

GOING GOD'S WAY

"And thine ears shall hear a voice behind thee, saying: This is the way, walk ye in it."
Isaiah 30:21.

The air is filled with voices. Almost every hour of the day we can tap the ether with our radios and hear voices tell us what is going on in the world and trying to tell us where the world is going. In this time of momentous and bewildering events we are eager to learn the facts behind the headlines. Even though we cannot see the exact point of exit from our confusion, we crave to know whether or not we are on the right road.

Some twenty-seven hundred years ago the prophet Isaiah was concerned about the future of his nation. He called on his people to seek divine guidance. He said, "Thine ears shall hear a voice behind thee, saying: This is the way, walk ye in it." Applying this verse to ourselves, How can we know when we are going God's way? If we shall listen, we shall hear God's voice saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it."

One condition for going God's way is that we must start with a surrendered will. God calls for the unconditional surrender of our wills to His will. One of the first tests of a Christian is, Am I committed wholeheartedly with surrendered will to carrying out God's intention as it is revealed in Christ? A second condition for going God's way is a studious mind. The hearts of many seem to be in the right place but their heads are often on the wrong side. We cannot keep our hearts going God's way unless our heads are going His way too. Just think of how good causes would be advanced if we gave half as much time and thought to doing God's will as we do to promoting our own affairs. And think of how much our own enjoyment of the Lord's work would be enhanced. Give your best thought to the study of God's will and way. A third condition is that of a walking faith, or doing the duties that lie at hand. When with committed will and dedicated mind we keep in step with the best we know, we are aware of the presence and blessing of the Lord. Paul said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" We, too, should pray that same prayer. We would also do well to pray, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to be?" From the Word we get some of His answers.

1. Be Clean.

"Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord" (Isaiah 52:11). The Lord very much desires that His children should be clean. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6). That every one includes you and me. There is our trouble. We are unclean by nature and by practice. The Bible tells us that; our consciences tell us the same; every one of us knows deep down in his or her heart, that that is absolutely true. God wants His children to be clean in their daily lives.

2. Be Holy.

"Be ye holy; for I am holy" (I Peter 1:16). Our Lord would not tell us to be holy if He did not mean for us to be. Try as best you can throughout your Christian life to be what He wants you to be. This requires Bible study and prayer.

3. Be Kind.

"And be ye kind one to another" (Ephesians 4:32). How wonderfully kind Christ was! Mark's Gospel portrays Him as going about trying to serve and to help others. There was a beautiful sweetness and kindness about Him Whom Peter described as "going about doing good." There is so much trouble and sorrow everywhere that it behooves every Christian to be sympathetic and kind.

Knowing that our Lord wants us to be clean, holy, and kind, we should look up to Him and say: "Lord, I will strive to do so, if Thou wilt help me."

I. How May We Enter God's Way For Us?

1. We must realize that God has a way for us.

We shall never seek to walk in His way unless we are conscious that there is such a way. Do you have the assurance that God has a way for you, distinct and clear, which is the right and the best way, and that if you are not in that way, then you are missing God's purpose for your life?

How may we have the assurance that God has a way for each of us?

(1) From the analogy of design in creation.

This universe is a cosmos, not a chaos, and cosmos means order and beauty. In this vast creation everything has its place and its use. There is nothing useless. Creation was planned. Amazing fact, as well as reassuring, because if God has been so careful about matter, He is not going to be careless about men; if God has made the house in which we live so beautiful, He is certainly not going to be indifferent to the welfare of the tenants.

(2) From the evidence of plan in history.

Behind all events in history is Divine design. It has been said that "History is His story," and you cannot read the Old Testament with care without being convinced of this great fact and truth, namely, that God has a design in history. God is not only the architect, but also the designer and the builder of the ages. Any Christian can derive assurance concerning his life from the fact that God is not careless of the mass and careless about the individual.

(3) From the explicit declarations of the Holy Scriptures.

In Psalm 32:8 we read: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." In Proverbs 4:12 God has said: "When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble." In talking with his brethren Joseph said: "It was not you that sent me hither, but God" (Genesis 45:8). Joseph believed that God had planned his life.

