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October 2018

THE GOOD LIFE

Part Four – Green Pastures & Still Waters

Greetings, saints! Our sincere prayer at Living Logos Ministries is that you are living the good life that Jesus died to provide for you.

Wow! We are super excited about the soon release of our second full-length book entitled **The Epistle of Joy!** I'm telling you—this book is a goldmine on the subject of walking in the joy of the Lord! I believe that it truly holds the keys to unlocking a life of supernatural joy in our lives!

One thing I am also blessed to tell you is that I had the privilege of having Andrew Wommack write the foreword for this book for me! What an honor it is for me to have my father in the faith to write the following endorsement for The Epistle of Joy:

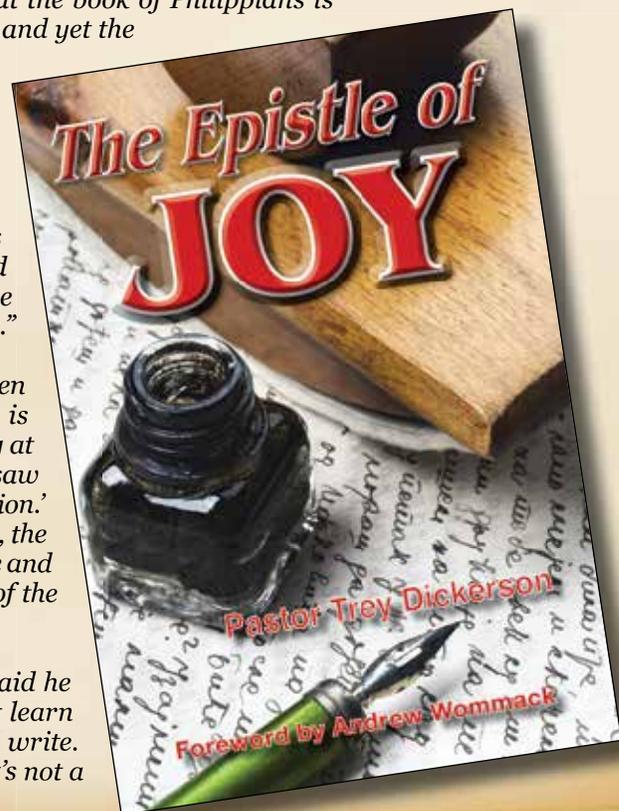
“The joy of the Lord is our strength (Nehemiah 8:10). You can check the health of a Christian by the amount of joy they operate in. If there isn't joy, they aren't healthy spiritually.”

“I know those statements shock most people and many might even say that condemns people who are in desperate situations. But, you can't get any more desperate than where Paul was and yet he was praising God when things were the worst. That's what the book of Philippians is all about. Paul was in prison facing possible execution and yet the letter to the Philippians is his Epistle of Joy.”

“Trey graduated from our Charis Bible College, and I was privileged to not only know him as a student, but also to have fellowship with he and his wife Shannon outside the classroom. I've seen them grow in faith and maturity as a couple, parents, and pastors. Trey has ministered in foreign countries with signs following, and I believe he has discovered a nugget about the joy of the Lord that is an absolute necessity in these troubling times.”

“It takes a deep relationship with the Lord to rejoice when everything around you makes you want to cry. There is no reason in the natural to rejoice unless you are looking at things through the eyes of faith. Like a bumper sticker I saw said, ‘If you aren't discouraged, you aren't paying attention.’ But for the Christian who is operating in true Bible faith, the apostle Peter said we would rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory (First Peter 1:8). If we are in the presence of the Lord there is fullness of joy (Psalms 16:11).”

“However, this joy doesn't come automatically. Paul said he had learned to be content (Philippians 4:11). You must learn how to walk in joy just as you must learn to read and write. It doesn't come automatically. The good news is that it's not a secret how this works. Paul clearly explained it.”



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“Trey has taken Paul’s secrets that were hidden in plain sight and expounded on them in a way that is working in his life and ministry. They will work for you too if you receive these truths. It’s up to you. God is no respecter of persons. What He has done for Paul He wants to do for you. God wants you to be happy more than you want it. Are you ready to agree with God and receive what is already yours? If your answer is ‘Yes’, then get ready to live the rest of your life in a continual feast (Proverbs 15:14).”

