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NOVEMBER 2016 LEST YOU ENTER INTO TEMPTATION

Greeting saints of God!

Isn't it great to be selected, called out and separated unto the plan and purpose of God!?! This is what it means to be a part of God's "church," my friends!

You see, the church is not a building and it's not an organization; you are the church! The church is a group of chosen individuals that make up the body of Christ! But the bottom line is that we are chosen by God and He has chosen to take up residence on the inside of each of our temples. Amen! That is grace, saints! Praise God!

Let me give you a brief update on what is going on with us. But before I do, allow me to take a moment to thank our partners out there who faithfully sow into our ministry, helping us to do what we do. We really appreciate each of you, and pray that the Lord gives you a bountiful harvest for the kindness you have sown. Your gifts really do help us do what we do! So thank you!

One thing we just recently accomplished is we just passed our **ten year anniversary of writing these Living Logos newsletters!** It was on August 26th, 2006 that I completed our very first teaching newsletter, and for ten years now, we have been sending out these materials on a consistent basis! God is faithful! These newsletters are now reaching many people all the way in India and around the world- people's lives being impacted and changed by God's Living Word. Amen!

Living Logos Ministries is also in the process of writing a couple of books, and I am making some good headway with one in particular that is based on the Apostle Paul's Epistle to the Philippians. It's going to be a great book and I plan to get it completed at some point in 2017! Stay tuned.

And, of course, our ministry is recording "The Living Word" television program on a local Christian network here in Macon. And we are receiving many testimonies of how the show is ministering to people.

So God is doing great things through our ministry and expect that the best is certainly yet to come! He alone opens doors that no one can shut! Glory to God!

So if you have been blessed by our ministry, I ask you to consider partnering with us with your prayers and financial support. It does cost money to put all of these things together, and the Lord uses you and I to be the ones that meet the needs of those who steward the mysteries of the kingdom. Please consider this and do what you can to help undergird all that God is doing through LLM.

As for this month's teaching, I want us to look back at one of our first ever Living Logos' where I talk about a very important subject regarding how to avoid entering into temptations. So let's jump right into it!

CHURCH CASUALTIES

You know, one of the most catastrophic and disappointing things that can occur in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is when one of its leaders fall.

I remember when Shannon and I lived in Colorado Springs for two years, we happened to be present for one of the most significant casualties in the church in recent history. A local pastor in one of the largest churches in all of the U.S. was reported to be involved in some heinous acts, and this created a huge fuss in the State of Colorado. When I initially heard of this news I was grieved because of the reproach that things like this bring upon our Lord and His Body.

You see, so many people hold the Lord responsible for the actions of His people and this should not be so. Even though we fail and fall short, God never changes! I have often told people- "Don't judge the Lord by the character of His children because, oftentimes, we are poor representatives of His character." So many get their eyes off the Lord and onto His representatives; so when His people mess up, those people lose their faith. Well, God is not the one making the mistakes! It is the earthen vessels in whom He has placed His treasure that make the mistakes, not Him. One of my favorite sayings is- "If it's good it's God! If it's bad it's us!"

But what the Lord taught me through this particular tragedy in the Body of Christ was that nobody is incapable of falling. People will look at this pastor's mistakes and say, "How could somebody who was that anointed and saw that much success fall like that?"

Well, first of all, people need to understand that just because someone might be specially anointed to deliver the Word does not mean that they are specially anointed to do the Word. As a matter of fact, those with the ministries called to impact the most people have a bigger bulls-eye on them and will be under more severe attack from the enemy.

Now I am not trying to make excuses for the actions of those who fall but these are truths that can help us be more compassionate and non-judgmental towards them. We just need to understand that we are all capable of the committing unthinkable sins if we walk in the flesh long enough.

Let's look at some verses that teach us this found in Galatians chapter six...

LEST YOU ALSO BE TEMPTED

Galatians 6:1 starts off by saying- "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted."

You know, we all consider ourselves to be spiritual, but according to this verse, Paul says a mark of true spirituality is to restore, with a spirit of gentleness, those who transgress. Now that last part is the key. The Apostle Paul does not say that the spiritual ones just restore those who have fallen; it says how they restore them- in a spirit of gentleness. So you could say that they attempt to restore them "with an attitude of humility."

