

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc. www.dtminc.org

Entrusting Yourself to God

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.”

Philippians 2:1-8

“Be subordinate to every human institution because of the Lord, ...¹⁸ Household slaves, subordinate yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the cruel. ¹⁹ For this is grace, if because of consciousness of God, someone bears up under sorrows of suffering unjustly. ²⁰ For what credit is there if you endure when you sin, and are beaten (or, harshly-treated)? But when you are doing good and suffering, if you endure, this is grace from God. ²¹ For you were called to this, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in His steps. ²² He did not commit sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth; ²³ when strongly-insulted, He did not revile in return; when suffering, He did not threaten, but kept-committing Himself to the One who judges righteously.”

1 Peter 2:13,18-22

“But Mary said, ‘Behold, the slave of the Lord. May it come to be to me according to your word.’”

Luke 1:38

Paul encourages us to think like Jesus thought, ...to have the same mindset Jesus had. There were two outstanding characteristics of Jesus’ mindset that stand out for me: **(1.) He was willing to empty Himself of His own power, rights and position, ...His own interests..., in order to provide for our deepest needs, ...reconciliation with God. He was willing to abandon Himself to the Father’s care and plan, even though it would mean giving up so much. (2.) He set His face like flint to accomplish the Father’s will (Isa. 50:7; Lk. 9:51). Even though it meant misunderstanding, insult, abuse, humiliation, suffering and death, He was determined to fulfill the plan and purpose of God for His life. As He faced each challenge, He kept entrusting Himself to the Father’s care and purpose.**

This doesn’t play well to our modern American ears. This goes against so much of our self-interest and self-promotion. But *this* is the example of Jesus, ...and the footsteps we are called to follow. We want to protect ourselves, guard our dignity, pursue what is easy, comfortable and what will benefit us, in the immediate future. In our flesh, we want to get *God* to do things for *us*. The gospel message is that *God has done something for us, and if we want what He has provided, we accept His freely offered gift of salvation on His terms. The terms are that we will no longer live for ourselves but for Him who died and rose on our behalf* (2 Cor. 5:15). We choose Him as our Lord.

God is asking us to allow *Him* to lead *us*, and direct *us*. He is asking that we trust ourselves to Him, even if it leads us into areas of risk, humiliation, difficulty and hardship. It is not that He wants to leave us there. No. He wants us to trust Him to utilize our self-giving, self-yielding obedience to *accomplish something greater*, ...something that could only come through sacrifice, ...or to *reveal something that is very unnatural*, ...something that only makes sense if there is something more than this world. ***The power of the resurrection is only released when we have surrendered to the power of the cross.*** The new life in the Spirit is most clearly and plainly revealed when we voluntarily choose to empty ourselves of our fleshly power and self-will, and, in obedience to God, choose to walk as a servant, ...when by all natural accounts and expectations we otherwise wouldn’t.

This is *not* a new teaching. It is, rather, a more clear application of what Jesus told those who were interested in associating with Him. This was Jesus’ *invitation* to the pathway of *discipleship*. He said, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny (disregard, disown) himself (the soul or natural-life of him), and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever might wish to save his life (the soul, self or natural-life of him) he will destroy it (ruin it, kill it, lose it); but whoever might destroy (ruin, kill, lose) his life (the soul, self or natural-life of him) on account of Me, this person will save (rescue, preserve, deliver, liberate) it” (Lk. 9:23,24). Just think how your spiritual life would be different if *that* was the primary message *you* received about what it meant to “follow Jesus”! ***We tell people to go to church, read their Bible and pray. Jesus tells them to lay their lives down!***

In 1 Peter 2, the apostle instructs us to be subordinate to every human institution because of the Lord Jesus. First, he referred to governmental authorities, ...kings, governors, or other officials. ***Why?*** Because it is the Lord’s will that by doing what is good, we might silence (lit., ‘muzzle’) the ignorance of unthinking people. ***God wants to remove any source of objection or complaint against us, by our compliance and good behavior, ...especially through good deeds done above and beyond duty or expectation. How can they speak against us, if everyone sees us as good,***

helpful citizens? Peter wrote, “Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants (lit., ‘slaves’) of God” (vs. 16). **We are to act as free people, but our freedom is not an excuse for defiance.** It means that, **as slaves of God, we can freely empty ourselves of pride and defiance and yield to governing authorities out of our loyalty to Christ.** It is the will of our heavenly Master that we subordinate ourselves to them.

