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*June 2018*

## THE GOOD LIFE Part One- The Lord is My Shepherd

Greetings, church! We pray that you are all experiencing God's goodness!

Did you know that this is exactly what God desires for each and every one of us- to experience the goodness of God right here in the land of the living (Psalm 27:13)!? He sure does! It brings our Heavenly Father much joy to give us richly all things to enjoy now in this life (1 Timothy 6:17)!

Yes, church, God is good and He wants for you to live the good life He has for you even more than you do! In fact, he has already prepared this good life for us to walk in.

Let's look over at Ephesians chapter two and see this: In the Amplified Version of **Ephesians 2:10**, it says, *"For we are God's [own] handiwork (His workmanship), recreated in Christ Jesus, [born anew] that we may do those good works which God predestined (planned beforehand) for us [taking paths which He prepared ahead of time], that we should walk in them [living the good life which He prearranged and made ready for us to live]."*

Now, what the Lord did for us in Christ (spiritually speaking) is absolutely the most important part. His providing us with the new birth to where we become His own handiwork, His masterpiece and His work of art is the cornerstone of this blessed life. But how many of you know that no one displays a valuable piece of artwork in some broken, shabby, substandard frame? No, they want that precious piece of art being displayed in something that is equally precious. Amen?

So, God has a "good life" which He has already prearranged for us to live and wants us to display all of these spiritual blessings that we have in Christ to the world we live in. In other words, He wants our natural lives to display His goodness to where we are living the good life. This is that exciting life of faith where we are enjoying our personal relationship with God, where we are introducing people to His presence and power, and we are partaking of all the good things He has for us in this life. Amen to that!

So, this is exactly what I would like to begin sharing with you this month- the good life that the Lord has prearranged and made ready for us to live. In this teaching, we will learn what this good life looks like and how to walk in it.

### THE GOODNESS OF GOD NOW!

Now the truth is that the majority of the church today does not believe this. They do not believe God desires for us to live the good life now, in this life. So, I want us to look at Psalm chapter 27 and notice how David had a different "theology":

In **Psalm 27:13**, King David said, *"I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."* I want you to notice that David put his faith of experiencing God's goodness *in the land of the living*- which is the opposite of the land of the dead, right? In other words, he didn't, like so many Christians, push off the glories and promises of God into the "sweet by and by." No, David expected the manifestation of God's goodness in the "rotten here and now!"

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Notice what some other translations say: The Passion Translation says, *“Yet I totally trust you to rescue me one more time, so that I can see once again how good you are while I’m still alive!”* The Expanded Bible translates it- *“I truly believe I will see the Lord’s goodness during my life.”* The Easy to Read Version says, *“But I really believe that I will see the Lord’s goodness before I die.”* So, again, we see that reoccurring theme of seeing God’s goodness in this life before we breathe our last breath.

David goes on in **verse 18** to say, *“Wait on the Lord; Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the Lord!”* The word used for “wait” in these verses does not mean what we commonly use the word “wait” like today. When we say that we are “waiting,” it might mean that we are just enduring and passively letting the time pass by, but this word meant something else in their days. It meant to earnestly expect something to happen, to where we are looking for it and desiring it. In other words, it is not a passive kind of waiting; it is a “neck-stretched out, looking for something” kind of waiting. Amen. So, in context, what David was encouraging all of God’s people to do was *expect* the Lord’s goodness right now in this life! Look for it, earnestly desire it, and believe for it right now in the land of the living.

But someone might say, “But what if I get disappointed, pastor? I don’t want to get my hopes up.” That’s why David said, “Be of good courage!” - because it will take courage for some of us to put our hope in experiencing God’s goodness in our lives. And that is exactly what I believe God wants to challenge each of us with: He wants us to start expecting good things in our life, beginning right now. He wants us to start living the “good life” that He has always wanted us to have here in the land of the living. Amen?

So, what I want us to begin to do this month is start looking at the 23rd Psalm. Why the 23rd Psalm, you ask? It is because this very popular Psalm is what I believe to be the perfect description of this good life that the Lord intends for us all to live, and this will feed our faith to start expecting these good things to occur in our lives.

Unfortunately, most of us have only heard this Psalm read and expounded upon at funerals. But how many of you know that this is not just a Psalm to comfort us in death? This is a Psalm also meant to encourage us in life!

You see, as one looks at this psalm honestly and objectively, he or she must conclude that it not only contains promises for the next life but contains God’s will for us in this life. For example, when David says in verse 4- *“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil”*- that is not talking about after one dies - for there will be no evil to fear then. No, it is talking about now in this life when the prospect of death does indeed face us and when the temptation to fear would be present. Another example is when David writes in verse 5 that God prepares a table before us in the presence of our enemies. Well, there will be none of our enemies in heaven, so that must be talking about now, in this life too. Amen?