Look at God's plan in the life of Moses. God sent Moses into the world to do one thing, and all his life was a preparation for the doing of that one thing. Forty years in Egypt; forty years in the backside of the desert; eighty years' preparation for a forty years' task; forty years learning that he was somebody, forty years learning that he was nobody, and forty years learning that God was everybody, and that He had planned his entire life.

God made Paul and sent him into the world for one task. No other man of the first century had the qualifications for this task. That task was to give the gospel of Christ to the world. Look at the world at that time -- the Hebrew, the Greek, and the Roman, with their ideals of Orientalism, Hellenism, and Imperialism. The man who is going to the great world with the Gospel must have a point of contact with those three peoples. Paul was the one who had what was needed. He was a pure-blooded Hebrew, a Hebrew of the Hebrews. That was his point of contact with that people. He was brought up and trained in a Greek city, where he attended a Greek university, and was in touch with Hellenism and its ideals. Then, he also held the Roman franchise or citizenship, and that saved him from at least one brutal beating. Those were his points of contact with those three peoples representing all others, and God made Paul with qualifications for the task of giving the Gospel to the world. Paul's life was planned, and your life is planned, and my life is planned. We may miss the plan. That constitutes the tragedy of life. But we may find it. "This is the way, walk ye in it."

II. How May We Continue In God's Way For Us?

We must abandon ourselves to God's plans for our lives. It is most pathetic to have the assurance that God has a plan for your life and yet to miss the way. Abandonment must be intelligent. We want to know, we want to understand, and we want to have a reason for our belief, our position, and our practice. God does not ask us to close our eyes and take a leap, but He bids us to be open-eyed to follow Him, and He gives us the reason as to why we should.

Not only must this abandonment be intelligent and sincere, but it must also be complete. Christ wants and is entitled to the whole person. He wants your intelligence, affection, will, and body. If He is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all. The tragedy of so many lives is that of half-commitment, compromise, or reservation. We do not have any right to withhold from Him that which belongs to Him by right of creation, preservation, and redemption.

The conditions for continuing in God's way are negative and positive. As to the negative conditions, we must never despise our own individuality. There are multitudes of people who are just aping others. They want to be somebody else. They want the experience, the calling, and the gifts of others. That sort of thing is virtually the denial of the fact that God has given these very things to them also. Why did God make us all so different? Because He had something for each of us to do that nobody else can do. He calls us to recognize this fact, and then to dedicate our personality for what it is worth to God and to men.

A Christian lady, who was a missionary to India, said to a friend, "I've got a Christ you've not got." The friend said, "What do you mean?" She answered, "Just because I am as I am in my makeup, my individuality, my personality, my temperament, my upbringing, my outlook, I have a set of needs that no one else in the world has. As Christ satisfies that set of needs, I apprehend Him from an angle from which nobody else in the world apprehends Him." Does Christ answer perfectly to your peculiar and complex needs? You ought to thank God that you can make a contribution and do a work that no other can. God made you, so respect your own individuality.

Then I would say, on the negative side, if we are to enter into and to continue in God's way for us, we must not have some little plan of our own. Two people cannot be in control of one life at one and the same time. God has His way for you. If you have a way for yourself, then He is not in control, and cannot be until you surrender your program and accept His. We are not here to make a program for ourselves, but to accept God's plan for us. I do not know of anything that gives such dignity to life as the realization that I have a place in the everlasting plan of God. Horace Bushnell said, "God has a life plan for every human being, girding him visibly or invisibly for some exact thing which it will be the true significance and glory of his life to have accomplished." Therefore, accept God's great sunlit highway for your life.

There is one other thing on the negative side. We must not expect God to give us a special revelation of His plan for our lives. This is not the age of revelation, but of apprehension. We have the Bible, and it is sufficient as a guide of faith and conduct, and our vision will come through its pages, and not apart from them.

Then, how may we continue in God's way for us? We must trust Him to reveal His purpose to us, step by step as we go. You may say: "I would like to see the whole of my life plan at once." No, you would not. It would make its sorrows unbearable if you knew of them in advance; it would take the joy and surprise out of life if you anticipated them too long. It is a magnificent thing to go step by step at a time with such a Guide as He is. Accept joyfully God's plan for your life. Enter into and continue in God's way for you. "This is the way, walk ye in it."