*Andrew Wommack
President & Founder of Andrew Wommack Ministries
and Charis Bible College*

And I echo Andrew’s sentiments here on the importance of understanding the truth about joy. It is a choice and it is learned! And I believe The Epistle of Joy practically teaches you how to choose this life of consistent and perpetual joy.

Its release date is set for November of this year—both in a soft cover copy and also electronically (i.e. in an e-book format). So, if you are interested in pre-ordering your copy, I want to go ahead and make it available to you for a gift of any amount. You can either mail in a check to the address below or go to our website @ www.treydickerson.com and simply donate online. Either way, just be sure to indicate that your gift is for The Epistle of Joy, and I will send it to you once we receive them sometime in November.

As for this month’s teaching, I want us to continue talking about “The Good Life”—the new, abundant, and resurrection life that Jesus made available for us to live. We have been looking at this from the 23rd Psalm, which I believe beautifully describes the quality of life that is ours in Christ.

Most recently, we looked at the second half of verse one, where David boldly proclaimed—“I shall not lack.” We saw that the reason he was able to so confidently make this profession was because of what he said right before that—“The Lord is my Shepherd.” Therefore, because David knew that the Lord God was His Shepherd, he absolutely was convinced that he would never lack any good thing (Compare Psalm 34:9-10). And we learned that this is not just talking about “spiritual things” either; this is referring to physical, tangible needs that we have in this body. Yes, the Lord has promised to provide in every area of our life!

If you have missed any of the past three Living Logos’, I encourage you to go to our website @ www.treydickerson.com and download yours now. Be sure to get caught up on the good things that the Lord has been teaching us!

Now this month, I want us to move into verse two of King David’s 23rd Psalm.

GOOD, GREEN PASTURES

Notice that David goes on to say that the Lord our Shepherd, Who will not let us lack, also “*makes (us) to lie down in green pastures...*”

The term “green pastures” literally describes “pastures of tender grass”, while the word “pastures” describes the abode or habitation of shepherds. But like any good shepherd, God is not leading us to barren and fruitless places. He is looking to bring us to places of “tender grass” (i.e. good places for His sheep to dwell).

In fact, the Hebrew word for “green” describes “new grass”—not mature grass ready for mowing, but grass that is just sprouting and young. What does this teach us? It teaches us that the Lord does not tend

towards giving us old, used-up stuff. He desires to give us a new life, a new beginning, and a fresh start. He makes all things new and He has made all these new things good. Amen.

We see a similar terminology to this used in Ezekiel 34:14-15 when the Lord said, *“I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God.”* We see here the Lord acting as the Shepherd of His people, feeding them in good pasture and making them to lie down in this rich pasture. Notice the word “good” being used here to describe the pasture that He would feed us in. So, these “green pastures” that our Good Shepherd is leading us to are good pastures—good and green pastures that are on the high mountains of Israel. Hallelujah!

And notice that increase and elevation are involved in this good life as well. This is the life that the Lord desires to make us lie down in. However, don't get the wrong impression by this terminology of lying down. According to Ezekiel's prophecy (and many other Scriptures), the Lord's will is to take us higher, not lower; to exalt us, not take us down! Amen!

THE FREE WILL OF THE SHEEP

Now the phrase “He makes me” might give one the wrong impression about how the Lord operates. You see, the Lord is not in the business of “making” us do anything. The Lord gives free-will to mankind. This is why the ungodly make ignorant statements like, “I just don't believe that a loving God would ever send someone to hell.” Well, that's true to a certain extent; He doesn't send people to hell. However, they do choose their own condemnation. They choose serving sin and satan over choosing the Lord's free gift of salvation. Therefore, they receive the same lot as their master, the devil. It is really that simple.

So, no, the Lord is not making us do anything. Always remember: when God is involved, free will is involved. Therefore, He did not make us choose Jesus as our Lord and Savior, nor will He make us choose this good life that we are talking about either. We all are living our lives on various levels of God's good, acceptable and perfect will for us.

So, we should never say things like, “Why is God blessing them more than me?” or “Why do I struggle with this and not them?” That is implying that God alone is the variable and we do not have a say in the quality of life that we are experiencing. Saints, the truth is that we are as close to God right now (i.e. experiencing His presence, etc.) as we want to be—and this also applies to other areas of our life. We can choose (the good) life (see Deuteronomy 30:19)!

