

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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The Manifested Life

by Dan Trygg

“What was from the beginning, what we have heard (and it still affects us), what we have seen with our eyes (and it still affects us), what we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of the life-- ² that life was revealed (it appeared, was made visible, was made tangibly-manifest), and we have seen it (and it still affects us) and we bear-witness and proclaim to you the eternal ('age-type') life that was with the Father and was revealed (it appeared, was made visible, was made tangibly-manifest) to us-- ³ what we have seen (and it still affects us) and heard (and it still affects us) we also declare to you, in order that y'all may have a sharing (communion, participation) along with us; and indeed our sharing (communion, participation) is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” 1 John 1:1-3

“And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal ('age-type') life, and this life is in His Son. ¹² The one who has the Son has the life. The one who doesn't have the Son of God does not have the life.” 1 John 5:11-12

“But thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumphal-display in Christ, and manifests (reveals, makes apparent) through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.” 2 Corinthians 2:14

“We are always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested (made visible, apparent, tangible) in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death on account of Jesus, in order that the life of Jesus also may be manifested (made visible, apparent, tangible) in our mortal flesh.” 2 Corinthians 4:10,11

Since I became a follower of Jesus Christ, the focus of my attention has varied at different times in my faith journey. I had heard the message of salvation since I was little, and I believed in God. I knew I was a sinner, and that Jesus had come to die for my sins. I was a child, so what seemed to be expected of me was to go to church and Sunday school. Then, after high school, I had a personal encounter with God, where He spoke to me in my mind and said, “Dan, I want you to give Me your future.” I knew it meant giving Him complete discretion over my life. I had no idea what it meant, except that my life was to be lived for Him, not for my own agenda. My heart was changed, and I began to pursue my relationship with Him in much greater earnest.

At first, there was an emphasis on *learning information*. I wanted to learn all I could about what the Bible taught. I wanted to understand. I wanted to familiarize myself with the content of the scriptures, and learn all I could about God, and what it meant to be a serious follower of Jesus Christ. I just “happened” to be starting at Bethel College, and my first class every morning was “Bible Survey”. Then, after the fall semester ended, I had a “Life and Teachings of Jesus” class in the spring. It was a great overview for a new, serious-minded believer. But God introduced another ingredient into my life that set the stage for the bulk of my future ministry. A young seminarian came to our church, and taught me about discipleship. *Discipleship is basically meeting with others to instruct, encourage, and coach one another in our faith journey.* The strategy was to introduce us to basic disciplines, or spiritual practices, to help us develop our faith. We studied through some study workbooks that helped us to grow in our understanding, but we also prayed together, worshiped together, and talked about other disciplines, such as fasting, giving, serving and interactive sharing that centered on our spiritual walk. *The focus was on learning information, developing self-discipline and spiritual practices, ...and trying to adjust our lives to God's standards.*

When you are trying hard to be righteous, it doesn't take long to see your faults and failings, ...or, you get puffed up with pride, and think you are doing better than others. Thankfully, I was also reading the biographies of great Christians from the past, and could easily see that *many of their struggles were the same as mine*. One of the advantages of relationships of accountability is that my friends and I were all in that same boat. We could see we all had our areas of sin, weakness or struggle, which we shared with each other. We prayed for each other. We agonized over our sin. It sure seemed that self-discipline and “trying harder” was *not* the answer to the sin problem. Bible study did *not* automatically change our hearts or give us the victory over our failings, either. I struggled with being angry, judgmental and having little compassion for others. I thought that *they* just needed to “try harder”, like I was.

In this pursuit of God and godliness, we became keenly aware of our need for the Holy Spirit. Our attention became more focused on receiving the power of the Holy Spirit, both for holiness, and for power for ministry. We began to interact with people who displayed spiritual gifts, or who claimed to have more of the Spirit than we did. While God used our seeking, and we learned and experienced some amazing things, we began to notice that, while so many of those we met were often more emotional or expressive, they did not seem to have any more power for living a holy life than we did. In fact, many of them had obvious areas of brokenness and immaturity. We saw that some were addicted to the emotional/spiritual “high” they felt at worship gatherings, but their lives were a mess. *Getting a spiritual experience, or operating in a spiritual gift often does not seem to produce spiritual maturity.* Spiritual gifts do not produce the “fruit of the Spirit” that are the character qualities described by Paul (Gal. 5:22,23). God does manifest His presence in powerful ways, at times, ...and sometimes those can be transformative and empowering

encounters..., but the more convincing work of God is to be found in the character of one's life. *The fruit of the Spirit, especially love like Jesus exemplified, is the indisputable evidence of maturity in Christ.* Something was missing!

