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THREE STEPS TO AVOIDING THE BAD THINGS THAT HAPPEN

Greetings, church!

I am writing this letter just before our departure to India due to the timing and length of our trip, but my plan is give you a thorough update of all that will transpire in future editions of these Living Logos. So, be on the lookout for those!

But I did want to thank everyone again for both your financial support and prayers regarding this mission's trip. We cannot express how thankful we are to have so many friends and family that would support us like you have. You are a blessing and will be blessed as a result! So, be on the lookout for those blessings too!

Last month, I began talking about "Why Bad Things Happen," and I explained that the reason I felt led to broach this subject was because of all of the things that recently have been transpiring in the world. There have been an abundance of hurricanes, earthquakes, floods and other tragedies that have touched many of our lives, and the question that usually arises when these bad things occur is- Why? Why do these things happen?

Now I explained last month that when many Christians ask this question, it usually comes from the belief system that God is in control and that He must have allowed these things to happen. Well, I cannot go into this in detail again, but we learned from several Scriptures that God is not the One who is directly causing or indirectly allowing these bad things to happen. These things happen because Adam allowed it in the beginning. That is the truth of the matter.

But we also learned that there are three primary reasons that bad things happen on this earth, and they are either because of:

1. **SIN-** Yes, this one should be rather obvious, but when people live contrary to God's way, statutes and principles, they open themselves up to the wages of their sin. In other words, when we persist in living contrary to the things God tells us to do, we cannot blame Him for the fruit we eat as a result. Now we can certainly repent and turn back to God and receive His mercy, not getting what we might have deserved, but if we continue to sow towards sin, it will catch up to us and we will eventually reap its wages, which are death.
2. **THE DEVIL-** Contrary to popular belief, there really is a devil out there and he and his cohorts are in the business of stealing, killing and destroying. Jesus showed us in John 10:10 that we have an enemy and he is the thief. Therefore, even though many people attribute things that steal from us as being *of God*, this Scripture and many others clearly show us that we have an enemy and he is the one who is bringing death into our lives, not God.
3. **THIS SIN-CURSED, FALLEN WORLD-** Yes, some bad things do not necessarily happen because of sin or Satan; some bad things happen because the world we live in is cursed and dying. That's right- some sickness, disease, natural disasters etc. happen because we live in a fallen world that is awaiting redemption. Sure, some of these things are a direct result of sin and the kingdom of darkness, but not everything. We learned that our world is travailing and is experiencing birth pangs. So, the closer we get to the end, the closer those contractions will get.

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So, these are the three primary reasons why we see so many bad things occurring in the world around us. But does that mean that we are doomed? Does that mean that there is nothing we can do about it, so we better just hope and pray we do not get caught in any of it? Certainly not! Yes, there are things that we can intentionally do to avoid incurring any of these disasters and tragedies in not only our own lives but also in the lives of our loved ones.

And that is what I want us to look at this month- ***How to Avoid these Bad Things***. So, let's begin by looking at the favorite psalm of many of you out there- the 91st Psalm...

CHOOSING GOD'S PROTECTION

First of all, I want you to notice how the first verse reads in our great "protection psalm," where God makes it clear His intention to guard, keep and protect His people. Psalm 91:1 says, "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." What this statement is literally saying is that it is the one who dwells in the secret place of the Most High that shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. In other words, living in the secret place of the Most High results in living under His shadow.

Now the shadow of the Almighty simply describes His protective covering. We know from James 1:17 that God has no shadow of turning and 1 John 1:5 teaches us that in Him is no darkness at all. So, the picture we see painted here is not of a literal shadow, but of a covering provided by His presence that we are abiding in. Notice that the psalmist says that we shall abide *under* the shadow of the Almighty. Therefore, I feel a great analogy that can be used here is of an umbrella. As we dwell in the secret place of the Most High, we shall abide under His protective umbrella- which shields us from the elements brought on by this world and from the devices of our enemy.

But here is the point I want you to get today: As you dwell in the secret place, you are, by default, abiding under His shadow. In other words, when we decide to live (because "to dwell" means "to live") in His secret place, we are choosing to abide under His protective umbrella. And, friends, this is our decision where we choose to dwell; it is not up to God.

You see, I can stand beside you with an umbrella covering you from the rain, but if you decide to move away from me and do your own thing, it doesn't matter how much I plead with, you are going to get wet if you do not stay close to me and heed my instructions. Well, this is the choice God has always given His people- to abide under His shadow or do what seems right to them- which will always lead to death.

So, as He told Israel in Deuteronomy 30:19, choose life! Choose today whom you will serve! As for Trey and the Dickerson household, we will serve the Lord, knowing that as we serve Him, we are choosing a life of protection! Amen?

