

Guidance

Part 3 – Look to the Word

By Todd Pruitt

Every culture knows that God is and yet because of sin this knowledge is distorted so that instead of being led into truth there is a further falling away (Rom 1:18-25). Thankfully however God did not abandon the crown of His creation even though it was His right to do so. Because of common grace (the goodness that God sheds upon all humanity) men and women are capable of comprehending profound truths and accomplishing great things. However, the knowledge of which we are most in need, that of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, is beyond our grasp apart from the gracious intervention of God.

Man desires to be in relationship to the divine; to know the mind of God; to possess His wisdom in light of the day's circumstances. Mankind has always sought to discover the will of his god or gods through means that seem to us sometimes fanciful at other times violent or even profane. The dilemma is that outside of Christ the hearts of men and women are darkened. "They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the created things rather than the Creator – who is forever praised" (Rom 1:25). "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned" (I Cor 2:14). So if we are to have any hope of comprehending guidance from God then we must begin with spiritual birth. Unless God raises us to life spiritually (John 3:1-8) then we will be unable to comprehend that which is spiritual as God defines spiritual.

Where are Christians to look for guidance from God? In ancient times God spoke to His people in various ways through His prophets (Heb 1:1-2). There were even times when God's people cast lots in order to discern His will. "The lot is cast into the lap, but its decision is from the Lord" (Prov 16:33). In the New Testament the disciples chose Judas Iscariot's replacement through the casting of lots (Acts 1:15-26). But such things as the casting of lots were temporary means that were used during the church's infancy. We live in a day of final revelation whereby God has spoken most supremely to His people through His Son Jesus Christ (Heb 1:2). And where do we find all that we need to know about Jesus? Our fullest and only truly reliable witness to Jesus Christ is Holy Scripture where He is foreshadowed in the Old Testament, revealed and explained in the New Testament.

In these last days (the days between Christ's first and final advent) God has established His Word as the rule for guiding His people (II Thess 2:15; 3:6). Our problem is that we often want God to provide for us a roadmap that will answer specifically which college to choose, person to marry, job to take, car to buy, etc. People who rarely drink from the well of Scripture wait until the moment of

decision to beg answers from God. Their lack of a sense of guidance should not surprise them. Their neglect of God's Word has left them unfamiliar with His voice.

How then does God use the Scriptures to act as His voice of guidance for His people? In His book Discovering God's Will Sinclair Ferguson offers three ways:

1. God's Word directs us through commandments and prohibitions. Certainly the moral law of God answers many of questions for us before we even ask. The Ten Commandments are an example of the timeless expression of God's character and therefore a clear guide to what He expects from His people. Certain applications of those particular commandments have changed but the principles stand. Scripture provides many other commandments and prohibitions concerning sexual, business, work and family ethics. These are given to us not that we may be justified before God by them but that we may glorify Him in our joyful obedience. What a rich source of guidance God has given us through His precious law (Psalm 119).

2. God's Word directs us through certain principles. While Jesus does not tell everyone to sell everything they have and give it away there is nevertheless an important principle enshrined in that command. The principle is that Jesus must be Lord of all and that He will not abide our idols. In His Word God has left us with a deep supply of guiding principles that will serve as faithful guides to help us navigate life.

3. God's Word directs us through illustrations. The many biographical accounts in Scripture show us the ways of God's working with men and what He "requires of us, does for us, and works out through us."

Look to the Word of God. Treasure it. Live in its pages. You will find God faithful to give you what you need when you need it. You will find your desires changing as God molds your character to reflect His priorities. As we grow in knowledge of God and of His ways we will see a corresponding growth in our love for Him and His ways. Ferguson writes, "An instinct is created within us by which we know the will of the Lord for our lives."

"But how then may the Lord's guidance be expected?...In general, He guides and directs His people, by affording them, in answer to prayer, the light of His Holy Spirit, which enables them to understand and to love the Scriptures. The Word of God is not to be used as a lottery; nor is it designed to instruct us by shreds and scraps, which, detached from their proper places, have no determinate import; but it is to furnish us with just principles, right apprehensions to regulate our judgments and affections, and thereby influence and direct our conduct."

- John Newton