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HOW TO WALK IN GOD'S PLAN AND PURPOSE FOR YOUR LIFE

Greetings my beloved brethren!

First of all, I'm excited to announce that Shannon and I will be taking our first mission trip *together*... We were invited to the city of Guadalajara, Mexico to do some teaching in a local bible college there as well as being involved in their class' graduation while we are there. We will have the opportunity to minister in a wonderful, thriving church while we are there as well! So we will be busy (as usual)!

So I ask you to please pray for us during this trip in mid-July! We believe the Lord is opening up doors of utterance for us all around the world that we may play a part in His ever increasing kingdom! Amen!

Well, over the past couple of months, I have been ministering on Sunday mornings at High Point Church a series entitled "Redeemed from the Curse of the Law." This series is based on Galatians 3:13 which states that "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (as it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree')..." And this series has been revelatory, my friends! I am persuaded that if this one truth would resound in our heart, we would see the things we experience in life in a totally different light. I have seen many light bulbs come on in our church as I have proclaimed that if it is found in the curse of the law, then we can be sure that it is not for us! Amen!

You see, there are things that Christ has already redeemed us from that we do not have to tolerate in our lives. Yes, there are things that we do not have to plead with God to change in our lives because the price has already been paid for us to live free from those things. Therefore, we just need to find out what those things are then resist them, fighting for our right to live in our redemption! Amen!

The word "redemption" itself is a word that denotes legalities. It literally describes the purchasing of a slave from the ownership of another. So when we are born again and receive the price that was paid to purchase us from our desperate plight (i.e. the blood of the Lamb), then we are, in fact, redeemed- bought out of the dominion of satan and sin.

Well, in Galatians 3:13, we are taught by the Apostle Paul that there is something that we are specifically redeemed from- the curse of the law. So a wise Christian, after reading this truth that Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law in Galatians 3:13, would immediately seek to find out what is this curse of the law that Paul is referring to. Amen?

Well, the curse of the law is described in the most detail in Deuteronomy chapter 28 beginning in verse 15. And upon reading verses 15-68, you will find that the curse of the law includes everything from death, sickness, poverty, mental illness, the loss of our children etc.

So, in this series, we have covered many of these things in detail. So I encourage you to go to our church's website at www.highpointmacon.com and listen to these messages from Sunday mornings under the media tab. You will be blessed by them; I can assure you!

But there is one particular thing listed in verse 29 that I felt led to share with you in this month's Living Logos, and it is along the lines of our purpose and fulfilling the vision God has for our lives. Deuteronomy 28:29 begins with, "And you shall grope at noonday, as a blind man gropes in darkness..."

Now I encourage you that as you read this, don't read it as something to be feared- hoping that it never happens to you. No, we need to read these things contained in the curse of the law as things that Christ has already redeemed us from. So when we see a curse like groping around at noonday as a blind man gropes around in darkness, we need to realize that Jesus already paid the price for us to live free from this.

So what does it mean that one "shall grope at noonday, as a blind man gropes in darkness?" The word "grobe"

means to search blindly and with uncertainty. When I read this I see it as referring to having no vision, direction or guidance. This is someone who is searching around for purpose and vision like a blind man is groping around trying to find out where he is going.

But how many Christians do we see who are doing just this? They are wandering around in their life, never realizing their purpose nor having a vision for their life. Saints, living in this wandering and aimless state is a product of the curse of the law, and we are therefore redeemed from it! Amen!

Friends, the Lord wants us to know what our purpose is and wants our lives to be full of vision and focus as we press forward in fulfilling our destiny and dreams. He doesn't want us to live lives of uncertainty and searching around blindly for what our heart is looking for. No! Having no direction and vision is a curse! God wants us to walk with clear purpose into the plans He has for us! Amen?

When I considered this truth, I was immediately drawn to one of our most loved verses, Jeremiah 29:11. In this beloved verse of so many, we have God's heart concerning the plans He has for us. It says, "For I know the thoughts I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope."

THE THOUGHTS HE THINKS

First of all, I want you to notice that God is actually thinking about you and me... Did you know this- that the Lord actually thinks about us? Glory to God! We tend to spend more time talking about our own thought life and how we are to keep our minds set on Him, but did you know that God practices what He preaches? For example, He told us to set our minds on things above, right? (see Colossians 3:2) Well, He also does this, but **He sets His mind on things below!** Praise the Lord!

Psalm 139:17-18 says, "How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand..." Wow! Now that is a lot of thoughts! And when David wrote this, he was referring to just the thoughts that God thinks of him personally! Glory to Jesus! And did you know that since God is no respecter of persons, His thoughts are just that precious and innumerable about you too?

