has for us to do.**