

# Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc [www.dtminc.org](http://www.dtminc.org) Today's Date: January 15, 2012

## Hold On Tight!

by Dan Trygg

“And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, in evil deeds, <sup>22</sup> yet He has now reconciled you in the body of His flesh through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach-- <sup>23</sup> if indeed you continue in the faith having-been-founded and firmly-settled, and not being-moved-away from the hope of the gospel that you heard, the one being proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a servant.” Colossians 1:21-23

This selection from Colossians is one of those passages that contains so much in a brief compass of words.

**It describes our pre-Christian condition.** We were alienated from God, ...hostile in mind regarding His purpose for our lives, ...immersed in selfish, evil living. We had no interactive relationship with our Creator, ...we had no interest in, and were even resistant toward, seeing things from God's perspective, ...and we were engaged in behaviors that were unhealthy and detrimental. We had no time for God, ...our interests were at cross purposes to His will, ...and we were living as though He did not exist.

**It describes what God did for us through Jesus.** This part begins with a strong, emphatic adverb of time and contrast, “yet *now*” or “but *now*”. *In spite of* our past state of affairs, our negative pre-Christian condition, *God chose* to reconcile us to Himself. The word for “reconcile” means to alter or transfer from one state of relationship to another. God reached out to us. He took the initiative to alter the state of our relationship. Note where this act of reconciliation took place, “...in the body of His flesh” (I Pet. 2:24). How? “Through death”. The death of Christ. Our death in and with Christ (Rom. 6:3-8; Col. 2:12,20; 3:3; Gal. 2:20). This reconciliation did not come cheaply. It was not just a small change of mind on God's part. It required the life of God's unique Son. “...you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver and gold (the normal payment for a ransom or redemption) from the futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with the precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ” (I Pet. 1:18,19). The language in Colossians emphatically states that we are *now* redeemed and reconciled. Our current state is *forgiven, free*, with open *fellowship* with God available to us, ...all by means of Jesus' death.

**It describes God's purpose for us, ...our destiny in Him. God's desire is to cause us to be holy, blameless and beyond reproach. This is our sanctification.** God does not just forgive us, He is working to transform us. He not only cleanses us in the blood of Christ, He is working within us to clean up our walk. **There are three aspects to this. There is positional sanctification, progressive sanctification and perfect sanctification. (1.) We are already sanctified, set apart, dedicated to God, from the moment we choose to align ourselves with Jesus Christ.** We receive the righteousness of Christ as a gift, by faith, and we are *justified*. Legally, we are acquitted from all charges and declared righteous, ...*just-as-if-I'd never sinned*. Our identity and orientation change at the moment of repentance and faith. We *were* citizens of the kingdom of darkness; *now* our citizenship has been transferred to the Kingdom of God. *Before*, we were serving only self, sin and the devil; *now*, we are servants of the Most High. **This is our legal standing. It is our position in Christ. We have been sanctified through the body of Jesus**, as we have appropriated that gift by faith (Heb. 10:10; Acts 26:18; I Cor. 1:2; 6:11). If you didn't “sign up” to be *dedicated* to God when you called out to God to save you, then possibly you aren't really saved, or at least you need to come to grips with this reality. God's offer of salvation is all about this. This is where the “narrow way” leads, to a destiny of devotedness and service to God. **(2.) There is a process of ongoing, continual growth in grace, understanding, Christian character and personal holiness that takes place throughout our lives as believers**, as we learn to walk out our salvation in personal experience (Heb. 2:11; I Thess. 3:11-4:5; Rom 12:2; II Pet.1:2-11). **This is called progressive sanctification.** This means that we do not become perfect or mature all at once, when we receive Christ. Instead, God intends to expand the work of His Spirit's influence throughout our lives, bit by bit, as we learn to walk with Him. Again, the apostle John points to the evidence of change in one's life as evidence of genuine conversion (I Jn. 2:3-5; 3:14). If there is no fruit, is there really any true life of the Spirit? **(3.) When Jesus returns, we will be fully transformed into the character and likeness of Jesus.** Our old, sinful nature will fall away, and we will bear and express the image and character of Christ, without hindrance or distraction. At that time, we will be fully sanctified, perfect, without sin. Then the fullness of what God intended for us in salvation will finally be seen, and we will serve Him with complete joy and devotion. **This is perfect sanctification** (Phil 1:6; I Jn. 3:2; I Thess. 5:23,24; I Cor. 15:42-53). I don't think we will sit around heaven just strumming harps and singing, but one thing I do know is that heaven will be a place where *everyone* is completely dedicated to serving and honoring God. I hope that is your heart *now*.