Now most Christians do not have a problem believing that God is constantly considering them; what they do have a hard time believing, however, is that those thoughts are good and positive thoughts. But again, what does Jeremiah 29:11 say that He thinks about us? "For I know the thoughts I think toward you... *thoughts of good and not of evil, of peace, to give you a future and a hope.*" My brothers and sisters, God is not thinking evil about you! He is focusing on the good in you! And why? Because He loves you a whole lot more than you can possibly imagine! You see, this fact that we are constantly on His mind reemphasizes to us a very important truth- and that is that He loves us...

You know, when we fall in love, one characteristic of that love is our minds become filled with that other person. We think about them all the time when we are at the height of that love. And why are we thinking so much of that person? It is because they are in our heart! Saints, God actually holds us in His heart! He does not just tolerate us or make Himself have to think good things about us. No, He thinks good thoughts about us because we hold a special place in His heart! In other words, we are important to Him because you do not rent space in your heart to people or things that are not important to you. No, what is in your heart is what is valuable to you! Therefore, we must be extremely valuable to the Lord if His heart and mind are so inclined towards us! Amen!

PLANS FOR OUR PEACE

Now it should be noted that the word "thoughts" in the beginning of this verse carries more of the idea of plans, purposes, or intentions. However, we know that in order to have a plan and purpose, you must first give thought to those plans and purposes, right?

So the word "thoughts" is also a good word for us to consider because it shows that (as this Hebrew word is also translated in other passages of Scripture) God is "plotting, scheming and devising" a grand and

glorious future for us! Amen? You know, when we hear words like to “plot, scheme and devise,” we usually gear towards the negative, but that is not the case here. In **the mind of God, His “scheming” revolves around our blessing!** In other words, God’s thoughts towards us are thoughts that conspire our good and welfare. Praise Jesus!

My friends, the mind of Christ is filled with wonderful plans, purposes and intentions for your life! He has a plan for you! You might not think He does; but He does! That’s why I believe it is significant how the first part of Jeremiah 29:11 is worded...

Notice again that the Lord says, “For I know the thoughts I think toward you, says the Lord...” Why does He say, “For *I know* the thoughts...”? Evidently, it was because His people believed He was thinking something else! Did you know that this is still true today? So many of God’s people have a totally incorrect perception of what God is thinking about them. They think God is harsh, critical and fault finding- always focused on our sin and shortcomings. This is why the Lord went on to say in Jeremiah 29:11 that the thoughts and plans that He knows He has for us are for peace and *not of evil*. Evidently this is exactly what His chosen people believed He was thinking about them- thoughts of evil. Nothing could be further from the truth! As we have already seen, the exact opposite is true!

You see, while God certainly is well aware of all of our faults and failures, He does not focus on the negative. No, in fact, God is focused more on our potential and His good plan for us than all of the ways that we fall short of His glory. Sure, we tend to focus on the negatives in people, but not God! No, 1 Corinthians 13:5 tells us that love thinks no evil. Amen! Other translations say, “(love) keeps no record of wrongs,” “(love) does not count the bad” and “it doesn’t keep score of the sins of others.” So listen- if God is love (1 John 4:8), then that means that God keeps no record of wrongs, He does not count the bad things in us, and He doesn’t keep score of our sins! Amen! In fact, the Scriptures teach us that our sins and lawless deeds He remembers no more (Hebrews 10:17)! Why? It’s because He has removed our sins as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12)!

So His thoughts, plans and purpose for us are of “peace” and not of evil... Now, of course, the word “peace” comes from the Hebrew word “shalom”- which means more than simply having an absence of conflict. Shalom describes “completeness, wholeness, soundness, success and welfare.” It basically describes having nothing missing and nothing broken in our lives. So we can see that God’s thoughts and plans for our lives involve making them complete, whole, sound, successful and with nothing missing and nothing broken! Amen!

So we have clearly seen God’s heart on the matter... He has good thoughts and plans for us! His purpose for us is to live lives that are complete, whole, sound-with nothing missing and nothing broken in them! Amen and amen!

HOW TO WALK IN GOD’S PLAN AND PURPOSE

But how many of you know that not every Christian walks in the reality of Jeremiah 29:11? We would be naïve to think that all of God’s children actually walk in this complete and total fulfillment of nothing missing and nothing broken in their lives. I would have to say that actually the vast majority of God’s children do not experience what Jeremiah 29:11 describes.

So the question is- Why? Why do so many of God’s people not experience this wonderful hope and future that God has for them? Well, I believe the Lord has shown me that some of the reasons for this are found in this very chapter- Jeremiah chapter 29.

So what I want us to do in this edition of the Living Logos is look at a few truths listed here in Jeremiah chapter 29 because I wholeheartedly believe that in them lie some integral keys that unlock us fulfilling what God’s heart is for us to walk in.

You see, as it is with so many Scriptures, we tend to take these truths and lift them up out of context, and in doing so, we miss the complete picture of what God was trying to communicate to us. And Jeremiah 29:11 is no different! While so many believers can quote this verse, the vast majority of them have never considered the context of it. So let’s take a look at this entire passage of Scripture and glean from the truth of God’s Word...

