

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Fitted-Out For The Work

by Dan Trygg

“...may He equip y'all in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.” Hebrews 13:21

“...for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ...” Ephesians 4:12

“All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness,¹⁷ so that the person of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:16-17

“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,⁷ casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you.⁸ Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.⁹ But resist him, firm in the faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brothers and sisters who are in the world.¹⁰ And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect (equip), confirm, strengthen and establish you.¹¹ To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.” 1 Peter 5:6-11

We have been looking at the Greek word, *katartizō*, translated as “equip” in the above passages. It is the word Paul used for the process of discipling new believers, “...to *complete*” what was lacking in their faith (1 Thess. 3:10). It was used to describe the process of “mending” believers wounded by life or “restoring” those who are entrapped in sin (Gal. 6:1, cf. Matt. 4:21). It is used to depict the need to become “matured” in order to develop the same perception and purpose in our thoughts (1 Cor. 1:10), so that we would be united. The kind of perspective and mindset that disciples of Christ will establish as they follow Him, will be very different than the mindset and purpose of people in this world (Lk. 6:27-40). As we pursue Jesus, and learn from Him, we will be “fitted out” or “trained” to have the same mind and heart that He has. **We will come to be like Him.** As disciples, ...active followers, apprentices, and practitioners-in-training..., we *want* to see and perceive things as He did, and learn to operate like Him (Jn. 14:12).

The passages we are looking at in today's study focus on becoming “equipped” or “fitted-out” for the work God calls us to do. This is an important concept. If we are going to be able to do what God intends for us, we need the tools, skills and understanding to successfully face that challenge or complete that task. We do not start out as new believers with those abilities. We must be “fitted-out” for the work through a variety of avenues and experiences.

Hebrews 13:21 is part of a prayer that God would equip us. Note the extent or reach of the author's thought: “May God... equip y'all”. **We all need to be equipped, or fitted out. No one comes fully prepared. It is like our natural life.** We all come into the world as helpless babies. We all need to learn basic skills and understanding to navigate in this world. As we mature, we will obtain a variety of skills and abilities that enable us to do different things. **No one has the same skill set or abilities as anyone else. We are all different.** Our skills and abilities can cover a broad array of possibilities. **Some skills are general, and most people become competent in them. Other skills are highly specialized.** Those who have those skills can be effective in ways that others would not be prepared for. **Special needs require specialized skills and understanding.** It is the way things are.

When a person is first born into Christ, he or she is a new creature. There is much about the new life of the Spirit of God that must be learned. **There are skills and understanding that must be acquired in order to get to know God, learn how to walk in the Spirit, develop the ability to help and support others, and learn to walk effectively as a Christian.** So much depends on the spiritual environment we grow up in, and our own initiative in pursuing growth. Hopefully we will be encouraged to discover and implement our spiritual gifts.

In Hebrews 13, the focus is on **God's part of that equation.** The prayer is about Him preparing us for what He has in mind for us to do. **At the same time, the fact that this is a prayer or a “wish”, implies that we have an active part in this equation, as well.** It is *not* something we can simply take for granted. Can we assume that the observation of James, the brother of Jesus, applies here, as well? “You do not have because you do not ask” (4:2). The way that this is expressed as a potentiality implies that **we should be asking God to do this in our lives**, and the lives of those we are in relationship with. It would seem that if we do not ask, this equipping process may not take place. **Possibly some things having to do with our being “equipped in every good thing to do His will” require our desire or interest. If we are not interested in doing His will, why would He “equip us”?** The language implies a cooperative partnership.

Clearly, the language implies that God is *able* to equip us with every advantageous and beneficial ingredient to accomplish His desire. Notice that the focus of His action is in “doing *in us* the thing that well-pleasing before Him, by means of Jesus Christ.” **The “fitting out” process will come from His action within us as individuals, or among us as a group.** We so often read the scriptures from an individualistic viewpoint, when it is expressed in pluralistic language. **Could it be that God will do something among us, as a body, that will equip us with the**

skills and abilities we need to do what God desires for us as a team? Again, maybe this needs to be a prayer for a *group* of believers, because God's desire is to create a network or team of believers to accomplish His will. In any case, **the purpose of His action *within us* is to apply it *outwardly*.** Like Philippians 2:12,13, **God will work something *within us* what He intends for us to "work out" in actions of service to others or obedience to Him.**

