

ORDERED STEPS

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord; and He delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand." Psalm 37:23-24.

The Psalms are as a mirror in which are reflected the joys and struggles of the human heart. One cannot read them without seeing one's own inner life unveiled in its ever-changing experiences. Shadow succeeds sunshine, sorrow follows rejoicing, and all the varied phases of the inner life are faithfully set forth. Man's greatest aspirations have an answering echo in the outpouring of the Psalmist's soul, and his sublimest hopes there find intelligent expression.

David looks back over his own checkered career and varying experience, and despite the sin and failure which have marred the whole, discerns the manifold grace of God with which he has been guided and guarded. And these his glowing words of testimony are a line of autobiography, and express also the assurance of a grateful heart, that what has been his portion may certainly be likewise known and enjoyed by all.

The fact of guidance is written large in the record of every life. We look back over the years and find that in all the variations of circumstance and experience God has somehow been controlling our lives, influencing our choices, and guiding us by His Spirit.

God orders and establishes the details of the lives of His children. In the Bible we see Him busy, not alone with great things, but with details also. And so it was in the life of Christ. The same thing appears in His preaching. He tells men how to live day by day.

The theme of this noble psalm is the vindication of God's supreme and gracious providence, and the confirmation of faith tried by the vicissitudes of life, the prosperity of evil-doers, and the trials of the righteous.

I. The Life of a Good Man Is Divinely Planned.

If you will examine this psalm, you will not have any difficulty in ascertaining what the writer means by a good man. "He trusts in the Lord and does good; he delights himself also in the Lord; commits his way unto the Lord; trusts also in Him; rests in the Lord; and waits patiently for Him."

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." Many people never think of this; some deny it altogether; and perhaps many of us often forget it, and thus lose the comfort of it.

1. This plan is individual.

There is not an item in our daily lives which is not comprehended. Our joys, our sorrows, our associates, our thoughts, and our actions are ordered.

2. This plan is comprehensive.

The good man is Divinely directed in his everyday procedure, in his going out and coming in, his lying down and rising up, his successes and failures, his joys and sorrows, his trials and triumphs, his birth and death.

3. This plan is benevolent.

God overrules all agents and all events for the well-being of His people. God's plan is great in its conception, great in the Divine skill by which it is shaped and worked out, and, above all, great in the momentous issues it prepares. But, remember that it is as good as it is great.

The path in which the good man treads is under God's guidance, upheld by His power, and directed by His counsel.

II. The Life of a Good Man Is Divinely Approved.

"He delighteth in his way." The Lord delights in the way of the good man. He delights in his way because it is formed and fashioned according to the will of God, and is directed by the Spirit of God. The Lord also delights in the good man's way because it manifests His glory. And what an inspiring truth this is! To know that His eye is upon us with proud affection, and to understand how high is the expectation of His loving heart, is a strong safeguard in temptation and an abiding inspiration to faithfulness.

III. The Life of a Good Man Is Divinely Protected.

1. The possibility implied. "Though he fall."

In this life disasters are to be expected, and it is not God's plan to prevent them. They are intended for the benefit of the good men; they are the refiner's fire.

True to the facts of life, these words of the Psalmist, so lofty in their faith and clear in their outlook, do not leave out of account the possibility of mistake and failure.

2. The truth expressed.

"He shall not be utterly cast down." The great truth that God is still near in moments of heart-sickening failure is one that we cannot too closely bind to our hearts. Because God is not driven from us by our mistakes and falls, and because His love remains constant in spite of our faithlessness, we need not be utterly cast down.

3. The reason.

"The Lord upholdeth him with His hand."

God not only sustains the good man in particular emergencies, but He is his constant and habitual upholder. He never lets go of him.

Fear not then to yield your whole life step by step to the loving guidance and solicitude of the Lord, Whose watchful heart delights in thy ways, and Whose Divine strength is always yours for uplift and renewed inspiration. Since God has ordered our way, let each of us walk in it.