**This passage also describes *how we can excel in the process of sanctification now*.** This is the secret of spiritual growth, victory and fruitfulness in the Christian life. It may sound very simplistic at first, but, even as Paul describes it here, it is clear that there are depths or levels of understanding, appreciation and experience to be explored. **He writes, “...if indeed you *continue in the faith*...”** The word translated as “continue in” is a word that literally means “abide upon”, “remain upon”, “stay on” or “persist in”. The tense is ongoing, so **the word picture strongly advocates living and dwelling based on faith.** This may still not say much to you, yet, but when you consider the next three descriptive words, you begin to discern that there is something more here than what you might just get from a surface read-over. These next words are adjectives agreeing with the subject, making them almost like pronouns here. Let’s look briefly at each one, and then make some comments.

**“Having been founded”.** The word is from a verbal root for laying a foundation. The word indicates that the “you” are to be “ones having been founded or established in faith”. The word indicates a process of clearing land, digging out a place for a foundation, and carefully and thoroughly setting each stone in place with cement. The word picture here is figurative, of course, but **it implies that we are to consciously labor to carefully and thoroughly establish a good, solid, stable foundation for the life of faith.**

**“firmly-settled”.** The word picture here is of a foundation that has been built and has had time to settle and become fixed in place. Figuratively, **this means that our understanding has become solid, firm, settled and unwavering. This is a by-product of time and testing, as well as of searching out answers to questions and discovering insights and experiences that confirm your beliefs.**

**“not being-moved away from the hope of the good news”.** The word for “being-moved” implies being shaken, changed, altered or moved by something. **The implication is that there is force or pressure being put upon you to attempt to move you to abandon your belief. It refers to being *dislodged* from your abiding place of faith. We are not to allow anything to cause us to abandon our hope, or to dislodge us from our trusting focus on God. “Dislodge” is an interesting word, because it literally means to cause us to stop dwelling or abiding in the truth we know. “Dis-lodge” means to get us to “move out from the dwelling place where we were abiding”.**

**It is important to see that Paul is *not* talking primarily about doctrinal facts. He is talking about *applied faith*, about “abiding in Christ” in practical experience.** When you look at this passage from *this* point of view, then we see that Paul is saying that *we need to lay a good experiential foundation for our faith, get it established or firmly-settled in the crucible of life experience and testing, and not allow anything to divert our attention from Jesus as our Source.* If we can be pushed out or beat down by opposition, or lured away by distraction, the result is the same. **If we are not getting our life from Jesus, we will soon be able to tell. The works of the flesh will soon begin to surface, instead of the fruit of the Spirit** (Gal. 5:19-23).

Unfortunately, I don’t think many people really understand what the hope of the gospel *is*, or *how it works*. In Galatians 5:1-6, Paul had to address a problem in the Galatian churches, where they had been lured off target by religious leaders who diverted their attention from Jesus to their performance. The subtle thing is that **a changed life, a more righteous life, is to be *the fruit of a walk of faith in Christ, change from the inside-out*.** In these churches, however, the false teachers turned things around, so that people were not looking to Jesus for His leading or strength. They were trying to be righteous from the outside-in, instead of from the Spirit inside of them. They were trying to keep the Law, by their own self-strength and understanding, instead of allowing God to direct, empower and lead them. As a result, Paul wrote, “You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. <sup>5</sup> **For we through the Spirit, by faith, are *waiting for the hope of righteousness*.** <sup>6</sup> **For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love**” (Gal. 5:4-6). It appears that the Galatians had fallen into trying to live by their own abilities and understanding, instead of asking God to reveal His will and wait for His prompting. As a result, they had bypassed Christ, and were left to their own resources.

**It is valuable to see that being empowered and directed by the Spirit *can* mean that we have to *wait, at times*.** God’s provision is not always present when *we* want it to be. God is always on time, but often He waits until what seems to be the last minute, or even past the time when we thought we needed an answer. It is our perspective that is off, or our impatience or uncertainty that makes it difficult to wait. Learning to trust that God knows what is best, and that He will always work it out, is so important to be able to not “jump ship” and take matters into our own hands. **Waiting for God to act is a common experience for people of faith.** There are over 30 passages that refer to “waiting on God”. That goes *so* against the flesh! **We are to walk by *faith*, not by sight or feeling.** So, our faith needs to be solidly founded, firmly established, and we are to hold on tight to God’s promises, until we see His answer or direction. “Therefore, return to your God, observe kindness and justice, and wait for your God continually” (Hos. 12:6).