

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

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Walking In The New Life

by Dan Trygg

“...in reference to your former manner of life, you put away the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, ²³ and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴ and put on the new self, the one created according to God in righteousness and holiness of the truth. ²⁵ Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth, each one of you, with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.”

Ephesians 4:22-25

“the goal of our instruction is love from a clean heart and a good conscience and an unhypocritical faith.” 1 Timothy 1:5

“This charge I entrust to you... [that] you may fight the good fight, ¹⁹ keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.

1 Timothy 1:18-19

“If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; ⁷ but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son continually-cleanses us from all sin.”

1 John 1:6-7

How do we walk in the reality and power of the new life of Christ that is in us? We hear and read many, many exhortations to do so, but **sometimes it is not exactly clear *what* we are supposed to do, or *how* to do it.** “I believe that Jesus died for me to make an entirely different way of living possible, but *how can I get a handle on that?* I’ve been *learning about* the Bible, how God worked in history to bring about a mighty salvation in Christ, and I am *familiar with* a lot of the passages that describe what the new life is supposed to look like, but ***I feel like I am missing a connection somewhere.*** I feel like it is just so much intellectual information. I ‘believe and pray’ and ‘believe and pray’, but *it seems like it only takes me so far, ...or at least I feel like I am at a plateau in my spiritual life that I can’t seem to move beyond.*” Does this sound familiar? Can you relate to these feelings and frustrations? Let’s break things down a bit to see if we can help uncover some practical ways of learning to walk in the new life.

We have to begin with some foundational principles. Paul laid out *the basis for the new life in Christ in Romans 5.* He said **Jesus was like a second Adam**, a person who represented and embodied the entire human race in some way. We can kind of understand how Adam’s sin affected all succeeding generations. The sin nature is like a spiritual genetic defect that Adam and Eve brought on themselves by their choice, but it is passed on to all of their descendants. What Paul is arguing is that Jesus was a similar figure, **a representative-head, One who could also represent and embody all of humanity who would associate with Him.** Jesus could take into Himself all the sins of the entire world, ...past, present and future..., and offer Himself as a sacrifice to redeem anyone who would choose to identify with Him as their head and Source for life. Here is an important distinction, however. Although the payment has already been made on behalf of all, it will only be applicable to those who choose to come under Christ’s covering and leadership. **The provision is already there, ...like a trust fund or an escrow account..., and the offer is made to each and every person in Adam’s family, but only those who choose to accept God’s provision by faith will be able to be identified with Christ and receive the benefits that come to those associated with Him.** This may seem like a strange concept, but it is happening all around us in today’s society. For example, there is a mother I know with two sons from two different fathers. One father has medical insurance. The other father is not really in the picture, and has no insurance plan for his son. The first dad knows and loves *both* boys. He has spent way more time with the other man’s son than the boy’s real father has invested. In fact, the second son calls him “my dad”, even though he is not really his father. Dad #1 would really like to provide medical coverage for the second boy, but the insurance company will not cover him because he is *not the physical or legal child* to their policyholder. However, **if the identification and guardianship of the boy’s physical father were terminated and transferred to the other father, who loved him, by legal adoption, then the boy would qualify to be covered by the benefits that belong to the adopted father.** In another example, a person may live in the United States, and have dual citizenship here and in another foreign country. In such a scenario, the person is obligated to keep the laws of *both* countries, unless he or she renounces their citizenship of one of the countries. In some cases, even if the person were to renounce the citizenship of the other country, that country may still try to enforce legal demands on that person, if he or she were within that country’s jurisdiction. **Typically, you are under the auspices of whichever country you are legally identified with as a citizen,** and your benefits and responsibilities are determined by the laws of that country. **In each of these examples, benefits and responsibilities come with your association with someone else.** By faith and new birth, ***we are legally associated with Jesus, and the benefits and responsibilities associated with being in Christ belong to us. The legal rights of our former heritage and citizenship have been severed, and we have an entirely new legal standing, with new rights, privileges and opportunities. This is the legal foundation for our walk in Christ.***

From this basis, Paul says, **“Reckon yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus”** (Rom. 6:11). The word translated as “reckon” is a hugely significant word. Its basic meaning is “to think according to logical rules”, but it was commonly used to “compute, add up, calculate” a column of numbers, and then to “credit, or set down to one’s account” the sum total of what was computed. So, **we are to logically evaluate and count ourselves to be dead to sin and alive to God. It is a fact, ...as clear and as reliable as 2+2=4!** Take it to the bank! Count on it! This is not some mind game, or wishful thinking. This is the clear result of our transfer of identity in Christ. We don’t have that old father, any more. We have a new Father! So, what does “Count on it!” look like? In our illustration, it would mean, “Go to the doctor. You have medical insurance.” In other words, see yourself as a child of God, and act like it. Don’t keep seeing yourself as the street urchin, or the child of the “deadbeat dad”. **See yourself as a child of the Holy God, ...find out what that means, ...and live up to the full measure of what He makes available to you.** No longer grovel in the hovel. Lift up your head, throw back your shoulders, and act like the King’s kid you are!