Now in most of our Bibles, when you look at verses 4-28, the margins are a little different. The reason for this is because it is actually a letter that the prophet Jeremiah wrote to the exiles who were carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon. Now the purpose of this letter was to give some specific instructions and exhortations to these exiles while they were in Babylon.

So let's begin looking at this letter recorded in the Book of Jeremiah in detail and see what principles are included in it that will help us to enter into those thoughts, plans and purposes that the Lord has for us...

HOW TO FIND GOD'S WILL

I want to draw your attention first to the couple of verses that immediately follow Jeremiah 29:11...

Immediately after saying that He knows the thoughts He thinks towards us and that they are plans of peace, a hope and a future, the Lord says, "Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me..." Now this is significant, saints, because the word "then" shows us "when" we will call upon Him and pray to Him. And when will this be? When we start thinking the way God thinks about us! *Then* we will call upon Him and go and pray to Him! That's good stuff right there!

So when we truly understand that God has a good plan for our lives (i.e. we are convinced that He has a good plan with a hope and a future) we will start calling and praying to discover that plan! Thank you Lord Jesus!

You see, if we are convinced that the Lord has a good plan- meaning, this truth is established in our hearts- we will seek after it. For one to say they believe God has a purpose for them, yet they never search for it with any semblance of persistence and zeal, I highly doubt that they believe in their hearts that He has something good for them. Why? Because faith without works is dead (James 2:20)!

And this leads me to my next point: This praying and calling upon the Lord is not a passive thing either! Notice what Jeremiah said next in verse 13... He said, "And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart."

You know, one of the main reasons that many of God's people do not truly uncover His plan for their lives is because they do not put their whole heart into discovering it! Sure, they hope they will discover the plan of God for them. They sure would like to know. But do they ever spend time seeking to know it? Do they get serious enough to fast and pray concerning what God's purpose is for their lives? Sadly, not many do this. Like I said, **they would like to know His plan and purpose, but they don't love to know it!** What I mean by that is they don't want to know it to the degree that they're willing to spend any time, effort and energy to find it!

You see, God has told us time and time again in His Holy Word that when we ask, we shall receive, when we seek, we shall find, when we knock it shall be opened for us (Matthew 7:7-8)! But this asking, seeking and knocking is not just the casual- "Well, I knocked a couple of times but no one came to the door. I guess they weren't home, so I'll just leave." No, we are talking about a kind of asking, seeking and knocking that is persistent and that is not willing to quit! Amen! And it is not that God is like some old miser up in heaven who is unwilling to give you what you want until you beg enough. No, it is just that sometimes we must press through the flesh to uncover the riches of the Spirit! Amen!

So, yes, a foundational key to discovering God's plan and purpose for you is to begin seeking Him for that plan with all of your heart! Amen? But what do you do while you are seeking and searching? That is a great question; I'm glad I asked it©. So let's go back to the beginning of this letter and see what specific instructions the Lord gave to these exiles through Jeremiah...

STEP #1- BLOOM WHERE YOU ARE PLANTED

In the beginning of this letter, Jeremiah starts out exhorting the people to build houses and plant gardens, to take spouses and beget sons and daughters (see verses 4-6). He was basically telling them to continue living

the way they would even though they were not in their home of Jerusalem. So here is a good first step to fulfilling your purpose and vision- bloom where you are planted!

You see, human nature tends towards not putting its best foot forward if it does not have a controlling interest in the place that it is planted. In other words, we tend to take better care of our baby than we do of someone else's baby. So many people despise the day of small beginnings and the Scriptures teach us not to do so (see Zechariah 4:10). And since they are unhappy with the thing that they are currently setting their hand to do, they do not show the same diligence and effort that they would if they had the job, family, ministry etc. that they desired. But if God has put us somewhere- whether it be in a job, a church etc.- then our goal should be to show the same diligence that we would if it were our own business or our own ministry.

In Ephesians chapter 6 we see similar exhortations to those of us who are serving under the umbrella of another... Beginning in verse 5, Paul addresses "bondservants." Now the following exhortations can apply to anyone who is under the authority of someone else. He goes on to tell them- "be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men." So what we see here is the heart attitude we should have when serving is that we are ultimately serving the Lord, not the man.

Now there is a reason that this exhortation is in the Bible, and do you know why that is? It's because the vast majority of people do not do their job or serve in their churches with this attitude. Most people are men-pleasers and as long as someone is looking, recognizing their hard work etc. they will get the job done, but the moment eyes are turned away from them, they give a lack luster effort.

