

# Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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## The Demonstration of Love

by Dan Trygg

“For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown (outwardly-demonstrated) toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints. <sup>11</sup> And we desire that each one of you show (outwardly-demonstrate) the same diligence toward the full accomplishment of the hope until the end, <sup>12</sup> that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” Hebrews 6:10-12

“Therefore, before the churches, showing (outwardly-demonstrating-to) them the proof (outward-demonstration) of your love and of our boasting about you.” 2 Corinthians 8:24

“We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. <sup>17</sup> But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? <sup>18</sup> Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. <sup>19</sup> We shall know by this that we are of the truth” 1 John 3:16-19

The key to understanding each of the contexts above is that they are encouraging the readers to press in to pursue maturity, and to give expression to the life of Jesus which is in them. In each letter, the evidence of the inner life of the Spirit is the outward expressions of His inworking in their lives in practical acts of love. *Love is uniquely demonstrated through unusual acts of giving to others.* The writers of these letters were exhorting the believers to follow through in action what the Spirit of God was doing within them. Earnestness of heart, hard work and sacrifice are often required in order for love to move from the prompting of the Spirit in the inner man to become expressed outwardly in practical action.

The believers in the book of Hebrews were Jewish Christians who were apparently considering abandoning their identity as followers of Jesus, and returning to Judaism. They were experiencing persecution and hardship, because of their identification with Jesus, both by Jews and by the pagans. They had started well, choosing to live radically for Christ and to minister to the other believers (Heb. 6:10). As a result, they had endured being reproached, harassed, and unjustly treated, even to the extent of the seizure of their property for their faith in Christ (Heb. 10:32-34). Now, however, they were wavering in their faith, and had not remained as focused and zealous as they had once been. Though they had been believers for a long while, their growth had stalled out, and they had become dull and unresponsive toward God (Heb. 5:11,12). *The writer's purpose was to try to correct and refocus them, encouraging them to renew their pursuit of God's promised blessings.* Part of his argument to turn them back toward Christ was to remind them of the people in OT history who had departed from following God, and how disaster and judgment had come upon them. In chapter 6, in particular, he warned of those who repeatedly receive God's blessing, but never grow to maturity or bear fruit, but who, in fact, turn away from honoring or serving God. They are “close to being cursed, and end up being burned,” says the writer. The first passage above, immediately follows this statement. “But we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation...” (vs. 9). Why would he make this statement? Because they had borne fruit. They had demonstrated that they were genuine by the love they had shown toward God, in ministering to the believers in Christ. The word for “shown” here, means to “outwardly-demonstrate”.

Remember, *agapē* is not an emotion. It is centered in the will. It is a “choosing to benefit or prefer another person, valuing them to the extent that you are willing to sacrifice to do them good”. Because of their actions-to-serve, their heart of love was made evident, and this gave confidence to the writer that they truly were born of God. However, from that point, the writer exhorts them to move even further along toward experiencing all that God had for them in Christ. The book of Hebrews is all about the superiority of the new covenant, in comparison to the former covenant. The older covenant was only external, and was unable to change the heart. The new covenant, however, was not only able offer a complete removal of sins, but also was able to bring a change to the heart. It was this heart change that had been revealed before in their actions of love. Now, however, they should not simply “neglect” or “dawdle” in their spiritual walk. They should “show the same zeal” toward coming to experience all that God has made available for them in Christ (vs. 11). Instead of being dull and unresponsive, he exhorted them to “outwardly-demonstrate the zeal to obtain everything God made available to them.” Instead of “being sluggish” they were to “imitate those who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises.”

The second context mentioned above is from 2 Corinthians 8. There, the Corinthians had responded to a report of the need that existed among the churches of Judea. People were impoverished, and Paul had been led to take up a collection to help them from the churches of Macedonia and Achaia. When the Corinthians first heard about this, their spirits resounded in response to the Holy Spirit, and they purposed to participate in this collection. However, a year had gone by since that initial idea, so Paul had sent Titus to them, to remind them of their stated intent to help, and to help them prepare to make this a generous offering, as they had originally intended (2 Cor. 8:6-11). In other words, *Paul was exhorting them to turn their initial "love-intent" into practical action*, ...in this case, a generous gift. "But now finish the task as well, that just as there was eagerness to desire it, so there may also be a completion from what you have" (vs. 11). This provides the context for verse 24, "Therefore, before the churches, showing (outwardly-demonstrating-to) them the proof (outward-demonstration) of your love and of our boasting about you." Note again, the point that *agapē-love is demonstrated or made visible through outward action. There is no way to prove or demonstrate that you have love, unless it is expressed-outwardly in action.* Another dimension to this scenario is that Paul had *boasted about their generosity and readiness to serve* to the Macedonian churches. If they did not follow through, not only would HE be embarrassed, but *they* would be too!

The third context is from 1 John. The apostle John agrees with our two other NT authors: *Love must be expressed if it is to be genuine.* Note here that it was through the *action of God* in Jesus' sacrificial death on our behalf that the love of God became visible to us (vs. 16). *Unless we also put our love into practical, visible, tangible expression, how could anyone know we have love inside our hearts or minds?* If we *say* that we love, ...but we don't *do anything*, ...John asks, "How does the *agapē* of God abide in us?" Without the *demonstration* of love, we cannot really even know if there *is* any love in the heart or mind of another person.

**The proof of love is in our actions.** Our consistent, repeated "love-actions" establish a basis by which people will judge our sincerity and our Christlikeness. **The demonstration of genuine *agapē*-love-in-action over and over will also build a reputation** in people's minds, as they interact with us, ...both as individuals, and as a group.

This *agapē*-love will stand out because it is *not* the typical response of people. **If our love is to be different, we must develop a deeper openness and responsiveness to the Spirit of God**

**Note that all three of these passages were written to expose a lack, ...a need for attentiveness to resolve a problem in the spiritual walk of the individuals being addressed.**

In the first scenario, they had become dull and unresponsive to God. **What was needed? A repentance and renewal of the mind, and a pressing in more deeply to "inherit the promises". What promises? The promises of the new covenant.** What is the new covenant all about? God putting the law in our hearts by the indwelling, inworking presence of the Holy Spirit (Heb. 8:7-13; 2 Cor. 3:5,6).

**This new covenant dynamic is the inheritance of every Christian, but it is important to see that we need to develop and deepen that dynamic in our lives.** Like the believers in Hebrews, we can be ill-informed, or we can become lax, or be disconnected from God in our conscious minds or experience. How can we be led by the Spirit, if we cannot discern His leading? Instead of thinking that "There must be something wrong with me", please recognize that this was the condition of those people that the letter to the Hebrews was written to. This can happen to any of us. **Walking in the Spirit requires that we not be "sluggish, lazy or non-responsive" but through "faith and patience" we push forward in our spiritual walk.** Note that we must "believe" or "trust" that this is "for us". We are NOT some "special case" that is hopeless, or beyond God's interest or grace. No. This is YOUR inheritance. Go after it! **Believe God is true, ...and He meant YOU!** Then, take note of the word "patience". The word in Greek is a word meaning "distant-anger" or "anger-far-away". That is significant, because we can get frustrated and angry when we don't easily get what we are looking for. Did you ever apply that insight to your spiritual life? Do you get angry and give up? Do you get frustrated and quit trying? C'mon, now! Get your mind right. This might require some patience and self-discipline, but this life in the Spirit IS for YOU! **Don't get frustrated and give up. Believe and persist.** Through faith and patience we WILL inherit the promises, ...even the promises of discerning the Spirit's leading, and opening up the fountain of His life energy in our experience.