If that is true, ...and it *is*..., the rest follows from that premise. **Secondly, put off the old person, with its evil practices.** That is what we just said above. Stop acting like the old person you were. **Put off the old identity, the old self-perception. You are not that old person any more.** You have been made new. You have been reborn. **Stop acting the old way.** Stop giving your members to express sin. You don’t serve that old master, any more.

Third, renew your thinking. It is interesting that Paul refers to this in two separate ways. He says, “Be renewed in the spirit of your mind”, and he also says, “be transformed by the *renewing of your mind*”. The first instance refers to **getting a fresh, young attitude or outlook.** The second is to **get a mind or perception that is of an entirely different sort than you had before.** It is interesting that when Jesus was talking about who would be great in the Kingdom of God, He mentioned that it would be those who would “come to be as the youngest” (Lk. 22:26), that is, they would be teachable, inquisitive and eager to learn, ...not stuffy, jaded or pretentious. **We begin to be able to learn to walk in our new identity when we can obtain a fresh, eager interest and curiosity about what God has made available to us.** When we are proud, stuffy, *self-controlled* or think we can manage on our own, then we will miss out on the resources God has for us, or how to live differently. **We need an entirely different mind or perception of reality if we are going to be able to tap into the power of God within us.** His ways are not like ours (Isa. 55:8,9), and He does not always operate as we might expect. We need to become very teachable, humble and learn to watch for how He works, instead of proceeding in the familiar ways we know. If we want to learn to be different, then we have to *learn*. This implies investigation, observation, study, examination, experimentation and inquiry. We need to be teachable, and we need information or perspective that we do not currently have.

Fourth, put on the new identity, along with the attitudes and behaviors that are associated with it. Here is where you have to see what God says is true about you now, and get comfortable seeing yourself that way. **What does it mean to be a son or daughter of God? How do you suppose a child of God would act? Try that on for size.** That is not just a figure of speech. That is actually the language Paul uses. He says, “put on”, like you would put on a set of clothing. **In fact, that may be a helpful exercise. Consciously “take off” the old identity. “Take up” and “put on” your new identity as a child of the Holy King of the universe.** The King’s kids are not all “hoity-toity” or arrogant. They are full of graciousness, very approachable and down to earth. How do I know? Because that is what our big brother, Jesus, is like, ...and we are going to be conformed to *His* image and character (Rom. 8:32; I Jn. 3:2).

Fifth, become attentive to communication from God. Jesus said that He did what He saw the Father doing. The Father revealed His actions to Jesus because He loved and delighted in Him (Jn. 5:19,20). Because we have believed in and loved Jesus, He says that the Father Himself loves and delights in us in this same way (Jn. 16:27). Can we not expect that He will reveal *to us* what He is doing, even as He did for Jesus? **We also need to be tuning in to the leading of the Spirit.** Paul said that the children of God are led by the Spirit (Rom. 8:14). Just as Jesus did not come to do His own will, but the will of Him who sent Him (Jn. 6:38), in the same way as a child of the King we should be seeking to do the Father’s will. **Trust that the Holy Spirit will infiltrate your thinking, as you seek to listen to God’s heart.** He has been given to us to reveal the things of God to us (I Cor. 2:12). Certainly, one of the “things of God” would include the will of God, don’t you think?

Sixth, consciously do what you perceive is God’s prompting in you, even if it feels very different than what you are used to. That *is* what we want, isn’t it? *Change? Growth?* Doesn’t that mean “different”? Notice that here is where the rubber meets the road. Here is where you become the son or daughter of God in *action*, not just in *thought*. Remember, too that we often discover God’s will, ...or develop skill in doing it..., by experimentation (Rom. 12:2).

Seventh, listen carefully to your conscience. Walk with scrupulous integrity. Note the verses at the top of this study. They emphasize maintaining a good conscience, and walking in the light. **Compromise and hypocrisy are death to intimacy with God and walking in the new life. We must highly regard truth within our hearts, and integrity in our outer actions.** God will not tolerate phoniness or double-mindedness. If we live up to the truth we know, God will reveal more to us. If we disregard what we know is true, it shows that He is not first in our lives.