About that time in my journey, God made me aware of the dynamics of shame, addiction and dysfunction in relationships. I began to see that many of us have been wounded by abusive and judgmental experiences that caused us to shut down emotionally. We believed that we were the problem, ...that we were *defective, or unworthy of love*. We were in families, school or work environments, or other relationships that were unhealthy. We learned to go along with unhealthy and unreasonable demands, to get along with controlling or abusive people. To do this, we learned to hide our real thoughts and emotions, and present a “fake” persona. *We learned to accept what seemed was wrong, and covered up our emotions*, as best we could. These patterns became entrenched in our lives, and kept us from emotional, spiritual and relational health. **In order to be sensitive to the Spirit, we have to get in touch with our emotions again, ...and often that brings up painful memories and realizations from the past.** In order to be fully available to the Spirit, we need to be healed, and become authentic and whole, once again. **We need to confront the lies that the enemy has used keep us stuck in dis-ease, and to block us from the healing love of God.** “Renewing the mind” is *not* just about “theological information”, it is about *grace and truth applied to life*.

Early on in my Christian life, I had a professor who told us that “eternal life” was not just “everlasting life”. It was “age-type life”, or the qualitative life of the age to come, the kingdom of God. While I was pursuing God, through my study of the Word, my spiritual disciplines, and focusing on the other areas He brought to my attention, He was growing me, changing me, deepening me all along the entire journey. *I was looking for some growth strategy, but the growth was working in me because the life of Jesus was in me!* As you can see from the passages above, Jesus came to reveal and manifest the life of the kingdom. Then, through His death and resurrection, He made it possible for all who believe in Him to receive this kingdom-life when they trust in Him and are born from the Spirit. I have come to see that *this is the source of the power-filled, love-expressing Christian life. It is the outworking of the inner spiritual life that is already in us!* We don't need to get more than we already have. **We need to learn to tap in and express this life of the Spirit.** It is not about how much theological knowledge we have, or how much self-discipline we develop. All those insights and habits I gained along the way helped to give me understanding and focus, so that I could recognize and effectively yield to the age-type life of the Spirit. **I commune with the living God who is at work inside of me. As I recognize what He is doing, I put aside old fears and former manners of living, and choose to partner with Him. As I do, that kingdom-life finds expression through me!**

It is interesting to note how John began his first epistle. He described an experiential encounter and relationship with Jesus, who he called “the Word (message) of the life”. *Jesus came to manifest, reveal or give tangible expression to this life.* John said that he saw and heard it, and his experience of it, through the life of Jesus, had an impact that was still felt by him years later. **It was this “age-type life” that John testified to us about, and he proclaimed it to us, in order that we, too, might share in it.** The testimony of God is that He has given us this “age-type life” through His Son. If we have the Son, we *have* this life.

The apostle Paul wrote that **Jesus came to make a righteousness of God visible and tangible, ...a righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe** (Rom. 3:21,22). We have thought of those verses from a theological perspective, but maybe they are also declaring a practical reality. *The righteousness of God is meant to be expressed by those who have believed in Jesus, ...those who have this “age-type life” in them.* This is a righteousness that is not based upon trying to keep Law. **It is a righteousness that is characteristic of God's life, which those who trust Him learn to express and make visible.** This is the “fruit of the Spirit”, the outworking of this life.

2 Corinthians 2:14, Paul describes how **God always is leading us in a triumphal-display in Christ, and is manifesting** (making apparent and evident) **through us the sweet aroma of the experiential-knowledge of Him** in every place. **We are like a letter, being known and read by all people, revealing** (making visible and tangible) **that we are from Christ** (3:2,3). The Spirit in us enables us to effectively live for Jesus. He gives us life (3:6). He brings freedom (3:17). As we ponder God, He transforms us from the inside-out to be like Him (3:18). Then, in 4:6-12, he says that **God has shone in our hearts to bring to light the experiential-knowledge of God's radiant-glory that we see in Christ's face.** This radiant-treasure is in our earthen bodies like a light in a clay pot, so that it would be abundantly-clear that it is not from ourselves, but from God. **No matter what we go through,** ...pressure, being at a loss, persecution or being cast down..., even as we are experiencing death to self, **...it is so that the life of Jesus may be manifested** (made visible, tangible) through our lives. This is a consistent pattern, ...being delivered over to self-death on account of Jesus, in order that the life of Jesus may also be manifested (made visible, apparent, tangible). **If God is to be seen in our lives, it will be when we live in ways that are out of character to our sinful predisposition, and, are inspired by the “age-type” life of Jesus within us.** *That will shine like light in the darkness!* **God has put the light and life within us. He is inworking, stirring, prompting us so that we will choose to act in accordance with Him, and bring the life to tangible expression.** Then, possibly, others will experience something that *they* will never forget, ...the life of God manifested in theirs.