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And then Paul describes what he means by “a spirit of gentleness” when he says, “considering yourself lest you also be tempted.” Do you see what the Apostle Paul is saying here? He is saying that a mark of true spirituality is when you understand that you are not better than that person who has fallen. It is when you desire to restore them- not with the condescending attitude that you are better than them- but with the humble attitude that all of us are capable of the most foolish things if we get in the flesh long enough and start yielding to the wrong spirits.

Now let’s skip down to verse three, because in it, Paul continues to focus on the attitude of the “saint” as opposed to the “sinner.”

In Galatians 6:3, the Apostle Paul goes on to say, “For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.”

The attitude that Paul is describing in this verse is the exact opposite attitude of that “spirit of gentleness” he mentions in verse one. So many times we deceive ourselves into thinking that we are at a place spiritually where we are incapable of being tempted with certain things. This is absolutely untrue! No one is untouchable! Now you might not be capable of doing certain things today, but if you sow to your flesh for an extended period of time your corruption is inevitable (see Galatians 6:8). Understanding this will greatly help you have a “spirit of gentleness” when restoring those that have fallen.

You see, when we see minister’s fall, spiritual pride tends to enter in subtly and we find ourselves thinking things like- “Even if all forsake you Lord, I will not!” Does that sound familiar? Of course, that is what Peter said to the Lord Jesus, and you know that he believed that with all of his heart when he said it.

You see, Peter loved the Lord intensely and he could not ever see himself denying Him just as most of us could never see ourselves doing anything like that. But as Joyce Meyer so poetically stated- “You never know what your fruit is made of until it gets squeezed.” In other words, you don’t know what you are made of until the pressure is on you. And, as you well know, Peter found out real quick what he was and was not capable of doing.

But there is good news! Even though we are all capable of making mistakes and falling, there are things that the Word of God teaches us that we can do to keep ourselves from entering into those temptations.

HOW TO OVERCOME TRESPASSES

So this is what I have on my heart to share with you this month. I want us to look at some of the things that the Lord has taught me that we can do to not be overtaken by any trespass. So let’s turn in our Bibles to Matthew chapter 26...

We just saw how Peter said that he would never deny the Lord, and now we are in the Garden of Gethsemane, a matter of hours before he did what he could never see himself doing. I believe verse 41 contains one of the major reasons that Peter fell that evening as well as holds the key for us to not being overtaken by any trespass. So let’s look at this verse in detail.

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In Matthew 26:41 Jesus says, "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." What a loaded verse, full of so many great truths!

First of all, notice the phrase- "...lest you enter into temptation." Did you know that the Bible does not really emphasize overcoming temptations? It doesn't! **What the Bible actually teaches us is to not even enter into temptations!** For example, in the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:13), Jesus taught us to pray that we would not enter into temptation. What a radical concept!

Did you know that there are many believers who commit abortion every day? Now I am obviously not talking about physical abortion; I am talking about spiritual abortion. What I mean is that they live their life having intimacy with the ungodliness on television, the internet, etc. and then- when they are confronted with a temptation- they have to "white knuckle it" to keep themselves from giving in to that desire. Of course, there are certain temptations that are unavoidable because we live in an ungodly society, but the truth is that there are many temptations that can simply be avoided by living holy lifestyles. And what I mean by "holy lifestyles" is living separate from the ways of the world.

It is sad to say, but you could not tell most professing Christians from "Joe-blow sinner" down the road. In other words, if they did not tell you that they were a Christian, you likely would never presume that they are. And then these same Christians do not understand why they struggle with a lust for sin in their hearts.

Saints, that is really no different than the female who goes around being intimate with boys, keeps getting pregnant, and then has to keep getting abortions to keep from having a bunch of babies. How would you admonish that girl who continuously slept around and kept getting pregnant? Of course, you would tell her to stop sleeping around, wouldn't you? Well, that is exactly what the Bible teaches us about temptations: **quit being intimate with the temptation!** Or, as we would say in the natural, quit putting yourself in the position to get pregnant!

The Apostle Peter makes my point best when he says, "...Abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." (1 Peter 2:11) You see, the best form of birth control from those fleshly lusts is spiritual abstinence- that is, keeping away from the ungodliness that you do not want to conceive in your heart.

WATCH AND PRAY

So how do you do this? How do you keep yourself from entering into temptation? Well, as I have already stated, you first need to abstain from the lusts of this world to the best of your ability. But notice again what Jesus said in Matthew 26:41... He said, "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation..."

