

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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The Redemptive Purpose

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... ¹² Therefore, my beloved, ...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for God is the One inworking in you, both the ‘to-desire’ and the ‘to-work’ for His good pleasure. ¹⁴ Do all things without grumbling or disputing, ¹⁵ that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast to the word of life...” Philippians 2:1-8,12-15

“Who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Do not fear what they fear, nor be troubled, ¹⁵ but set apart Christ the Lord in your hearts, always being prepared to make a reasoned-defense to anyone who asks you for an account for the hope that is in you; ¹⁶ yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. ¹⁷ For 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...”

1 Peter 3:13-18

There is a purpose higher than our own selves, ...our own self-comfort or our own self-interests. While most people may not be thinking about any purpose beyond these things, **those of us who are Christ-followers are to develop a consciousness and mindset that is looking beyond mere self-interest. We are to develop a mindset like Jesus Himself had.** Jesus' mindset was to be willing to set aside His own comfort, power, status, and privilege in order to come among us as a human being. His mission was to reveal the heart of God by His good works, character and teachings, and, finally, to lay His life down on our behalf. **There was purpose behind everything that He did. The purpose was to honor the Father by serving us.**

In Philippians 2, the apostle Paul applies this mindset to our relationships with one another in the body of Christ. He exhorts us to develop a Christlike mindset in our relationships with one another. The basis for this is the *encouragement* we have received from Christ, the *comfort* of His love, and the *empowering-partnership* of the Spirit. **Apart from the personal impact of God's life and love inside of us, we would not be able to walk the Jesus-walk.** *That* is the power that enables us to begin to think differently, to empathize with others, and to experience compassion. **Because of these inner changes, Paul encourages us to take the next step, which is to develop a mindset like Jesus had.** We are to think the same way, having the same love, souls-joined-together-as-partners, thinking “the one thing”. What is that? **Paul sets up a couple of contrasts to help clarify the point he is trying to make:**

“*Nothing according to self-promotion nor according to empty pride,
rather in lowly-mindedness considering one another as more important than yourselves,
...not each one looking out for the things of yourselves,
rather each ones also the things of the others.*”

Then he says, “*be-thinking this which was also in Christ Jesus...*”

After describing Jesus' self-emptying choices, Paul returns to the Philippians in verse 12, “...with the result that... you might work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for God is the One inworking in you, both the ‘to-desire’ and the ‘to-work’ on behalf of His good pleasure.” **This mindset of self-emptying and preferring others will set the stage for God to work in you new desires, and an ability to act in new ways to bring about what is pleasing to Him.** *This* is the “working-out” of our salvation in practical, visible ways.

Paul is quick to follow-up, however, with another qualifier: “Do all things apart from grumbling or disputing in order that you might come to be *without blame, without mixture*, children of God *without blemish* in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation, among whom y'all shine as lights in the world.” He seems to be saying, “Don't be double-minded about this, ...put your heart into it.” **Any grudging attitude or selfish mixed-motive will leach away the impact. And we are not to get caught up in disputations and arguments.** That, too, will poison the effect. People will remember any grudging attitude or secondary agenda *more than* the heart of service. **We are to shine brightly, which requires purity of heart and motive.** Another possibility for “disputing” could be self-doubt. We are to put

aside those grudging or doubting feelings, clarify our hearts, and hold fast in obedience to the word of life. **The idea of “shining brightly” is that we might clearly display the heart of Jesus before a sin-darkened, lost world.**

