

GOD'S GUIDANCE

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Proverbs 3:5-6.

One cannot think back upon the beginnings of this nation without realizing that its roots went deeply into the rich soil of faith in God. A consideration of the Pilgrims in their battling with the wilderness trails in those pioneer years will convince you that this was God's land and that He was their Leader. Now more than ninety per cent of the people in this country seldom, if ever, attend church services. God knows, and so do we, that those who are not actively and openly for Him are against Him. Because the vast majority of the American people are leaving God out of their lives they are unhappy and restless. Moreover, they will never become happy unless and until they recapture the faith of their fathers.

God has not left us to order our own steps. What wondrous grace on His part that such is the case! He sees us and has compassion upon us in our needs. Knowing that this is a dark and sinful world, God promises to guide His children. God said, "I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths" (Proverbs 4:11). "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps" (Proverbs 16:9). The Psalmist said, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way" (Psalm 37:23). It is the steps of a meek and godly man that are ordered. If Christians are carnal and worldly, they cannot expect God to guide them in the common affairs of life. The person who would be led of the Lord must be willing and desirous for the Lord to determine his thoughts, to form his opinions, to shape his character, to point out the right way to him, and to control his life.

Man will be guided by self, by Satan or by the Spirit of God. Those who are guided by self or by Satan will always go wrong. We are incompetent to direct ourselves. Frequently we think that we are capable of doing so, that our knowledge and wisdom are adequate for the demands, but we are mistaken about this. Every Christian should be made aware of his need of guidance. How often each child of God has asked himself: "What shall I do?" "Where shall I turn?" "What course shall I pursue?"

Unfortunately there are those who want to be guided of God irrespective of their manner of living. Some professing Christians live worldly and back-slidden lives and then in a moment of pressure they turn to God and ask for wisdom and direction in the making of some vital decision. If we want the strength and comfort of divine guidance, we must not live for Satan and then come to our heavenly Father expecting His guidance. If we are willing to meet the simple conditions which He has laid down, then the joy of walking according to His divine will shall be ours.

I. A Plea.

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart." Trust is a very beautiful word which represents a very wonderful experience. Somebody has said that faith consists of two elements: belief and trust; that is, a belief that trusts. Another has said, "Belief is taking the map and trust is taking the journey." Literally, the word trust means "to lean upon" or "to depend on." But just what does it mean to trust in the Lord? It conveys the idea that one is conscious of his weakness and therefore turns to the Lord to rest entirely upon Him for support.

We often make trusting a hard matter, but God makes it an exercise of great simplicity. He points to a child and tells us to have the same loving confidence in Him which the child reposes in his parents. In the heart of the little one there is no worrying, no fear, no looking ahead, no reasoning and no questioning. There is complete dependence on the father and the mother.

We must keep in mind that the Lord is the object of our trust. Many times in the hour of difficulty and need we trust almost everyone else before we trust Him. On our coins are the words, "In God We Trust," but it is principally the dollar we trust. It is not hard to talk about trusting God when everything moves along like a song, but when everything seems to go "dead wrong" a difficulty arises. Visualize the early Christian martyrs who were thrown among the wild beasts in the great Coliseum at Rome. How wonderful was their confidence and trust in God as was indicated by their upturned faces which revealed total indifference to the lions and complete trust in or dependence on the heavenly Father! Every one of us ought to memorize the middle verse of the Bible because of what it teaches. "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man" (Psalm 118:8). The Christian life starts with trusting and it should be continued in the same manner.

We are told how to trust, namely, "with all thine heart." Half-heartedness does not have any place in the purposes of God for His people. "With all thine heart" means undoubtingly, or without any suspicion whatever; undividedly, or without an implicit trust in any other; and lovingly, not as a matter of expediency, but as a matter of supreme affection. We can count on the faithfulness of God in the face of every circumstance and condition. He has never failed us. He will never fail us. Projecting Himself into the daily affairs of His people He says, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Therefore, let us trust Him completely.