So, you see, the Lord our Shepherd doesn't drive us. If He did, He would have been called the “Good Cowboy” instead of Jesus calling Himself the “Good Shepherd.” You see, a cowboy drives his herd. He ropes and ties them. However, a shepherd leads, guides and calls his sheep. Therefore, the Lord is not in the business of making us doing anything. No, He calls us. He bids us to come follow Him. He gently leads us in the way we should go. And that way is on pastures of tender grass. Amen.

LYING DOWN IN PEACE

Now it has been said that sheep will not lay down unless they are truly at peace, and oftentimes this peace comes as a result of them knowing that their shepherd is present with them. So it is with us: David said in Psalm 4:8, *“I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; for You alone, O Lord, make me to dwell safely.”*

Here in this verse, David gives us a big key to sleeping well—it is learning to lie down in peace. And the major key to doing that is found in the second half of this verse: “for (or, because) You alone, O Lord, make me to dwell safely.” So, us entering into that peace referred to here is determined by us believing in our hearts that our Lord will cause us to “dwell safely.” In other words, He will cause us to live a life that is guarded, protected and kept by Himself alone.

You see, the “you alone” is an important part of this phrase too. It denotes that the Lord Himself is the One who we see as being able to make us live safely (not with any help of our own, I might add). Church, when we get the revelation that our God is indeed with us and He alone is the One that will protect and defend us, we will indeed be at peace—particularly when we see that the objects of those fears that come up are the Lord’s problem and not just ours.

So, my point is: it is both the known presence of the Good Shepherd and knowing that He is resolved to care for His sheep that creates the peace among the flock. Yes, He is there to defend us from the turbulence that arises within the flock and to keep us from the predators that come in from outside of the flock. Amen.

OUR RESTING PLACE

But notice what else David goes on to say that our Good Shepherd leads us to: David goes on to say in Psalm 23:2 that *“He leads me beside the still waters.”*

The phrase “beside the still” comes from the Hebrew word *menuwachah* and describes a “rest or resting place.” It describes a comfortable, still and quiet place or thing (and in this case, that thing is “water”). So, these “still waters” could literally be described as “waters of rest” and for us to be led beside these still waters would describe us being led and guided alongside places of rest—places that are quiet, still and comfortable. Amen. In fact, this is actually the word that was used to describe the Rest of God referred to in Psalm 95:11—the same Rest that the writer of Hebrews describes in Hebrews chapter 4.

Now this “Rest” was an obvious reference to Canaan, the Promised Land, and was described as a rest in contrast to their 40-year journey in the wilderness. This wandering around in the wilderness was a feeling of never belonging, always moving and striving, never experiencing the fullness of the blessing. And sadly, that is where many Christians live—in the wilderness, living from miracle to miracle (which means they are also living in crisis to crisis) and experiencing this striving, working, and arduous lifestyle.

Regarding the origination of the Sabbath Rest, it is important to understand that God did not “rest” in the sense that we think of resting. When we think of resting, we think of recuperating because we are fatigued, but this is not what is implied here. God rested on the seventh day, not because He was tired and exhausted. He rested because the work was finished and complete. There was nothing left to do.

This word “Rest” described more of a cessation of activity, the ending of effort. A good example of what transpired here is an artist who was working to paint a beautiful masterpiece and then when his or her picture was completed, they lean back in their chair observing their completed masterpiece maybe with their brush in the mouth. This image in no way describes an artist laying down his brush because it got too heavy. No, he rested from his work because his work was finished and complete.

God had created the heavens and earth and all that is within them and saw that it was all “very good” (1:31). It was finished! His work was complete! So, He was attempting to get His people to see that the work of creation had been completed. Therefore, He gave them the Sabbath to illustrate to them that they

are to rest in God's finished work of creation and redemption. Church, we can now rest in all the works that Christ has done for us! He has paid the price and done everything that needs to be done in regards to our salvation!

In fact, the number seven in Biblical numerology describes "perfection and completion." Thus, our salvation and the new creation we were made is perfect and complete! There is nothing left undone! God made all things good in the beginning and God has made all the things that are new in us good! When God looked over all that He had made, He said it was very good! Likewise, God looks at His work in us and says it is very good! We have passed inspection!