So, although we have promises of protection like this one in the 91st Psalm and all throughout the Bible, it is important to understand that God's protection does not automatically appear in our lives just because He wants us protected; we must choose His protection.

Now, in both my own experience and in my study of the Scriptures, there are three ways to apply God's protection in our lives from these bad and harmful things that surround us. Yes, there are three very concrete and solid steps that will guarantee us avoiding these unnecessary hurtful things.

However, let me make one important point lest anyone misunderstand what I am saying here: I am

referring to things that God has redeemed us from such as plagues of the enemy like sickness and disease and these natural, harmful things that the world throws at us. I am not referring to things such as persecution and the trials and tribulations that the devil will throw at us because we are making an impact on his kingdom. These are not things that we are redeemed from walking through. But notice I said, "walking *through*"- for if we do these three things, we will walk through them without even the smell of smoke. Amen?

So, what are these three things that we can do to walk under God's protective shadow?

THREE STEPS TO AVOIDING THE BAD THINGS THAT HAPPEN

- 1. Being Led by the Holy Spirit**
- 2. Doing His Sayings**
- 3. Intercession**

BEING LED BY THE SPIRIT

Now I put this one at the top of the list because I see it as such a critical part to avoiding these tempting, evil things. Learning to be led by the Holy Spirit was one of the first things the Lord ever taught me after I was born again and I am a firm believer in the fact that if we could be led by the Holy Spirit 100% of the time, we would avoid many of the unnecessary stumbling blocks this world and the devil throws at us.

You see, the Holy Spirit was given to us for many reasons, but one reason is certainly to lead and guide us in the way we should go. And as we have already established, since God is good and His heart is to pour out only good and perfect things, then we can rest assured that the Holy Spirit will lead us in paths of plenty and protection. Therefore, if we would just learn to hear from Him and do what He is leading us to do, we would be led on smooth and straight paths (Proverbs 3:5). Amen?

For example, Jesus makes this very profound statement in His model prayer: "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Matthew 6:13). Let me ask you- why would Jesus have included this in His model prayer if it wasn't a significant part of our life? Evidently being led by the Lord is an extremely important part of our life. And this also expresses the will of God concerning temptation and evil in our lives: it is the Lord's will to lead us out of temptation and to deliver us from evil.

One of my favorite biblical examples of this is found in the account of Lazarus being raised from the dead:

In this familiar story located in John chapter 11, news was brought to Jesus that his friend, Lazarus, whom He loved was sick. Now if this would have been most Christians in Jesus' shoes here, they would have immediately gone to heal their friend. But not Jesus! We are told that He stayed where He was another three days! And why did He do this? Well, I believe it was because the Holy Spirit simply led Him not to go the first three days, knowing that this was a scheme of the devil.

You see, Jesus just came from this area and, just before He left, the Jews sought to stone Him there. So, I personally believe the enemy was trying to set Jesus up to return out of an emotional response so that he could have Him stoned by those same Jews. But thank God for the Holy Spirit who led Him to stay where He was for a few more days and then, after Lazarus died from that sickness, released Him to return there.

You see, I can see those religious leaders who wanted to stone him just waiting around Lazarus' home for

those three days, waiting for Jesus to return because they just knew that if He was going to come heal anyone, He would certainly come heal His friend. But then, when Lazarus died, they left figuring Jesus was not going to come after all. And this was when Jesus came in and pulled off the biggest miracle of His ministry to date! Glory to God!

Thank you, Lord, for the Holy Spirit and for always leading us in triumph! Hallelujah!

DOING HIS SAYINGS

Now the next step to avoiding harmful and hurtful things is directly related to what we just got through talking about- for the Spirit and the Word agree.

You see, following God's Word and obeying biblical principles is such a vital part of Jesus being our "Lord." Now I am not referring to Him just being our Lord in word; I am referring to Him being our Lord in action. This was a major point that Jesus made regarding God's protection in our lives in one of His messages...

Jesus said, at the end of His Sermon on the Mount, *"Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord' and not do the things which I say?"* (see Luke 6:46) In other words, how can we call Him our Lord (i.e. Master) and not heed His instructions? That just does not make sense, does it? Well, notice what He went on to say in Matthew's account- *"Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."* (Matthew 7:24-27)

Now there are two very important things to understand about this parable:

1. Both of these guys that Jesus described heard His sayings, and contextually, they were both calling Him "Lord" too. So, we are talking about two different kinds of believers/followers of Jesus here.
2. Both of these guys had the same trials and tribulations attacking their house. Therefore, both of these types of Christians incurred hardships and had opportunities to have their homes destroyed.

