

Notes for the Ekklēsia Meeting

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Oneness With God

by Dan Trygg

“...that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. ²² The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; ²³ I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.”

John 17:21-23

“...the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, ²⁷ to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸ We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man mature in Christ.”

Colossians 1:26-28

“...His divine power has granted to us all things pertaining to life and godliness, through the true-knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence. ⁴ For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature...”

II Peter 1:3-4

It is interesting to read in the gospel of John how little emphasis there is on pursuing ongoing forgiveness from sin. Once a person trusts in Christ, and takes Him as Savior and Master, the emphasis turns to *abiding in Christ, rather than getting forgiveness from sin*. Don't get me wrong, there is a high call to obedience (3:36), but the clear message is that Jesus is our *life*. If we want *life*, we need to *come to Him, trust in Him, drink from Him, gnaw on Him, abide in Him*. Apart from Him, we can do nothing. In 15:3, Jesus said that they were *already* clean, because of the word which He had spoken to them, which they had obviously received since they were following Him. As you survey the book, the emphasis is on believing that Jesus is the one sent from God, the one who takes away our sin, the one we are to trust in and follow. **More than just following, we are to abide in Him, live in Him, continue in Him. In chapter 14, the message goes a bit deeper. Jesus points out that the disciples had seen the Father, because the Father was living within Him. He then introduces the role of the Holy Spirit, who He will send to them to actually live within them (14:17). Later on in the chapter, He speaks of how He will disclose Himself to those who obey Him, and that He and the Father will come and dwell within them (14:21,23). Within the compass of just six verses, Jesus taught that all three persons of the triune God intend to come to live in them.** Chapter 15 reiterates this concept, “Abide in Me, and *I in you*...” (15:4). Finally, in chapter 17, we have the fullest, clearest expression of this idea. Jesus is praying for the future church, the ones who will truly follow Him in the centuries to come. He prays that they may be one, even as the Father is in Jesus, and Jesus is in the Father, that they may also be in Us. This is not an organizational unity He is describing, but a oneness of Spirit. He goes on to say that He has given His followers the glory that God had given to Him, so that they could be one, as He and the Father are. What is this glory? The *outshining of the Holy Spirit* (I Pet. 4:11). He goes on, “I in them, and You in Me”. Again, we are to have all three persons of the Trinity abiding in us. Why is this a prayer? Because the unity is dependent upon us abiding in God, and acknowledging His presence in others who are also abiding in God. It is God's presence in us that makes us one. Unfortunately, many Christians do *not* abide in the Spirit. Many have no real understanding of this as even a *possibility*, ...or they are just choosing to live a self-centered life, instead of learning to walk in and with the Spirit. When the people of God do start walking in the Spirit, it becomes quite evident that they are one. Their lives take on the characteristics of Jesus, and they live with humility, honesty, mercy and justice in their relationships with others. They stand out because they are living differently. They are living differently because God is operating in them.

When you survey the letters of Paul, again, you will find there is virtually no focus on asking forgiveness for our sins, once we receive Christ. Romans is undoubtedly the most systematic presentation of Paul's theology. Once he establishes that all people are sinners who are incapable of removing the stain or guilt of sin in their lives, he presents Jesus as God's answer. He was the satisfactory sacrifice that paid for our redemption from sin. Because of that, God is righteous to offer justification to all who will trust in Him as their Savior, and will align themselves with Him. Romans 5 is the transition chapter. **Having been justified by faith, we have ... , peace with God, access to grace, the hope of God's glory, and the love of God, which has been poured out within our hearts** through the Holy Spirit who was given to us (Rom. 5:1-5). Again, **having been justified..., we shall be saved from God's wrath, we were reconciled to God, and we shall be saved by His life** (vss. 9-11). He then lays out the *basis* for our freedom and victory in Christ. Just as we all were affected by Adam's sin, **Christ came as another Adam, a representative of all humanity. His acts of sacrifice and obedience are attributed and applied to all who will identify with Him by**

