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**OCTOBER 2015**  
**JOY'S CORNERSTONE**

Greetings co-laborers in the kingdom of our Christ!

We pray everyone is blessed and living in the Father's good pleasure- peace, prosperity and joy!

First of all, I wanted to thank everyone out there who has helped support my mission trip to India thus far! We here at Living Logos Ministries, are truly grateful for all your financial support and pray that the harvest you will receive from your seeds sown will exceed your expectations. Amen!

We do still have financial needs that need to be met and trust that the Lord will provide them before my departure date. So if the Lord puts it on your heart to support us, we would greatly appreciate it! Faithful is He who calls, who also will do it!

I do ask that you please pray for me as I leave on the evening of Wednesday, October 14<sup>th</sup> and return on Friday, October 30<sup>th</sup>. I have over 33 speaking engagements in three different locations during the course of 13 days, so please agree with me for strength, stamina and all the grace necessary for this trip. I truly do covet your prayers.

Well, we began a few months ago studying the subject of joy in these Living Logos teachings and I want us to pick this study back up this month because, as I made the point of, I see joy as being a lost art in the life of most Christians.

We began in July by talking about how joy is truly the one thing that everyone seeks after. People are looking for joy, happiness and contentment in all sorts of things- relationships, fame, money, etc. But we learned that joy is not found in things; joy is found in a Person- Jesus. Amen!

We spent the majority of our time in the first two parts of this teaching dealing with our perspective... In July, I entitled our newsletter "Midnight in Macedonia" and in August, my subject was "the Proverbial Palace." (I joked around by calling these first two parts of this series as being two chapters in Trey's romance novel J)

But that actually brings up a good point... Did you know things like romance novels have been the cause of many failed marriages? Why is this? It is because things like movies, books, television programs etc. can build in people a vain hope that the grass is greener on the other side. In other words, these things can paint the picture that if you were just with the right person, if you just have the right circumstances or if you just had more fame and finances, that you would be happy. But we learned that circumstances cannot give you joy, only Christ can. So if you are deceived into thinking that if you can just have something "more, better, or different" that you will be happy, you are deceived. I cannot sugarcoat that!

So I encourage you that if you missed either of these two teachings, go to our website @ [www.treydickerson.com](http://www.treydickerson.com) and get a hold of them. They laid a very good foundation that teaches us how our perspective and how we choose to view things can produce more joy and contentment in our hearts. You will be blessed by them, I can assure you.

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Well, we are basing this teaching on the Apostle Paul's letter to the Philippians because, as I made point of a couple of months ago, the Lord showed me that the keys to unlocking a life of joy are found in this book of the Bible. So as we begin this month our journey through Paul's "Epistle of Joy", I believe it is necessary for us to begin by using the same custom Paul used in many of his epistles...

### **ESTABLISHED IN GRACE**

You see, a common practice by Paul in his letters was to begin by telling its recipients who they were in Christ and what they had in Him. Generally, it was not until close to midway through most of his epistles that he told them what their responsibilities as Christians were. As a matter of fact, in none of his epistles does he ever move directly into dealing with their conduct and behavior.

Why is this? It is because Paul understood that a major key to successful Christian living was to first understand our "who" before we focus on our "do." In other words, we ought to first focus on understanding what God has already done for us by His grace before we begin focusing on what we are supposed to be doing through our works. Yes, the foundation that must first be laid is His grace.

I remember when my wife and I first arrived in Colorado for me to attend Bible College. I had been saved for several years, but had never embraced in my heart the message of God's grace. Fortunately, God had led me to a school where the unconditional love and grace of God was taught and emphasized. Therefore, I was about to embark on a two year journey where my focus would be solely upon God's love and grace. In hindsight, I see that this was all a part of God's plan for my life.

Well, within the first month after we arrived in Colorado, the Lord spoke to my heart saying, "It is good for your heart to be established in grace." This quote came from Hebrews 13:9 and what I immediately knew the Lord was telling me was that one of the main purposes for Him bringing me to this particular school was so that my heart would become established in the truth of His grace.

But what I have come to discover since then is that it is good for all of God's children to have a good and solid foundation upon the grace of God. Why? It is because if our hearts are not first grounded on what God has already done for us then everything we may attempt to build our lives upon going forward will be shaky and unstable.

Friends, we need this good and solid foundation of God's love and grace in our life *first!* It is the cornerstone for maintaining this life of joy that we are all hungry for!

### **SAYING GRACE**

In this Epistle to the Philippians, after Paul gives his customary introduction to those he is writing to, he says, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."