There is a better life, saints! Yes, I said there is a better life! And that is living in the blessing of Canaan where we enter into His Rest, having taken His yoke upon us! And here's a good thought from the ministry of Jesus: perhaps Jesus healed so often on the sabbath because it was easier for God to work when His people were resting. Amen?

Saints, there remains therefore a rest for the people of God—where we can cease from our works, our striving and busyness. This is the Sabbath that we are called to observe—where we learn to rest in the work of another—namely, the Lord Jesus Christ's work on the Cross. Its ultimate fulfillment will be when we leave these tents and live in the eternal rest in the Kingdom of God, but there is also a rest to be experienced now.

LIGHT, EASY AND COMFORTABLE

Regarding this, Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30, *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*

Notice that twice in this passage Jesus refers to "rest." We must understand that one rest is given, the other is found. One is experienced when we come to Christ upon making Him our personal Lord and Savior. This is the positional rest we have entered in to. But there remains a rest that we can partake of experientially—and that is when we exchange our weakness for His strength, when we learn to wait on the Lord and draw near to Him in fellowship. This is when we will run and not grow weary, when we will walk and not faint. Amen. (See Isaiah 40:31)

My friend, learning to taste and see that the Lord is good and that He is our strength when we are weak is such a vital truth to experience. Oftentimes, we gravitate towards doing things in our own strength and we begin to pull a "Martha"—being troubled with much serving. This is when we must become more like Mary who learned when to sit at the Master's feet and draw her strength from Him. Strength for service comes from fellowship. This is when we yoke ourselves up together with Him and He does the majority of the pulling. "Burnout" comes as we do all the pulling ourselves. This is not what the Lord intended. The Master said, *"Take My yoke upon you (i.e. get yoked up together with Me) and I will give you rest."*

Friends, the Christian life is meant to be light and easy, not heavy and hard. And the moment we begin to feel like our burden is heavy and hard is the moment we have simply realized that we are taking our own yoke and are not benefiting from Him pulling the weight for us. In fact, all of Psalm 23:2 teaches us this one principle.

For example, the entire phrase at the beginning of this verse, "Me makes me to lie down," comes from one Hebrew word—the word *rabats*. This word literally means "to stretch oneself out or lie stretched out." Thus, the reason that this word is translated "to couch" in a couple of places. Therefore, this word

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describes “reclining.” So, we might translate this first half of Psalm 23:2 like so today: “He helps me to take a load off and to rest & relax.”

You see, if we are not joyfully serving the Lord, then we are not serving the Lord the way He intended for us to. When we are living the Christian life correctly, we will live a life that is full of peace and joy. It is only when we try to live the Christian life in the arm of the flesh that we become miserable, feeling unfulfilled.

Saints, it is not the Lord’s will that any part of our Christian walk feels like “work.” Sure, it is not always pleasant putting the flesh under, and sure, it is not always easy to go through the various trials we fall into. But if everything always seems arduous and an uphill battle, then we are likely missing it in some way.

You see, the reason working for the Lord is light, easy and comfortable is because we are yoked up together with Him. In those days, oxen were yoked up together in order to share the load they were carrying. So, if we have been yoked up together with Christ, then we can be certain that He will bear the entire burden! This will result in our walk being light and easy, as opposed to heavy and difficult. The only time that it becomes laborious is when we, of our own accord, unyoke ourselves from Him and try to carry the weights of this life ourselves. This is when the Christian life becomes burdensome and overbearing and we, as a result, lose our joy.

But, no, Christianity is not intended to be burdensome. Again, there is certainly discipline over the flesh and the resistance of temptation involved in the life of a Christian; but in regard to our growth and increase in every area of our walk, it is God Who carries that entire burden. Praise the Lord!

Therefore, to lie down in green pastures describes our Good Shepherd leading us, His sheep, to places of comfort, rest and relaxation—like a spiritual couch or recliner. And as we have seen, the leading us beside still waters teaches us the same—that there remains a rest for the people of God—a stream that makes glad the city of our God. It is beside these still waters that we find rest for our souls.

May you find rest for your souls today and experience the Sabbath rest—a quality of this good life that is found only in Christ. Amen.

Until next month—Maranatha!

Victoriously,