No, saints, this psalm is not just a good passage of Scripture to be read at someone’s graveside; it is a good psalm with many good promises for us to embrace while we are still above ground. Glory to God! So, let’s begin looking at this power-packed Psalm that declares the good life, shall we?



## THE LORD, MY SHEPHERD

King David begins this Psalm with the profound promise and declaration that *“The Lord is my Shepherd.”* Now David knew a little bit about shepherding, didn’t he? So, through his personal experience as a shepherd, he saw how the Lord took care of us in a similar manner.

First of all, the title “Lord” comes from the Hebrew word YHWH and has been transliterated as *Jehovah*. This is, of course, one of those names God gave to Himself that describes His covenant relationship with His people - *Jehovah Ra’ah*. Thus, Psalm 23:1 describes the Self-Existent One as “The Lord our Shepherd”- that is, “The God who leads, guides, feeds and watches over us.”

Now this, of course, is not the only name given to Jehovah. Other covenant names that He gave to Israel, describing His nature are:

- **Jehovah Jireh** (Genesis 22:14) - “The Lord our provider” (i.e. the God who supplies all our needs)
- **Jehovah Raphe** (Exodus 15:26) - “The Lord our healer” (i.e. the God who heals all our diseases and takes sickness away from the midst of us)
- **Jehovah Nissi** (Exodus 17:15) - “The Lord our banner of victory” (i.e. the God who always leads us in triumph)
- **Jehovah Tsidkenu** (Jeremiah 23:6-6) - “The Lord our righteousness” (i.e. the God who imputes His righteousness unto us)
- **Jehovah M’Kaddesh** (Leviticus 20:8) - “The Lord who sanctifies” (i.e. the God who makes us pure and holy in His sight)
- **Jehovah Shalom** (Judges 6:22-24) - “The Lord our peace” (i.e. the God who gives us His peace, wholeness, and soundness)
- **Jehovah Shammah** (Ezekiel 48:35) - “The Lord is there” (i.e. the God who never leaves us nor forsakes us and our ever-present help in time of need)
- **Jehovah Elyon** (Genesis 14:20) - “The Lord Most High” (i.e. the God who is above all and higher than any problem that we can face)

Now it is important to understand that the “name” of God represents His authority and His power; it describes His person and His characteristics. His name declares to us who He is and what He does - His integrity, personality and nature. So, God gave us all of these names to reveal to us His nature and the core parts of who He is - to show us who He is to us. Amen.

But He didn’t just give us these names to reveal who He is to us, but who He is to you and to me on an individual level. Amen. In other words, He is not just the Lord *our* Shepherd; He is the Lord *my* shepherd! Yes, we need to make who He is personal to us. Amen?

In fact, notice all the personal pronouns David used in the 23rd Psalm: *The Lord is **my** shepherd; I shall not want. He makes **me** to lie down in green pastures; He leads **me** beside the still waters. He restores*

*my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*

Now that is a lot of “me’s, my’s and I’s,” isn’t it? But it is significant that he didn’t once say, “us, we, our, etc.” Why? It is because He is our personal God. He didn’t just send Jesus to die for us. He sent Jesus to die for you and for me on an individual level too! Amen. Praise God!

You see, David was confident in his God to where he personalized these promises! Plus, he was not “wishy-washy” either. He apparently really knew and believed what His God was going to do.

You know, if this Psalm were not a part of the Holy Scriptures and say, I wrote these words, you might be tempted to think I was being a little high-minded, arrogant or over-confident, right? But we know that these confident statements by David were inspired by God. Therefore, they are apparently right on! In fact, David even made other statements throughout his life that people misunderstood and was even accused by his brother Eliab in **1 Samuel 17:28** as being arrogant. But in that situation, David turned from him and kept saying the same things. Yes, he said things that many would consider presumptuous and arrogant - saying things to Goliath, “*This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand...*” (**1 Samuel 17:46**) Where did David get this confidence from? We don’t have any reason to believe that God told him any of these things. Where did his obvious persuasion come from? His confidence came from knowing his God.

## KNOWING MY GOD

You see, David knew his God, and this is what produced all this boldness and confidence that we see. And I can guarantee you that I know exactly how he knew his God so well: It was because he was a “praiser” - for the Bible says that in Judah (Hebrew for “praise”), God is known (**Psalm 76:1**). And we know that David was well versed in praise by all the psalms he wrote. In other words, God is known in the arena of praise. Amen.

You see, David did not just know what he believed; he knew *whom he* believed. We see in **2 Timothy 1:12** the Apostle Paul made a similar, profound statement: He said, “*For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.*”

Notice that Paul did not say here, “I know *what* I have believed.” And this is a big problem with many Christians - they are trying to adhere to a principle or a promise and not to a person. They are trying to follow a formula and the problem with that is that we can get the results of the seven sons of Sceva to where the devil turns on us and eats our lunch and pops the bag. But if we know HIM like David and Paul did, it will produce faith. No, Paul knew God as a person and this produced, what? Him being persuaded that His God would be able to keep him. Amen. Church, truly knowing God produces persuasion. This word “know” here means to perceive or to see. And this is the problem with so many Christians - they have not really “seen” God. Their vision is blurry. They see an abstract version of Him but have never clearly seen His true nature.