When we come to 1 Peter 3, we see the same ideas. We are to be engaged in going what is good, ...in fact, we are to be zealous for what is good. Actually, the Greek is even a little stronger. It says, “Who is the one who would mistreat you if ever you might come to be zealots for what is good?” **We are to be zealots, eager participants, enthusiastic adherents and proponents of what is benevolent, kind, wholesome, advantageous and beneficial to others.** The word for “zealot” refers to someone who is stirred to action by strong emotion or great personal concern. A zealot is someone ready to “put skin in the game”. They are deeply committed in principle, and ready to put their commitment into practical action. **“Who is the one who would harm you or mistreat you for being zealots for helping others?” It is a rhetorical question. You would think that no one would, ...but there are some who will!** There are some who may want to keep other people down, ...keep them weak or at their mercy. There may be some who don’t want others to get ahead, ...or who are prejudiced against certain people, and can’t stand to think that someone would be coming alongside of *them* to assist and support them. **This world is under the domination of the devil, ...the thief, ...who only comes to steal, kill and destroy** (1 Jn. 5:19; Jn. 10:10). He is the spirit that is at work in the children of disobedience (Eph. 2:2). He does not want to see those whom he has ensnared or oppressed find hope, freedom or to escape the domination he has held over them. He stirs up pride, greed, hatred and evil motives to oppose what is good. **So, it is no surprise that, after asking that question, Peter answers immediately with the statement, “But even if you would suffer on account of righteousness, you will be blessed.”**

We are not like them, anymore. **We have been freed from a worldly mindset, and do not need to fear what they fear, or be troubled as they are.** (This is a direct quote from the Greek Septuagint version of Isaiah 8:11-13. The unbelievers fear because they do not know or trust in God. We, however, are *not* to call a conspiracy, what others call a conspiracy. We are *not* to walk as they walk. Isaiah said, “But you shall consider Yahweh of hosts as holy. He shall be your fear and your dread.”). Instead, we are to sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts, and always be ready to make a logical-defense to anyone asking us to account for the hope which is in us. **We should be noticeably different.** We should not be getting pulled into the drama of current events. We should have a larger picture. **Our faith in God should give us stability in uncertain times, ...peace in the midst of chaos. We should be able to continue to do good, and think of the welfare of others, ...even when so many of those around us are just preoccupied with their own interests. Others will notice, and will ask us to account for why we are not afraid or troubled, ...and we should be able to give them a logical and personal response.** Such inquiries are God-opportunities, ...divine appointments, ...doors God has propped open for us to minister to others. **It is important that we are ready to give a reasoned response, and that we do it in a non-offensive, non-combative way.** Because, as we saw in Philippians 2, a bad attitude and negative way of communicating can dull or destroy the effect of what we might be able to say. We need to be ready to say something that *makes sense*, ...and communicate in a *respectful manner*, maintaining a good conscience. Don’t allow an adversary to lure you into an unspiritual way of interacting with them. Keep your peace, and your graciousness of spirit.

Note again, Peter’s concern is that we give the enemy, or our opponents, no basis by which they could speak negatively about us. Remaining calm, being respectful, listening attentively to their concerns, and then giving a sound, reasonable response in a clear, dignified manner, will remove a basis for an easy attack on us or our faith. **If we also have a solid track record of doing good for people, those who would want to speak against us will be put to shame, if they would try to criticize us.**

If we do have to suffer, ...if it should come to that..., it is better that we do so for doing what is good, than for suffering for something we have done wrong. God is in control, even over such things. If He permits it, He will not waste it. He will do something powerful through any sacrifice we are asked to make for Him. **If we entrust ourselves to God, ...and do not retaliate, or get bitter..., His character and power will be even more clearly seen in our lives.**

Remember, **Christ also suffered. He is our example.** He was mistreated, and did not talk back, strike back or retaliate. He remained calm. He kept His focus on God His Father. **He suffered for sins, ...not His own sins, but our sins. He suffered for a purpose. That purpose was: “that He might bring us to God”.** As He was put to death in the flesh, He was made alive in the Spirit. That is a spiritual principle. **There is power given to those who are willing to suffer for doing what is good. There is a victory won within those who are willing to give up their self-comfort, and even are willing to suffer, in order to bring others to Christ.** Those who have willingly suffered in the flesh have defeated the power of sin in their lives, and the Spirit of God’s glory rests upon them (1 Pet. 4:1,14). **As we bear in our bodies the dying of Jesus, the life of Jesus will be made visible in our mortal flesh** (2 Cor. 4:10). **This Jesus-walk is not a waste. It is an investment. We choose to live for a purpose beyond ourselves. We choose to live to honor God before all else. May He use our lives as an avenue to reveal Himself and to bring others to faith in Him.**