Therefore, both of these so-called "Christians" heard His Word and both of them had the same troubles come against them. So, what was the difference? There was one major difference- one did what He heard and the other didn't, and this is what determined one's house being built on the Rock and the other's not.

So then, notice that Jesus was always the Rock to both individuals. He didn't change. He has, is, and always will be the Rock- the One whom we find refuge and shelter from the storms of life. But only one type of believer stood the disasters and dangers of this world- and that was the one who did what He said.

You understand that it is not just the hearers of the Word that get results, correct? Now hearing the Word is important because faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word. So, the more you hear the Word, the more opportunity you have for faith to come. But we should not come to church or listen to any other messages concerning God's Word just to hear something new and have our ears tickled. We should hear with the intention of being doers of what we've heard. In other words, planning to specifically apply the truth that we have heard in our lives. Amen?

Church, doing the Word (or you could say, following Biblical principles and statutes) is what will keep our house from being blown over when sin, the world and the devil are trying to blow it down. And why? Because God's Word is full of His ways and, as for the Lord, His way is perfect (see Psalm 18:30). In other words, if we do things the way He has laid it out for us in His Word, then we are capable of getting "God-results." Amen? But even if we are calling Him "Lord" and we do things our own way (i.e. the way that our soul and flesh want to do it), then we cannot expect God's protection and deliverance. And if this is the truth for a Christian who is simply not practicing Jesus' sayings, how much more is it true for those who reject God altogether.

INTERCESSION

But the truth is- as important as both the Word of God and the Holy Spirit are in us being kept from evil, prayer is important too- particularly, as it pertains to the impact of these bad things on our loved ones, our property etc. Yes, prayer can make a huge difference in avoiding many unnecessary evils and temptations- both for ourselves and for our loved ones. As Jesus taught us, it makes a big difference in certain tragedies that we see in life...

We see this in Luke 13:1-8 when Jesus answered this big theological question as to why bad things happen to certain people: In verses 1-5, He said, *"There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."*

Can you hear that Jesus was not going there with these questions of "why did this happen"? All that He dealt with is the sin question by saying that "No, this did not happen to them because they were worst sinners than others." This correlates with the Book of Job where Job's friends implied that Job's situation must have been a result of some sin in his life.

This is never a safe place to go, friends. While sin can certainly be a determining factor for certain things in our life, we must not automatically assume that is why every problem has come.

No, Jesus took this opportunity to talk about the frailty of life and how all of our lives will end at a moment that we do not expect. Therefore, living a life of repentance towards God is important so that when that unsuspecting time comes, we are ready!

But, just as any good teacher does, Jesus then went on to "also" speak a parable to them: You see, verses 1-5 were meant to teach us that tragedies are not necessarily an indication of sin, but verses 6-9 were meant to teach us that an absence of tragedies are not an indication of fruit either.

We are told in the following parable found in Luke 13:6-9- *"He also spoke this parable: 'A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, 'Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?' But he answered and said to him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down.'"*

What Jesus was doing here is talking about the importance of having an intercessor. Many have tried to make the fig tree be symbolic of Israel and so forth, but the bottom line is that this parable is tied

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together with verses 1-5. Therefore, we must interpret this parable based on the context of “why do bad things happen?”

You see, church, I do not think that we really realize just how much pull we have in the grand scheme of things. Just as Abraham was able to “Jew-down” God when it came to the destruction of Sodom & Gomorrah and the loss of lives involved, the Bible says that we are the seed of Abraham and, therefore, have the same blessing of Abraham. So, when we choose to stand in the gap on behalf of other individuals and certain geographic locations, we can thwart the devices of the devil and resist the curse of this world. Amen!

I believe this is what happened on 9/11 regarding the World Trade Center!

Did you know that they say that those two towers were the emptiest that they had ever been on that date? Why do you suppose that was? I believe that God was interceding through His people which caused many of those people to oversleep, their alarm clocks to not work, and to simply just not to go into work that day because something did not seem right.

This is why we must learn to respect the privilege and calling of intercessory prayer!

IN CONCLUSION

So, these are three things that we can do to avoid having sin, the devil and the curse of this world harm us individually, our geographic locations and our loved ones. Yes, intercession, doing the Word and being led by the Holy Spirit are three very important tools to being led out of bad and hurtful things that will try to overcome us.

Again, what we need to understand is that, while in the world, we will certainly have tribulation and there are some things that will happen that we will not have answers to. However, we need to stay on God’s side, knowing that He is good and that His will for us is always to give us a more abundant life. Amen and Selah.

I hope that this teaching has been an encouragement to you this month. And let me say that if you are ministered to by these teaching newsletters, take the time to contact us and let us know. It really encourages us when we hear of how our ministry is touching lives. God bless you!

So, until next month... Maranatha!!!

Victoriously,

