

"Living a Healthy Promised Land Lifestyle" (Pt. 1)

Vital Signs – Pt. 8

March 12, 2017

Review: Prosperity & Health are hard to manage ...but does that mean it is to be avoided, banished, or outlawed?

What is 'prosperity'? Prosperity (dictionary.com) = a successful, flourishing, or thriving condition

...a life with access to abundant options and pleasures.

Pleasures can be a rather tricky course to navigate!...

- The people of God headed into Exile did not do a good job of navigating the minefield of pleasure & prosperity!

Jer 2:7-13 And I brought you into a plentiful land to enjoy its fruits and its good things. But when you came in, you defiled my land and made my heritage an abomination. 8 The priests did not say, 'Where is the Lord?' Those who handle the law did not know me; the shepherds transgressed against me; the prophets prophesied by Baal and went after things that do not profit. 9 "Therefore I still contend with you, declares the Lord, and with your children's children I will contend. 10 For cross to the coasts of Cyprus and see, or send to Kedar and examine with care; see if there has been such a thing. 11 Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. 12 Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the Lord, 13 for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

...Asceticism, pietism, and monasticism–

[after Constantine 'nationalized' the Christian religion and gave it 'favored status' in the 4th Cent.] *"How was one to be a true Christian in such circumstances? When the church joins the powers of the world, when luxury and ostentation take hold of Christian altars, when the whole of society is intent on turning the narrow path into a wide avenue, how is one to resist the enormous temptations of the times? ...Many found an answer in the monastic life: to flee human society, to leave everything behind, to dominate the body and its passions, which give way to temptation. ...The very word 'monk' derives from the Greek monachos, which means 'solitary.' One of the driving motivations for the early monks was the search for solitude. Society, with its noise and its many activities, was seen as a temptation and a distraction from the monastic goal. ...Their life was extremely simple. Some planted gardens, but most of them earned their living weaving baskets and mats that they then traded for bread and oil. ...The diet of the desert consisted mostly of bread, to which were occasionally added fruit, vegetables, and oil. Their belongings were limited to the strictly necessary clothing, and a mat to sleep on."*

...Even before Constantine's time, there had been Christians who, for various reasons, had felt called to an unusual style of life ...women who chose not to marry, and to devote all their time and energies to the work of the church. Some time later Origen, following the Platonic ideal of the wise life, made arrangements to live at a mere subsistence level, and led a life of extreme asceticism. ...Also, although Gnosticism had been rejected by the church, its influence could still be felt in the widely held notion that there was a fundamental opposition between the body and the life of the spirit, and that therefore in order to live fully in the spirit it was necessary to subdue and to punish the body." Justo Gonzales, "The Story of Christianity", p. 136-138, 143

BUT ...It is very interesting to see how God approaches the "pleasure dimensions" of our existence!

Wired for Pleasure

Amos 9:11-15 ...God brings judgment on his people, who have Forgotten Him Amidst Their World of Prosperity ...Yet, He promises a day that will restore "mountains dripping with sweet wine", "fortunes", "rebuilt cities", "vineyards", "gardens full of fruit", etc.!

Jer 2:7 And I brought you into a plentiful land to enjoy its fruits and its good things. But when you came in, you defiled my land and made my heritage an abomination.

Deut 6:4-5, 10-12 "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ... 10 "And when the Lord your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—with great and good cities that you did not build, 11 and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant—and when you eat and are full, 12 then take care lest you forget the Lord, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

Deut 8:7-14 For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in the valleys and hills, 8 a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, 9 a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. 10 And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land he has given you. 11 "Take care lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, 12 lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, 13 and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, 14 then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God,

Deut 8:17-19 Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.' 18 You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day. 19 And if you forget the Lord your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish.

Gen 2:5-9

- v.5 ...Man was to "work the ground" and reap a reward!
- v.7 ...Man formed from the dust—we are PART PHYSICAL, not just Spiritual ...we have a 'body-dimension' now and will have a 'body dimension' in heaven!
...and this 'body dimension' is WIRED FOR PLEASURE!

