

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.

God has not left us to order our own steps. What wondrous grace on His part! He sees us, the poor helpless sheep that we are, and has compassion upon us in our need. He knows this is a dark and sinful world, and therefore promises to guide His children. Over and over in the book of Proverbs there is the promise of guidance for God's people. "I have taught (directed) thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths." 4:11. "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps." 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 good man that are ordered. If Christians are carnal and worldly they cannot experience God's guiding hand in the common affairs of life. God is awaiting opportunity to lead us in His way.

The person who would be led of the Lord must desire the Lord to determine his thoughts, to form his opinions, to shape his character, to point out his way and to control his life. This text points the way to this end.

I. A Plea.

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart." But just what does it mean to trust in the Lord? Trust is a very beautiful word which represents a very wonderful experience. Trust conveys the idea that one is conscious of his feebleness and so turns to the Lord to rest wholly upon a stronger One 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 perfect resignation toward the father and 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 we print, "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" then comes the difficulty. 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 is to be continued in the same manner.

We are told here how to trust--"with all thine heart." Half-heartedness finds no place in the purposes of God for His people. If we cannot trust Him fully, why trust Him at all? We can count on the faithfulness of God in the face of every condition. He has never failed us, and He never will. Projecting Himself into the daily affairs of His people, He says, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Therefore, let us commit all our concerns to Him.

II. A Prohibition.

"Lean not unto thine own understanding." This is a prevalent evil. Men practice it in all walks of life. It may be observed in the business world, in social activities and in religious matters. Our text prohibits the continuation of this evil practice. We are admonished to distrust our own understanding. Nothing is more fickle, more frail, more deceptive and more wicked than our own understanding. Because we are so apt to repose our trust in other things, such as fortune or chance, the favor of the world, friends, our own abilities, etc., we are strictly forbidden to do so.

III. A Precept.

"In all thy ways acknowledge Him." A precept is a maxim or rule of conduct. In this

precept God calls for the supreme affection of our hearts, the complete homage of our intellects, and the unswerving loyalty of our lives.

Recognize the Lord. Admit that He is the Giver of every good and perfect gift, and that we live and move and have our being in Him. Without Him we are nothing and cannot do anything. He is all and in all. We must trust Him as Saviour, follow Him as Example and obey Him as Lord.

"In all thy ways acknowledge Him." He wants to be Lord of all. He deserves our complete surrender. He is to be acknowledged in all the details of life--in business affairs, in family life, in social life and in religious life. We must acknowledge Him as our Saviour. Every Christian should bear gladly 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.

We should trust the Lord with our time, 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.

Our blessed Lord is worthy of being acknowledged as the Lord of life. We should gladly acclaim Him as coming King and point to His return as the solution to all the ills of the world.

If we want to enjoy the guidance of God for the days that lie ahead, then it is most essential that we meet the simple condition imposed upon us in the matter of acknowledgment. All of us who are saved can say a good word for the Lord Jesus if we want to. The Holy Spirit has promised to give us the grace needed for the task.

IV. A Promise.

"And He shall direct thy paths." In the Bible there are conditional and unconditional promises. This promise is conditional. He will direct our paths on the condition that we acknowledge Him. Our attitude toward the condition specified here will mark the difference between a rebellion against God's will and yieldedness to His will; joyous Christian experience and unhappiness in our Christian lives; victory and defeat; the guided life and the wandering life; the life of fellowship with Christ or one without His fellowship; the fruitful life and the barren life; the hopeful life and the hopeless life; walking in the light and walking in the shadow; and the peaceful life and the life of fretfulness.

"He shall direct thy paths." 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 provide 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 unable to say. That is His business. The thing that interests me is the fact and not the method. Faith is not concerned with methods, but with His 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 in Him, lean not unto their own understanding, and in all their ways acknowledge Him. God forbid that we should go through any part of this new year without the sweet consciousness that we are going in the path of His appointment. There is no satisfaction like living in accordance with His will.