

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

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The Outworking of Salvation Brings Praise to God

by Dan Trygg

"The Spirit of the Lord Yahweh is upon me, because Yahweh has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners; to proclaim the favorable year of Yahweh and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, to grant those who mourn in Zion, giving them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of Yahweh, that He may be glorified. Then *they* will rebuild the ancient ruins, *they* will raise up the former devastations; and *they* will repair the ruined cities, the desolations of many generations. Strangers will stand and pasture your flocks, and foreigners will be your farmers and your vinedressers. But *you* will be called the priests of Yahweh; *you* will be spoken of as ministers of our God. *You* will eat the wealth of nations, and in their riches you will boast. Instead of your shame, you will have a double portion; and instead of humiliation, they will shout for joy over their portion. Therefore they will possess a double portion in their land, everlasting joy will be theirs."

Isaiah 61:1-7

"...On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen; all day and all night they will never keep silent. You who remind Yahweh, take no rest for yourselves; and give Him no rest until He establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth." Isaiah 62:6,7

The scope of God's salvation is so much broader and expansive than what we might imagine. Not only does He want to set the captive free, and comfort the wounded and mournful, He wants to establish them, bless them and make them strong so that they might in turn help others, and bring praise to Him. *God's grace is always given to be passed on to others.* Like a rejuvenating stream, His vitality flows into us and through us, enlivening us and refreshing us in the process, washing away the dead and lifeless remnants of the past. **The more we allow God's life to flow through us, the more pure and unpolluted is the outflow from our own hearts. If we try to acquire God's blessings only for our own enjoyment, however, they begin to be soured by our selfishness, and the flow of His blessing becomes restricted and stale.** It is *only* as we are willing to be made by God into productive, helpful servants to others [channels of blessing] that the flow of His strength and confidence heals us and fills us to overflowing with His strength. We are not only healed and strengthened for our *own* well-being, but also *to use that strength and ability to serve others.* In doing so, we can fulfill our destiny and purpose, and we bring praise to God.

Note the movement in these verses, as different people are called, equipped and set into action by the power of God. First, the servant of God realizes that the Spirit of God has come upon him or her *for a purpose*, ...to reach out, save, and serve *others*. As s/he proclaims the good news, s/he calls *other* people to respond to God's favor, and some are comforted and strengthened. They exchange their sorrows and mourning for hearts of vision, hope and praise. As the seed of hope and faith in God's promise is established in *their* lives, *these others* become "the planting of the Lord". The new life *they* experience is meant to *grow up in them and become visible to yet another circle of people.* This *change*, the result of God's Spirit working in them, is *noticeably better* than what their old life was before. This *visible change* is attributable to God's influence in their lives, and thus brings Him praise.

Next, these "oaks of righteousness", *these new believers*, become the ones who set about rebuilding the ruins and devastations of many previous generations. Note that there *is* damage, widespread ruin, that must be cleaned up and set right. There are repairs that must be made. The garbage and clutter of ruin must be removed, and new construction must be set into motion. In Isaiah's prophecy, this is meant to be both literal and figurative. There actually *was* a homeland, Israel, that would be overrun and destroyed by enemy armies as a consequence of sin. The farms, villages and cities would have to be rebuilt. More importantly to us, however, is the figurative side. **The spiritual and social ruin caused by sin would have to be put aside, and people brought back into relationship with God, and into obedience to His will, in order for His healing and blessing to come upon them.** Revival starts with repentance and reform, and spreads as the call to justice, purity and reform begins to awaken others to their need for change. Note that the ones who were being saved in the first three verses are now the ones setting things right, and setting *others* free! **They actually become the ones who are the priests and ministers of God** (vs. 6), because they have become strong, healthy and motivated to help their family and friends. The same is true for us. **God wants to not only save us from the mess and pain of our pasts, but also to build us up so that we can be strong and healthy to begin to help others.** Those of us who are the "first ones" in our family or social group (or of our *generation*) are intended to impact the others in *our* network of relationships. **Not all will respond, but they should be able to see the impact of faith on our lives.** Because they know us, we are the "natural missionaries" in their lives, who are to somehow communicate and *demonstrate* to them the good news that first drew us. **The change in our walk (lifestyle) should agree with the change in our talk, or our words will have little real impact. Lives that are changing for**

the better, those that exhibit health and produce good fruit, however, speak loudly to those who are still hurting, or stuck in their mess.