- v.8-9 ...a Garden created and designed by God—to Interact with the Way Man Was Wired. That interaction is described as "PLEASANT to the sight and GOOD for food"

Gen 2:10-17 ...Man's interaction with the world he was to "WORK AND KEEP IT"

- v.11-12 ...Work the land and discover "gold—that is good; bdellium and onyx stone as well!"

...sounds like life is going to be an exploratory adventure!!!

Gen 2:18, 21-23

- v. 18 ... "a helper FIT for him" ...There is Much PLEASURE in this "fitness"

...the Pleasure of Friendship/Companionship/Human Relationship

...the Pleasure of Sexual Union

...the Pleasure of Procreation and Family

...the Pleasure of Managing God's World Together

- ***We are designed and wired for Pleasure!!***

"This book was written to answer a simple question: What are we to do with the things of earth? Embrace them? Reject them? Use them? Forget about them? Set our affections on them? Look at them with suspicious eyes? Enjoy them with a twinge or two of guilt?"

...Why did God make this world? Why did he make a world for his own glory in Christ and then fill it to the brim with pleasures—physical pleasures, sensible pleasures, emotional pleasures, and relational pleasures? Why did God make a world full of good friends, sizzling bacon, the laughter of children, West Texas sunsets, Dr. Pepper, college football, marital love, and the warmth of wool socks?" Joe Rigney, "The Things of Earth", p. 20, 25

My aim is simple—I want to work with you for your joy. Your joy in your family. Your joy in your friends. Your joy in your pancakes and eggs, your steak and potatoes, your chips and your salsa. Your joy in your camping trips, workouts, and iPod playlist. Your joy in the Bible, in worship services, and in the quiet moments before you fall asleep. Your joy in your job, your hobbies, and your daily routine. And in and through all these things, I want to work with you for your joy in the living and personal God who gave you all these things and delivered you from sin and death through the work of his Son and Holy Spirit that you might enjoy him and them, and him in them, forever." Joe Rigney, "The Things of Earth", p. 25

"If we extend this divine endorsement of sight and taste, then here we see God enthusiastically endorsing our joy and delight in all sensible pleasures (that is, pleasures we receive through our bodily senses, pleasures that we see, smell, taste, touch, and hear), provided they are enjoyed within the boundaries established by the giver of every good gift. Perhaps God could have done it another way. He might have made an immaterial world populated by purely spiritual beings. Infinite wisdom preferred stomachs. And tongues. And every combination of sour, sweet, bitter, salty, and savory that the chefs on the Food Network can discover. Because that's what they are doing: discovering all the ways that God chose to communicate his goodness, his sweetness, even his bitterness to human palates. My guess is that it'll take a while. The creation of food, tongues, and the human digestive system is the product of infinite wisdom knitting the world together in a harmonious whole." Joe Rigney, "The Things of Earth", p. 81

The New Heaven and New Earth

Rev 21:1-3, 5, 10-12, 19-21, 24-25, 22:1-3 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God ... 5 And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." ... 10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, 11 having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. 12 It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed— ... 19 The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. The first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, 20 the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. 21 And

the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass.

24 ... and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, 25 and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. 26 They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.

22:1 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.

- **Rev 21:2 ... "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband"** ...the reason why this imagery has a "breathtaking impact" is because man has been TRAINED by the "Pleasures of Earth"—

- **Rev 21:12 ... "a great high wall with twelve gates..."**

...this is a celebration of Architecture!

- **Rev 21:19-21 ... Gorgeous, beautiful, precious stones—Like the Ones in Gen 2 near the River Pishon!!**

- **Rev 21:24-26 ... the kings of the earth and the nations will bring their glory and honor into the city**

- **Rev 22:1-2 ...there is still water to drink and fruit to eat**

- **Rev 22:3 ...And God is the Centerpiece of it all!!**

...In God's Great Plan—He is at the CENTER of our Pleasure, not an Excluded Alternative to Pleasure!

Perhaps Spiritual Health and the remedy to temptation, idolatry and self-indulgence is something different than—"Just Say No to life's pleasures!"