But the fact is, Paul knew His God personally. And this even produced the confidence that made him say in **Philippians 4:19**- *“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”* Why would he say, “And my God?” Wasn’t the Lord also the God of the Church of Philippi? Sure, He was, but what Paul was saying was, “And I am confident that my God - the One who has proven Himself to be faithful to me in my life - He will supply all your need too.” You see, this is a statement that reveals that He knew his God! Amen.

Church, I am getting ahead of myself a bit, but it is critical that we likewise believe in our hearts and declare with our mouths who our God is to us personally just like David and Paul did. In fact, this is what you see throughout the Bible - that the ones who came to know Him as their own personal God, made professions that to some might seem a little arrogant.

For example, the Apostle John declared time and time again in his gospel that he was the disciple whom Jesus loved. But for someone to say that this is not being humble would have to say that the Apostle John was in pride - and I can assure you the apostle of love was not a high-minded person.

### **THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PEOPLE THAT KNOW THEIR GOD**

But here is the truth- as **Daniel 11:32** says, the people who know their God will be strong and do great exploits, not just the people who know about their God. Saints, we must see His face and become intimately acquainted with Him. Then, and only then, will our confidence level be where it needs to be. Then, and only then, will we become persuaded in Him backing us up and being our shepherd. Yes, it is the one who knows their God that will be strong, bold and courageous!

We all remember the instance where Abraham began to bargain with God over the righteous that dwelt in Sodom. I mean, who actually tries to strike a deal with God? Someone who knows their God does, that’s who! In another instance, when God told Moses that He was going to wipe out all His chosen people, Moses stood between Him and the Jews and basically told God to repent. Now who does that? Someone who knows their God and knows who they are in Him, that’s who! (See **Exodus 32:7-14**) You see, the people of Israel knew His acts, but Abraham & Moses knew His ways!

Saints, every born-again believer is now a friend of God. Notice what Jesus said to His disciples in **John 15:14-17**: Here, Jesus tells His disciples that He no longer calls them servants for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. Therefore, we are now the initiated. We are not outsiders - peeking in from the outer court. No, we are insiders - initiated into the mysteries of the kingdom! And as God’s friends, (notice what Jesus went on to say at the end of **verse 16**) *“whatever we ask the Father in His name He may give you.”*

So, we should no longer communicate with God with this mentality that we are on the outside looking in. Saints, we are in covenant with the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ! This means we are joint heirs, and no longer strangers to the covenants of promise! So as the friends of God, we can talk to God rather frankly. Of course, not being disrespectful because He is still God, but we must find the middle of the road where we are not communicating to God like we are still lost and without God in the world.

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But the good news is that the same confidence that David, Abraham, Moses and Paul had, you and I can have because, under this new and better covenant, we all can know Him from the least to the greatest (Hebrews 8:10). Amen!

However, let me again reiterate to you that just as it is important to personalize His promises, it is also just as important to then speak them.

We see this in **Psalm 91:2**, where after the Psalmist describes this whole Psalm in a nutshell in the first verse, he goes on to say, *"I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust."* (Notice again all of the personal pronouns being used here)

So, is what we say important? I can assure you, it is! There are countless Scriptures that teach us the power in our words. What is most notable is how the Book of Wisdom itself - Proverbs - has so many Scriptures that reveal to us the importance of our words. Therefore, we can simply conclude from just this that a wise person watches what he or she says and a fool doesn't.

You know, the world will tell us that we are weird if we talk to ourselves; Well, the Scriptures indicate that we are weird if we do not talk to ourselves. For instance, when you have those times where your emotions are screaming at you - Fear, Panic, Worry! Well, what should you do? Just give in to the anxiety? No! You should SAY, "The Lord is My Helper! I will not fear!" (Hebrews 13:6)! Also, when your flesh is telling you that you are good for nothing and that you'll never amount to anything, you should SAY, "The Lord is my Shepherd! He has chosen me, called me, and anointed me!" Yes, we are to respond to those fear-filled thoughts with faith filled words! Amen?

So, when we see here in Psalm 23:1- "The Lord is My Shepherd"- what should be our response? We should boldly say, "I will say of the Lord: The Lord is My Shepherd. I shall not lack! He will provide for me! He will take care of me! My enemies are His enemies, and He will deliver me! Amen!"

Saints, knowing our God and boldly declaring it is the first step into that good life that God has for us! As F.F. Bosworth stated- "Faith begins where the will of God is known." So, as we become persuaded in who He is, faith will come- and then as we release our faith out of our mouth, mountains start moving! Negative things that have been rooted in our hearts start getting removed! The course of our life takes a turn! And we are ushered into the good life!

Until next month- Maranatha and be blessed!

Victoriously,

