

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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The Vindication of Faith

by Dan Trygg

“Therefore, if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, ² make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. ³ Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; ⁴ do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mindset in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be held on to, ⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, and being made in the likeness of humans. ⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself (‘made Himself low’, or ‘lowered Himself’) by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Philippians 2:9-11

“It is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. ¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, ¹⁹ in which He went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, ²⁰ because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. ²¹ Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to Him.”

1 Peter 3:17-22

It is important to remember that **Jesus accomplished His mission, and He now sits in heaven at the Father's right hand.** He has been through way more than we will ever have to face. He took the weight of the world's sin upon Himself. **Because He was willing to empty Himself, and become a human being to identify with us, and take our place, we have the opportunity to be cleansed, forgiven, made new, set apart for God, empowered and transformed by the Holy Spirit.** The entire trajectory of our lives and destinies have been changed because of His love and obedience. **He is our Savior, our Lord, and our example.** We have been called to follow Him, and as we do, we experience more and more of what He has for us.

We, too, are here on mission for Him. He has called us to humble ourselves, to empty ourselves of our own agenda, in order to accomplish God's will by serving our brothers and sisters in Christ, and by revealing the heart of God through the good service we do in Jesus' name to those who do not yet know Him. ***Part of our Christian experience will entail suffering.*** It goes with the territory. **Jesus was called to suffer in order to accomplish His mission, ...and, as we follow Him, we will also come face to face with opposition, rejection, persecution and sacrifice.** Jesus told us to expect that. He told us we would have to deny ourselves, take up our cross daily, if we are to follow Him (Lk. 9:23).

The focus of Philippians 2 is on our ministry to one another as believers. Even to serve one another, we need to develop a mindset like Jesus demonstrated in coming here. We will need to empty ourselves of self-agenda in order to put others first. **We will need to be mindful of the needs of others, choosing at times to put the needs of others before our own.** This is important, because we are members of one another in Christ, ...brothers and sisters together in the family of God (Rom. 12:5; Eph. 2:19). If one member is hurting, we all suffer and are diminished (1 Cor. 12:26). **Our job is to help each other grow, mature, and become healthy, so that together we can accomplish God's purpose** (Eph. 4:11-16). At times, that will require that we step out of our own comfort zone. **At times, it will be inconvenient, ...and at times it will cost us something, ...at times, we will be led to make sacrifices for one another.**

The focus of 1 Peter is living our lives before those who are unbelieving, or resistant. This theme comes up over and over throughout the book. **Peter's admonition is that we are to live exemplary lives, so that those who would speak against us will be silenced, because the good deeds we do will be evident to all.** We are to arrange ourselves under the authorities in our lives, being cooperative and obedient, so as not to give them a reason to speak against us. **We are to be responsible and good citizens, workers and spouses. Sometimes this is difficult, because leaders, bosses and marriage partners can be unreasonable or selfish.** We are not to lose our cool, or fall into negative attitudes or retaliatory speech. We are to be respectful, and compliant, as much as possible. If we experience mistreatment or suffering, it should not be because of misbehavior on our part. **Sometimes, suffering is unavoidable, because people will be motivated to persecute us because of Jesus.** In

such cases, we are to remember that **Christ is our example in this, as well. He suffered unfairly, and was mistreated, yet did not strike back or talk back.** He suffered for sins, a righteous person on behalf of unrighteous people, that He might bring us to God. That should be our motivation, as well. We should not fear, or be intimidated by threats or harassment. **We should see such experiences as an opportunity to overcome evil with good** (Rom. 12:21). Rise above the level of those who would demean you. Don't answer back in kind. **Trust God to use and vindicate your faith. Ask Him to reveal Himself through your life.**

Jesus' faith was vindicated. His resurrection and exaltation *followed* His great sacrifice. ***He emptied Himself to glorify the Father, and now the Father is pleased to glorify Him.***

While even upon the cross, Jesus knew that His work was accomplished. He sensed when the debt of sin was paid. He cried out, "Tetelestai!", which means "It is finished!" or "Paid in full!" (Jn. 19:30). It was the word written upon every certificate of debt or bill that was satisfied by payment. Then, He cried out, "Father, into Your hands I entrust My spirit", and He breathed out His final breath and expired (Lk. 23:46). Immediately afterwards, **Peter tells us that, though He outwardly was put to death in the flesh, He was quickened or made alive in spirit. He went to Hades,** referred to as "the lower parts of the earth" or the "underworld", the place where all the dead from the creation of the world until that time had waited (Eph. 4:9). **He came to proclaim His victory. "Tetelestai!" "The debt of sin has been paid in full!"**

To those who were the righteous dead, this was a message of the vindication of their faith and hope in the grace of God. To those who had rebelled against God, ...those who had rejected the preaching of men like Noah and others who had called people to turn from their sin to trust in God..., ***it was a further realization of their impending judgment.*** A quote from Psalm 16:10, was applied to Jesus' resurrection by Peter at Pentecost, saying that **God did not leave Jesus' soul in Hades** (so He must have gone there), and did not allow His flesh to see decay. **At His resurrection and ascension, He took a host of captives to heaven. The righteous dead no longer had to wait in that unseen place,** and God no longer has to pass over their unaddressed sins, because the satisfaction for sin has been provided by Jesus' death (Rom. 3:25). **What a glorious day! What a vindication! The vindication of Jesus' choice to entrust Himself to the will of His Father was mighty, and far-reaching!** The Suffering Servant became the satisfactory sacrifice to solve the sin problem and vindicate the faith of the faithful from past generations, and also to save all who identify with Him in faith and baptism. **And He will continue to be the salvation of all people who are willing to believe in Him, and commit their lives and hopes to Him.**

Now, Jesus sits at the right hand of God the Father in heaven. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Him, ...all angels, authorities and powers being ordered under Him (Matt. 28:18; 1 Pet. 3:22). God has exalted His name far above every other name. *in order that* at the name of Jesus, *every knee* may bow and *every tongue* may confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Notice that **this is God's purpose. It is His agenda for the remainder of this present age. He is bringing all things under Jesus' feet, summing up all things in Christ** (1 Cor. 15:25; Eph. 1:10). It is happening *now*, ...and it will be fully actualized at the final ending of this age.

It is important for us to see ourselves, our obedience, our service, and our vindication as also summed up in Him. Just as we follow Him in a mindset of self-emptying, and even sacrificial obedience at times, **in the same way there will be an affirmation and vindication of our faith and our choices to serve Him.** Jesus said as much to His disciples. He said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.²⁹ And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, shall receive many times as much, and shall inherit eternal life" (Matt. 19:28,29). **Those of us who have identified with Him, and have faithfully lived to serve Him, will also reign with Him** (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 5:10). In fact, our place is already to be seated with Christ in the heavenly places, at the Father's right hand (Eph. 2:6; Col. 3:1).

God will vindicate our choices to trust Him and to obey Him. He delights in the faith of those who will prefer Him above all other interests, including self-comfort and self-promotion. When we are willing to be of the same mindset that Jesus had, ...when we are willing to empty ourselves in order to serve others at His leading, ...or when we are willing to walk faithfully, even when enduring ridicule or mistreatment of others..., **God sees,** ...and He will reward us. **When we honor God by our obedience, He will honor us by working on our behalf in some way. God is never a debtor to anyone.** We are only *able* to give what He has given to us. But it is His delight to *vindicate* the faith of those who trust in Him. **Often the fruit of sacrifice is far-reaching!**