II. A Prohibition.

"Lean not unto thine own understanding." Men are making a terrible mistake by leaning upon their own understanding in all walks of life. This evil may be observed in the business world, in the professions, in social activities and in religious matters. We seek the solution of our problems in human wisdom. God forbids us to lean upon our own understanding, but commands us to rely upon His understanding. Nothing is more frail, more fickle, more deceptive and more unreliable than our own understanding. There is not anybody or anything in whom we can reasonably and safely trust except the Lord. We are to trust in His person, His presence, His love, His compassion, His faithfulness and His ability. Our trust in the Lord must be intelligent, unlimited, exclusive and constant. This trust in the Lord, rather than our leaning upon our own understanding, will be made manifest in our surrender to the divine authority, in our submission to the divine providence and power, in our obedience to the divine commands, and in our faith in the divine promises.

III. A Precept.

"In all thy ways acknowledge him." A precept is a maxim or rule of conduct. Speaking broadly, people go through life in one of two ways. Some pass through life remembering God and others pass through it ignoring Him. We are not merely to acknowledge God at times, or about some things, but always and in all things. Some are inclined to confine God to certain experiences of life -- the critical decision, the impending danger, the great anxiety, or the sickness that may result in death. In this precept, "In all thy

ways acknowledge Him," God calls for the complete homage of our intellects, the supreme affection of our hearts and the unswerving loyalty of our lives. We must trust Christ as our Saviour, follow Him as our example and obey Him as our Lord.

"In all thy ways acknowledge him." Acknowledge His presence, His power and His promises. He wants to be Lord of all. He deserves our complete surrender. He is to be acknowledged in all the details of life -- in personal life, in family life, in professional or business affairs, in social life and in the spiritual life. After acknowledging Him as Saviour, every Christian should gladly bear His witness that he has found Jesus Christ precious to his own heart and that through Him he knows that he has the forgiveness of sins.

Our attitude toward this precept, "In all thy ways acknowledge him," will mark the difference between a rebellion against God's will and yieldedness to His will, between a joyous Christian experience and unhappiness in our Christian lives, between victory and defeat, between the guided life and the wandering life, between the life of fellowship with Christ and the life out of fellowship, between the fruitful life and the barren life, and between the peaceful life and the life of fretfulness.

We should trust the Lord with our souls, serve the Lord with our talents, honor the Lord with our gifts and praise the Lord with our lips. The Lord can use in a mighty way the life that is completely surrendered unto Him for His service. Acknowledge Him as the one grand subject of your thought, the one great object of your affection, and the one supreme aim of your life.

If we want to receive and enjoy the guidance of God in the future, then it is most essential that we meet the simple condition imposed upon us in the matter of acknowledgement. All of us can say a good word for the Lord Jesus Christ if we want to do so. The Holy Spirit will give us the needed grace for the task. No recognition of Him in the common affairs of life means no reward at His hands in the crucial hour. If we cannot say a word in the ears of others for Him, how can we expect Him to listen when we want to say something to Him?

IV. A Promise.

"And he shall direct thy paths." In the Bible we find conditional and unconditional promises. This promise is conditional. He will direct our paths on the condition that we acknowledge Him. Note this climactic statement: "And he shall direct thy paths." There is no doubt about it. There will not be any question about His guiding us provided we trust Him, we do not rely upon our own understanding, and we acknowledge Him in all things and under all circumstances. If we will trust the Lord and yield our lives to Him, He will lead and guide in our lives. When a decision is to be made He will direct. When a task is to be done He will help. When the way is dark He will furnish the necessary light. When the burden is heavy He will bear it. When sorrow comes He will comfort.

Just how God will guide us I am not able to say. That is His business. The thing that interests me is the fact that He will and not the method. Faith is not concerned with methods, but with God's promises. God speaks to us through His Word and directs us by His Holy Spirit. God will neither deceive nor disappoint His people if they will trust Him, cease relying upon their own understanding, and in all their ways acknowledge Him. There is no satisfaction in life like living in accordance with His will. His guidance always secures safety, happiness and progress. Follow as He guides.