There are also "strangers" and "foreigners" working among these people. These are men and women who have not originally been part of this family or culture, but who have come alongside these new followers of God to help them in the rebuilding process (Isa. 60:10). **This reflects two different principles: (1.) Sometimes God calls outsiders to come in to help us** to see and do things that we are unable or unwilling to address ourselves. **Sometimes we need outside intervention.** The enemy tries to get us into isolated groups, so that he can keep us stuck. **Often God will send some of His servants to move into a new social group or culture to bring strength and insight to break loose the chains holding people captive.** Then, when those who respond to the message become healthy and functional, *they* are the ones God wishes to use to reach the rest of the group. Note here that in 61:5 the strangers and foreigners are in *supportive* roles, helping to provide sustenance for the new, "natural missionaries", the ones who have received the good news and have become the "planting of the Lord". **(2.) God desires to turn upside-down the evil of the ones who afflicted oppression on others.** This is a form of God's justice working out in history. He turns the children of thieves, abusers and drug-dealers into people who help the oppressed, abused and addicted (Isa. 60:14), or He transfers the wealth of the wicked into the hands of the righteous, who will help the poor (Prov. 13:22; 28:8; Ecc. 2:26; Job 27:16,17).

Finally, the offspring of those who are walking with God will become a testimony to Him. They "*will be known* among the nations", and, "*all who see them will recognize them* because they are the offspring whom the Lord has blessed" (Isa. 61:9). **This is God's desire, and He has done it repeatedly in history.** He took Joseph from slavery to become the second most important ruler in Egypt (Gen. 37,39-50). He took Moses, an outcast and murderer, and transformed him into the greatest leader in ancient Israel's history, who led a company of two million people through the wilderness (Ex. 2-17). He took Jephthah, an illegitimate son of Gilead, and made him a deliverer and chief ruler over Israel (Judg. 11). He took David, the youngest, most insignificant son of a common "country bumpkin", and transformed him into a mighty warrior and the greatest king of Israel (I Sam. 16-II Sam. 8). What becomes clear, as one examines each of these lives, is that none of these people were from noble birth, or wealth or power, and yet God lifted them up to become very significant and powerful. *Their stories are passed on to us as examples of God's ability to lift us beyond our circumstances and disadvantages.* **God likes to take the ones whom the world despises, and writes off as being of no account, and use them in a mighty way to put to shame the arrogant and powerful** (I Cor. 1:26-29). Here, God is describing an example of that by intending to exalt the offspring of the poor and powerless to become men and women of notoriety and influence. ***This, however, will not happen without faithfulness and effort on the part of these offspring.*** **This is not an unconditional thing. It is a conditional offer, the intent of God's heart, which must be embraced by these young men and women in order to come to fulfillment** (cf. Jer. 18:1-12).

God's desire is that we trade the inheritance of shame and poverty, of dysfunction and woundedness, for a "double portion" of spiritual wholeness and prosperity, so that we might be a blessing to others and bring praise to His name. Instead of sorrow and humiliation, He wants us to have joy and honor. **The promises come to those who believe and implement the most basic principle of the life of faith, found in Hebrews 11:6, "...he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."** Note that this is not a one-time thing, but as Isa. 62:6,7 suggests, it comes to those who *repeatedly, persistently* and *perseveringly* call on God to work in their lives, and make the corresponding faithful choices in obedience to His will. Those who have been victorious champions of faith, those who received the promises, often had to face and overcome difficult obstacles. **Trusting that God is on your side, ready and willing to work on your behalf, can encourage you to take steps you would not otherwise take, ...to press on when you would otherwise give up, ...to dare to try when others resign themselves to accept what they see around them. Faith encourages us to overcome.**

God knows. He knows where we have come from. He knows what we are dealing with now. He also knows where He wants to take *us*. **He knows how He can transform us, and make us a blessing to others. He knows what He can do with our children. We can pass on a heritage of righteousness and blessing!** He sees our efforts to follow Him, and would encourage us. "For God is not so unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have toward His name... And we desire that each one of you *show the same diligence* so as to realize the full assurance of hope toward the end, so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb. 6:10-12). **God challenges us to press through to inherit the promises and possibilities. He also challenges us to hold Him accountable,** to give Him no rest until He fulfills His promises to us. There is a partnership, here. He will do His part, if we do ours. In fact, He is *eager* to do so. **The fruit of our lives indicates what He can do, and that brings Him glory. As we are blessed to be blessing others, He receives the praise** (e.g., II Cor. 9:12,13).