This is a customary blessing that the Apostle Paul gave to the recipients of all his epistles. Only in the Pastoral Epistles (1 & 2 Timothy and Titus) he added the virtue "mercy" in along with grace and peace. (How many of you know pastors need more than just grace and peace; they need mercy too?J) But Paul always addressed the churches he wrote to with this specific statement.

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Now was he just throwing a little religious cliché' out there out of habit or is there significance to this statement of blessing? I can guarantee you that there was great significance in this declaration.

You see, Paul understood the power of words and he also knew the authority that he had been given as their spiritual father to bless them, his spiritual children. You see this throughout the life of the patriarchs as they blessed their children. This was not just some vain ritual. No, these faith-filled words came to pass, my friends! And you need to understand that you have that authority too!

We should always pronounce blessings over our church, our children, our spouses, and our own self also-knowing that our words have the ability to remove mountains and change the course of circumstances. So begin to "bless" your loved ones and yourself today with these spiritual virtues. Confess grace, peace and whatever else you so desire and watch your words take action and cause you and your loved ones to eat the fruit of those words (see Proverbs 18:21). Amen!

So, yes, invoking blessings is the right of all born again believers and was also a method of greeting that was a common practice in those days, but I believe that there is something else significant here.

I believe Paul blessed his readers with grace and peace at the beginning of his letters because he understood that we must first be blessed with a foundation of grace and peace before we can build a successful Christian life for God. In other words, we need to first receive the grace of God and peace with God before we ever endeavor to receive any other truth or revelation. Amen!

Again, laying this foundation is so important in the life of a Christian because when the foundation is faulty, everything else that is built on it will be unstable and out of alignment. It is sad to say, but this describes the lives of most Christians. The foundation that they were established upon is error and full of wrong belief systems.

For instance, if one gets born again and immediately begins to study the old covenant before getting their heart established in the new covenant, they will likely steer towards legalism and condemnation. This is not our new covenant of grace.

Saints, we must first come to the Cross- seeing ourselves as crucified with Christ- and then move on to His resurrection- seeing ourselves in the likeness of resurrection. First focusing on our works and adhering to a bunch of rules and regulations will create in us a self-focus, not a Christ-focus. And the Scriptures teach us that the letter kills- that is, the commandment written and engraved on stones (2 Corinthians 3:6).

So, yes, our foundational belief system is very important because if our core-beliefs are out of line, it can cause us to have a totally wrong view of our God. And this will rob us of all that God has called us to inherit in this life.

Saints, it took me years to realize this truth...

### **WHAT GOD THINKS OF US!**

The first few years of my Christian walk were spent in self-striving and wallowing in condemnation because I had this law-mentality that I am attempting to steer you away from.

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Although I had experienced the joy of salvation to a degree, the majority of this time, I did not experience the fullness of joy that the Bible speaks of.

In the midst of these early years where I lacked the understanding of God's wonderful love and amazing grace, there was a period of time where my heart became far-removed from God. During that time, I did things, that if you would have told me that I would have done them a few years earlier, I would have called you a liar. Then during this time of struggling with my flesh, I tried to get back to where I knew I needed to be, but I only experienced more failure and frustration.

You see, this is all the law does. It frustrates. It condemns. It dooms one to remain dead in their sins and never releases the believer to live a life of freedom and victory over sin.

So after I continuously stumbled in this same area for several months, I then had Scriptures come up in my mind that talk about when we sin willfully after we receive the knowledge of the truth that there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins and so forth (see Hebrews 10:26). So I began to think that maybe this was me. Maybe I was this one the writer of Hebrews was talking about that had become reprobate and moved beyond even the ability to repent. After all, there seemed to be no grace on my life any longer. So God must have forsaken me, right?

I battled this for longer than I would have liked and I finally cried out to the Lord with all my heart, asking Him, "Lord, have I gotten to the point of being beyond repentance?" In other words, what I was asking was: Had I made such poor choices when I knew better that He was finished with me?

The next morning, as I lay on my bed, a statement kept coming up in my heart. The voice on the inside of me was saying, "just as it is right for me to think this of you because I have you in my heart." Now this saying came up in my heart several times throughout the early portion of the day until I finally realized that God was trying to tell me something.

Initially, I was unaware of it, but this phrase that He was repeating in my heart was out of the Bible. I looked it up and found that the Scripture that He was speaking to me was in the very book that we are studying here- Paul's Epistle to the Philippians- and is found in chapter 1 and verse 7. Let's take a look at it...