Here, Jesus gives us two things we can specifically do to keep ourselves from entering into temptation, and the first one I want to discuss is the admonition to "pray."

If you were able to look back at the weeks, months, and even years preceding the fall of anyone- ministers and laymen alike- you will find one thing is constant. You will find a decrease in their prayer lives.

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You see, when one starts to allow their relationship with God- specifically through prayer- to become basically non-existent then they are opening themselves up to a life dominated by the flesh. No one can neglect time spent with God and live strong spiritual lives. Prayer is the basic foundation of our Christian walks. If we allow our primary purpose on this earth to wane (which is communion with God) then we are building our lives on a shaky foundation and are putting ourselves in a position to fall when the winds, waves, and rain comes.

So if you are not making time with God and are allowing anything else to take away from your relationship with Him, then do yourself, your family, your church, etc. a favor and make time to seek His face. It is crucial, as Jesus has said, to keep yourself from entering into temptation.

The other one word instruction that Jesus used here to keep us from entering into temptation was the word “watch”...

Jesus used this word repeatedly throughout His three years of ministry. He oftentimes used it in connection with His Second Coming- admonishing His disciples to be ready for that day that will come like a thief in the night. And to simplify its intended meaning, it was simply referring to possessing *spiritual awareness*.

You see, so many people (even Christians) float through this life totally unaware of the spiritual realm, and are completely unaware of the warfare surrounding them. This is why Peter admonished us in his First Epistle to be sober and vigilant because our adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour!(Peter 5:8). There is an unseen enemy out there who is trying to devour us and Peter tells us to be sober and vigilant of that fact.

The word “sober” describes “thinking straight and clearly” and the word “vigilant” is the same Greek word used in Matthew 26:41 for the word “watch.” So as we have already seen, Peter was very aware of this and evidently took to heart what Jesus had said to them in the Garden of Gethsemane.

So how does “watching” help us not to enter into temptations? First of all, if we stay spiritually awake- ever mindful of the kingdom of God and of Jesus’ soon return, then we will be more inclined to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age (Titus 2:12).

Just think about it, if you had the revelation that Jesus could, in fact, show up any minute, don’t you think you might straighten your act up a little? Of course you would! You would do your best to get your house in order and to tell as many people as you could to do the same! This is why I see such a need in the Body of Christ for us to preach more about Jesus’ soon return. There are so many Christians out there who have “zero” revelation of this and are proving it by their lives that are conformed to this present world! We need to pray that this truth will become alive in our hearts so that we will live everyday like it is our last on this earth!

Secondly, when we “watch,” it helps us stay alert to the spiritual realm around us so that we will not be caught by surprise by any of the wiles of the devil. In other words, we will not be ignorant of any of his devices if we are sober and watchful of his various kinds of temptations. So many believers just

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float through this life without a clue that there is an enemy out there who is always trying to destroy them. If we would just stay alert to the fact that there are always demons on assignment against us- constantly attempting to use circumstances, co-workers, strangers and even our families to make us fall, then we would be more prepared to handle those temptations.

WILLING OR WEAK?

And, last but not least, notice what Jesus concluded by saying in Matthew 26:41- “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

In essence, what Jesus was saying was that there are two parts of us that vehemently oppose one another (Compare Galatians 5:17). Our spirit is always strong and desiring to do the will of God, but our flesh is weak and would rather go with the flow of the world.

So do you think maybe what Jesus said at the beginning of this verse has something to do with whether or not we walk in the spirit or in the flesh? I believe it was. I believe Jesus was telling His disciples then and now how we can successfully live out of our spirit- the part of us that is willing- instead of out of our flesh which has sin and carnality engrained in it. Yes, by keeping our mind stayed on spiritual things- through watching and prayer- we can successfully live a life where the flesh will not dominate us and we will not be overcome by its lusts.

As Galatians 5:16 plainly states- “Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh!” There are no ifs, ands, or buts about it! The Word of God tells us that when we walk in the Spirit we absolutely will not fulfill the lusts of our flesh! And in Matthew 26:41, Jesus gives us the two major keys to walking in that new nature that is always willing to do the will of God and incapable of falling. Amen.

So until next month- cultivate a consistent prayer life and become more aware of your spiritual surroundings. If you do these things, my friends, you will never stumble! Selah!

Victoriously,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Trey', with the date '3/26/12' written in smaller text to the right of the signature.