Secondly, he told household-slaves to subordinate themselves under their masters. It is significant that Peter addresses Christian slaves in this manner. **The apostle Paul had written to Christian slaves in Ephesus and Colossians, telling them to “obey” their masters, then addressing the attitude of the heart** (Eph. 6:5-8; Col. 3:22-25). Although their obedience was a response to an order, it was not simply to be external. They were to serve their masters from their hearts, as if they were serving the Lord Himself, with sincerity and good will. Their attitude, energy and positivity would reveal Jesus. **Here, Peter approaches it from a different direction. He tells them to “order themselves under their masters with all respect”,** using another form of the word, “be subordinate”, from verse 13. This particular form means that they are to voluntarily yield themselves under (“arrange themselves under”) their masters. The emphasis of the form of the word is on their free choice to do this. **Then, he adds the further challenge that they are to do this, whether their master was good and gentle, or if they were crooked and unreasonable. Why? Because the grace of God is more clearly evident when a person, due to a consciousness of God, bears up under the pain and sorrow of suffering unfairly.** To make his point even more clear, Peter adds, “What credit is there if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure that, ...but if you are doing what is good and are suffering for it, and you remain steadfast, *this* is grace from God!” **The respectful attitude even in the face of unfair treatment more clearly reveals the grace of God!**

Then Peter draws the connection to Jesus! He says, **“You were called to this!” Why? Because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example to follow in His steps!** This is part of the walk to the cross, the path of discipleship. This is what Jesus was talking about, when He invited people to follow Him. “You must deny yourself, take up *your* cross, and follow Me.” **What happened to Jesus?** He did not sin. He did not lie. He did nothing wrong, ...in fact, He was doing a lot of good, helping a lot of people. Nevertheless, He was arrested, falsely accused, beaten and mistreated. **How did HE handle this unfair situation?** When He was insulted, He did not hurl insults in return. When He was unfairly treated and was suffering, He did not curse or threaten those who were mistreating Him. He did not retaliate, and He forbade His followers to do so. **What did He do in the face of all this unwarranted ill treatment?** “He kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously.” **He kept trusting that God was in control, and He knew what He was doing. He believed that something greater would come into being if He was willing to lay His life down for us.** He saw Himself to be like a grain of wheat. He said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains by itself alone. But, if it dies, it bears much fruit” (Jn. 12:24). **We are part of the fruit of His choice to empty Himself, and entrust Himself to the Father’s will. The only way to forgiveness and new life for us was through that cross.** And, through it all, people were amazed that He did not get angry, retaliate, complain, or even defend Himself. **He knew what His mission was, and He underwent mistreatment, suffering, and even death with grace and patience. All the while, He kept entrusting Himself to God.**

We aren’t slaves, but we all have authorities in our lives, of one kind or another. And we are in a world of unkind, unfair and abusive people. Peter is right, ...Jesus *did* leave us an example. He is our role model. But He is more than just a role model for *when* or *if* such a thing *might* happen in our lives. This is not just an academic lesson, a thought experiment for our brains. **Jesus is going to bring us into situations and relationships where the pathway of His footsteps will lead in a different direction than our fleshly compass might want to take us.** As we follow Him, ...if we really *do* follow Him..., He will call us to “get out of the boat”, so to speak. **He will challenge us with people and circumstances that will require that we die to our own pride and empty ourselves of our comfort.** He will lead us into situations where we will be misunderstood, gossiped and slandered about, ...maybe even where we have been cheated, threatened and mistreated. **Our response will either show people the beautiful grace of God, or the ugly flesh of our humanity.** God wants to reveal *Himself* through *our* lives.

The pathway of discipleship leads us to progressively deeper places, if we are willing to go where God would call us to go, ...and do what He would ask us to do. Maturity is not learned in a day. Even Jesus Himself had to learn. He had to grow to maturity, not only physically and mentally, but also spiritually. Hebrews 5:7-9 describes a process of development in His own life, where He learned through suffering. **Who were His teachers? Who did He go to for support and instruction?** How did He learn to empty Himself, and entrust Himself to Him who judges righteously? His earthly parents, Joseph and Mary, were prepared by God to become the ones to be role models for Jesus, as He grew up in their home. **Joseph exemplified immediate obedience** in his responses to the revelations of God’s will in His life, and **Mary exemplified the precious attitude of voluntary subordination to the will of God...**

“Behold, the slave of the Lord. May it come to be to me according to your word.”