As it has been said in the world- "Dress for the job you want, not for the job you've got." This goes for not only how you dress, but the attitude and effort that you dress yourself with in your current situation. Friends, promotion comes neither from the east or from the west; promotion comes from the Lord! (see Psalm 75:6) **But one of the main reasons I see that the vast majority do not get promoted by the Lord is because they are not truly working for the Lord; they are working for man.**

So my point is that when we are currently in a situation where we are serving another man's plan, purpose and vision, do it heartily as unto God, not unto man! Take ownership and put your best foot forward, knowing that as Ephesians 6:8 goes on to promise us- "whatever good any one does, he will receive the same from the Lord." In other words, work hard for the authorities God has put in your life like you are serving Christ Himself. Then you will position yourself for promotion! Amen?

STEP #2- SEEK THE PEACE OF THE CITY

Yes, Jeremiah 29:4-6 tells us to live life to the full even if we are in Babylon. Don't quit! Work heartedly as unto the Lord in whatever situation you might currently be in. Trust the Lord to bless the work of your hands and to prosper whatever you set your hands unto. But human nature is to simply gripe and complain with the way things are.

Now I am about to step on some toes here, but do you know one way that we do this? We do this with our government. So many people- including Christians- are so disenchanted with the state of our country. And while I do not disagree with the fact that we need a major change and intervention from God in the United States of America, this does not mean we should be sitting around and cursing our nation because we don't like how things are going. No, as Jeremiah 29:7 goes on to say, "And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it; for in its peace you will have peace." Wow! There is so much we can learn from this verse!

Verse 7 reminds me of 1 Timothy chapter 2 where the Apostle Paul undisputedly teaches us to pray for all men, especially the kings and all who are in authority. And why? "That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence." (1 Tim 2:2). Do you know what this teaches me? **The reason why we don't experience a quiet and peaceable life is not because of the king and those in authority, but**

because of the church's failure to pray for the king and those in authority. Amen or Oh me? You see, we need to be praying for the peace of Jerusalem (absolutely!), but we also need to be praying for the peace of whatever plan that we live in! Amen? For in praying for its peace, we will have peace!

But this also goes for praying for your family, your job, your church etc... Saints, there are countless employees out there who are griping and complaining about how much they make in their job, but what if instead of them complaining, they would start using that same energy to pray for the success and prosperity of their employer? Do you think that just maybe if they would start prospering, they would have more to pay you? Just maybe! But somebody will say, "Yeah well, they wouldn't pay me any extra anyways." But again, who is your employer? It's ultimately the Lord! He is who we are to be serving whole-heartedly! So then, He is the One who can give us the raise that we desire by moving upon our employers hearts or by supplying our needs another way! Amen!

So pray for the place that you are in. Pray for the peace and prosperity of those around you- genuinely and from the heart, seeking their own welfare. For, as this Scriptures promises, in their peace, we will find your peace!

STEP #3- DON'T LISTEN TO HANANIAH!

Then Jeremiah goes on to exhort the people in verses 8&9 to not listen to the wrong voices...

Now there was a false prophet in Jeremiah's day that was speaking lies to the people. If you go back and read Jeremiah chapter 28, you will see where a man by the name of Hananiah was prophesying to the priests and all of the people that the Lord was going to bring them and all of their stuff back to Jerusalem in 2 years. The gist of his message was that they do not need to get too comfortable in Babylon- for the Lord was going to break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar from them soon. Now while I'm sure these were comforting words in the ears of all the people, they were not accurate. In fact, in his letter to the exiles, Jeremiah gave them the true Word of the Lord that after 70 years are completed in Babylon, the Lord would bring them back to their own land (see Jeremiah 29:10). In other words, the truth he was giving them was that probably all of them were going to die in Babylon and their children or children's children will be the ones to return to Jerusalem.

Now, as history has taught us, Jeremiah's words were not appreciated very much. Why? Because people want to hear what they want to hear. And this is something we need to guard our hearts against when we are in those days of small beginnings...

Friends, when we are in our "Babylon," we need to be careful not to heed the voices that we hear on the inside of us. For the flesh and soul love to feed us lies that enforce impatience and not remaining planted. We need to be careful not to feed those deceptions and uproot ourselves prematurely before the fruit can begin to come forth from the seed sown. This is a huge temptation that we need to resist- not to uproot ourselves prematurely before the fruit of God's purpose can be produced in and through us!

Friends, we need to be convinced that God is thinking good thoughts about us and He has a bright future ahead for each and every one of us! Then when we become convinced of it, start searching for it with all of our hearts- that is, spending time in our prayer closets seeking His face with the aim of obtaining His thoughts! Then, in the meantime, blooming where we are planted- working as unto the Lord with all of our might! Also, praying for others around us to fulfill their glorious future as well. And by all means, not listening to those "Hananiah's" who would try to convince us to move and uproot ourselves from our place called there! Do this and I give you an unconditional guarantee, you will discover your purpose!

Until next month... Maranatha!

Victoriously,