In this verse, Paul was writing to his beloved church, telling them how much he loved them and how his heart and mind were set on them. But what we need to understand is that the Apostle Paul was simply a man of God who was being moved and inspired by the Holy Spirit when he wrote this (2 Timothy 3:16 & 2 Peter 1:20-21). Therefore, these words were not just the words of a man written to a body of believers nearly 2,000 years ago. No, these are the Words of Almighty God written for all believers, for all time! Hallelujah!

So when Paul said- "just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart..." God is revealing to us, His church, what He is thinking of us! Amen!

So when I realized that the Lord was speaking this to me, I knew I needed to find out what it was that He was thinking about me because evidently He wanted me to know what His thoughts of me were. And based on the wording of verse 7, I knew that whatever He was thinking about me must have been

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contained in the verse or verses preceding this phrase- “just as it is right for me to think this of you.” That is when I looked up Philippians chapter 1 in order to see what the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to say just before verse 7.

And guess what the preceding verse says? Philippians 1:6 says, “Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

Man, when I saw that, my jaw hit the floor! I immediately realized that the thoughts the Lord was thinking about me in regards to my situation were not thoughts of anger, judgment, and condemnation. No, they were thoughts of love! He was not down on me! He had not turned His back on me! I saw that He was actually for me! He was on my side, rooting me on and expressing faith in me that the good work he began close to 7 years before that, He was confident that that work was going to come to completion!

You see, God’s thoughts are higher than our thoughts and His ways are higher than our ways. I know we like to quote Isaiah 55:8-9 in the context of us not having a clue what God’s plan is for our life etc. but I challenge you to read it in a different light today.

He doesn’t think like us, thank God! No, He doesn’t do things like us either. When our patience left town days ago, God’s patience is just getting started. When we feel like quitting on others and ourselves, God’s is not even close to quitting on us.

No, as King David proclaimed, God’s thoughts towards us outnumber even the sand of the earth (Psalm 133:17-18). Yes, saints, He is thinking about us constantly! We are continuously on His mind!

Someone might say, “Yeah, Trey, I believe God is thinking about me, but I’d hate to see what those thoughts are”- concluding that all God sits on His throne thinking about is all the mistakes we make and all the ways that we fall short of His glory. No! Doesn’t Jeremiah 29:11 say, “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end” (King James Version)?

Why do you think God said, “For I know the thoughts that I think towards you”? Evidently because His people think He’s thinking something different, right?

And He makes it clear in this oft quoted verse that the thoughts that He is thinking toward us are good thoughts, not evil. They are thoughts of peace! In other words, He is not angry and focusing on all the bad things we do. If He was, He would be violating the very admonition He gave us in Philippians 4:8 telling us to only think on positive things, right?

No, saints, God is thinking only good of you. He is a wonderful Heavenly Father that treasures you in His heart and only desires the best for you. Let that truth penetrate your heart today!

But here is another important point from Philippians 1:6... He was not expecting me to complete the work; this verse said that the good work He began, *He* was going to complete! In other words, the good work He began by grace through faith, He was going to finish by grace through faith! Thank you Jesus! That is grace, my friends!

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You see, in 1 Corinthians chapter 13, when describing the characteristics of love, the Apostle Paul said that love believes all things and hopes all things (see 1 Corinthians 13:7). So since God is love (1 John 4:8), then we should be able to see that God believes all things (i.e. He believes the best in us) and God hopes all things (i.e. He expects to see us succeed). In other words, God is optimistic, not pessimistic- contrary to popular opinion.

So when the Lord said in Philippians 1:6 that He was confident of this very thing, what He was literally saying to me was, "Trey, I believe in you! I am rooting for you! I am for you because I love you..." Then He was telling me *what* He believed in me... He believed that I was going to get back on track and that He was going to cause me to get to my destination and finish my race.

Let me tell you, when you see that God is actually for you and not against you, when you see Him as a Father who sits in the grandstands of heaven and cheers for you like any proud father does for the child that he loves; when you see God for who He truly is, a God of Love, a God of Hope, and a God of Faith, you will be freed to love Him in return, saints! That is the gospel truth!

There is a liberating power in knowing the unconditional love of God- in knowing that He will never be through with you and in knowing that He will always be for you! Praise be unto God for His marvelous grace!

And do you know what this truth did for me? It empowered me to turn my heart back towards Him! Yes, the grace that I once knew was again present in my life to live for the Lord like I once had. Not that I was doing everything perfectly by any means, but my heart was once again inclined towards the Lord. And when I saw this unconditional, all-consuming love of God for me, the joy of my salvation was restored. It was like I got saved all over again!

But this is what understanding the grace of God that was poured upon us will do! It empowers us to obey! It frees us from sin! Hallelujah! This is why having our heart first established in grace is so important.

Until next month... Maranatha!

Victoriously,