In Ephesians 4, it is the ministry of the "word gifts", ...apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor-teachers..., that are used to "fit out" the believers for the work of service, unto the building-up or edification of the body of Christ. It is important to parse this correctly. **The people with the "word gifts" help equip *everybody* in the body to do the work.** Those "word gift" people are *not* the be-all and the end-all. **Their role is to help all of us understand our calling as believers, what God has made available to us in Christ, and help us to get prepared to step into our roles as functioning members of the body.** We all have different gifts, and different callings, ...and we will function in different ways..., but we are *all* to help one another to be supported, encouraged, strengthened and matured in Christ. As Paul lays out how this is supposed to work, he gives us some very important objectives and parameters to help us understand what kind of equipping we may need. **The goal is for each one of us, and all of us, to come to a "unity of the faith, an experiential knowledge of the Son of God, and to become a mature person", like Jesus in our character.** So, we are all to come to (1.) a fundamental and unified understanding of at least basic theology; (2.) a personal interactive relationship with Jesus; and (3.) to become like Jesus in our character and how we interact with others. Paul's description does not end there, however. He says that **we are to grow up in every way into Christ, who is the head of the body, such that He can direct us in how to express the truth and reality of Jesus to one another in practical ways, so that the body of Christ is built up through the ministry of each and every one of its parts, ...by you and me!** Those with the "word gifts" help us to learn about Jesus, and to find our place of ministry in the body, in order to develop a healthy interactive community of love that strengthens and supports each one.

In 2 Timothy 3, we are specifically told that **the scriptures are uniquely inspired by God ("God-breathed"), and are profitable to teach us, reprove us, correct us and train us so that we would become equipped ("fitted-out") for every good work.** They are a powerful resource for growth. Anyone who is serious about following Jesus should take advantage of their special effectiveness in helping us grow. You will notice, however, that **they are not just to teach us information.** Many of us approach the scriptures primarily as a source of information *about* God's activity in history, and to understand more *about* who He is and what He has done. If you look closer at the description of their usefulness, you will see that **there is much more.** **They are useful to reprove us, ...to confront us when we are in the wrong. Then, they are helpful to direct us in getting back on course, to set us on the right path. Next, they can help to "train us".** Training is a process of behavioral change. The scriptures can help us to learn to live differently in our daily lives. Of course, **if we are interacting with other believers who use the scriptures to teach, encourage, correct and remind us, then we can combine the power of the word of God with the interactive people of God.** They can help us apply the word in our lives, as they instruct, correct, and hold us accountable using the scriptures. As we pray, **God's Spirit will also use His word to speak into our lives,** reveal things, and give us new understanding.

The passage from 1 Peter 5 indicates that **God will use difficulty, suffering and even spiritual warfare to deepen our spiritual walk, to establish our character, and to equip us in new ways.** Learning to submit ourselves to God's care and oversight, even in the midst of opposition, unfairness and injustice, is a discipline that will test and can enlarge our faith, if we continue to defer to God in such times. Romans 5:3-5 and James 1:2-4 both describe the deepening and solidifying process that comes when we endure trials, ...if we remain consistent. We often don't start out maintaining our sweetness in Jesus, in our early exposures to trials. **But that is the goal. God wants us to become like Jesus, ...to not react in kind to those who are abusive or disrespectful to us. When we learn to lean harder on the Holy Spirit, we develop more endurance, and His fruit becomes more prevalent in our lives.** Our character becomes established and firmed up in Jesus. We find that we are not so easily stirred up and irritated by discomfort or disrespect. We can more easily withhold an unkind word, ...or even return a negative action with patience and kindness. This reveals Jesus because it is so out of character for our natural human selves. God uses these kinds of trials to reveal to us how deep we are in our walk with Him, and to cause us to humble ourselves even more. James tells us that we are to direct our thoughts to what is joyful, when we encounter trials, knowing that such tests will actually help us grow in steadfastness. Then he adds, "...but let steadfastness have its complete work, that you may be mature, full-recipients of the inheritance, lacking in nothing" (2:4). **There is something to be gained in going through these trials with humility, faith and consistency.** Peter adds to James' thought by saying, "After you have suffered for a while, God will 'fit-you-out', stand you up, strengthen you and firmly establish you" (1 Pet 5:10). **We become equipped with new abilities, having endured the test.** One of the areas specifically mentioned is spiritual warfare. We tend not to take it very seriously, until we have experienced it. The pressure of the enemy drives us to find answers. Once we learn how to defend ourselves, he cannot continue to easily defeat us.