faith. Paul reiterates this idea again in 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, “For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.” Also from II Corinthians 5:14, “the love of Christ compels us [to proclaim the good news], being convinced that One died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.” He died for *everyone*, but those who *live* are the ones *who have accepted this gift by faith*. God’s purpose is that they would stop living for self, but for Christ. Paul goes on in chapters 6-8 of Romans to explain that **when Christ died, we died, ...when He was raised, we were raised to newness of life.** Also, **our death with Christ set us legally free from everything that used to hold us under its power.** We are free from the power of sin (Rom. 6), the obligation to the law (Rom. 7), the power of the flesh (Gal. 5:24), the authority of the powers of darkness (Col. 1:13), any sins or charges that could be levied against us (Col. 2:13-15), or any curses set against us (Gal. 3:13). **We are not obligated or bound to continue to serve or be influenced by these things. The newness of life that is ours in Christ can empower us to walk differently. And what is this “newness of life”? The birth of a new person within us, empowered and led by the indwelling Holy Spirit.** In Romans 8, Paul contrasts living by the flesh, versus living by the Spirit. The mind set on the flesh is hostile to God, does not submit to His ways, and cannot please God. **The crux of it all, the end point of Paul’s teaching on how to live as a “justified one”, is that we are to be led by the Spirit of God, who is in us.** He really emphasizes this in Galatians 5. We are to “walk by the Spirit”, be “led by the Spirit”, and bear “the fruit of the Spirit”. He says, “If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit” (Gal. 5:25). **Interestingly, the “hope of the glory of God”, mentioned in 5:2 is revisited in Paul’s thinking in Colossians 1:27. “Christ in you” is the hope of the glory.** This is the message that he was *proclaiming, reminding every person and teaching every person with all the skill he had, so that he might present every person mature in Christ.* **We come right back to John 15. Jesus is in us. If we learn to abide in Him, we will bear much fruit. The Spirit is in us. If we walk in His power and are led by Him, we will bear much fruit.**

In II Peter, the apostle tells us that **everything we need for life and good-devotion has already been given to us.** This comes through intimate, accurate knowledge of God, and through the wonderful promises He has given to us. Note that **God has called us to His own glory** (There is that word again! = “radiance, outshining”) **and excellent-virtue** (vs. 3). **How is that possible? By becoming partakers or sharers of the divine nature** (vs. 4). Here we are *again!* **God is calling us to a life that is emanating His presence, which is within us.** As we share in His nature, ...as He is in us and we are in Him..., and we live that out in our dealings in day to day living, people will see God in us. **In the verses that follow, Peter gives us a list, or a progression, of practical things we can do to move toward that goal of expressing outwardly what we have inwardly. Note that confessing our sins, or worrying about our failures, is not on the list.** It is amazing how little focus there is on that in the NT! Yet, we have made it so much of our focus. **Our focus should be on recognizing God’s presence and working inside of us, and expressing outwardly the leading of His Spirit.**

There are only two passages in the NT that mention Christians confessing their sins. I John 1:9 assures us that if we do confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us. James 5:16 is in the context of receiving prayer for sickness, suffering or weakness. In the previous verse, it mentions that the prayer of faith will save the discouraged or ill person, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed sins, they will be forgiven. In *that* context, we are encouraged to confess our sins to one another, and pray for one another, that we may be healed. That’s it! Only those two passages, yet so many of us have been worried and focused on making sure we have our slate clean, ...that we are up to date with confessing our sins. **Where does this disproportionate focus on sinful behavior come from? We can trace it back to the Roman Empire.** The Romans ruled a very expansive empire, governing many peoples and cultures. In order to maintain order, and to make sure there was consistency throughout its realm, it strictly enforced Roman law in all its provinces. It became very focused on behavior. Roman courts were not interested in customs or excuses. If you did the crime, you were punished. Not surprisingly, **Roman culture heavily influenced the Roman Catholic Church. They brought this legalistic, punishment-oriented mindset to their understanding of faith.** They developed an elaborate, hierarchical system of receiving grace from Christ, through the pope, the cardinals, the bishops, and down to the parish priests. This grace was only dispensable through the Church, usually through confession, penance, and receiving the Eucharist. The common people were taught that unless you did these things, your sins were not covered. Moreover, you needed to cover new sins by receiving additional grace from the priest at the next mass. This is not biblical theology; this was R.C. teaching. **This sin-oriented focus was passed along to other Protestant groups** that separated from the Roman Church, and still influences us today. **This is the wrong focus! We should be focused on the Christ within, learning to abide in Him and walk with the Spirit.** Interestingly, the focus of the Eastern Orthodox churches was not so much on behavior, but on becoming one with God. **Oneness with God is abiding in Christ, ...He in us and we in Him.**