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GRACE & PEACE

An E-periodical for spiritual enlightenment, edification and encouragement

■ **STEPS TO
STAND ON THE
VICTORY SIDE**

■ **Commitment
to God's Will**

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Life In God's Will

What is the primary goal of Christian life? According to the Westminster Shorter Catechism, 'the chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.' This is absolutely true, however that involves knowing and fulfilling God's will for our lives. Hence, living in the will of God must be the number one priority for a born-again child of God. Not only is this our bounden duty as the redeemed people of God, but our privilege as well. God in His grace and mercy was pleased to reveal His will to us, and not only that, He helps us to live by it.

Blessings Innumerable

The blessings and benefits of living in God's ways are innumerable. As long as we abide by the revealed will of God, we are in the right track, and we do not need to be confused or wandering. It gives us

confidence and peace of mind as well as safety and security. The Word of God also asserts that such wholehearted consecration to the ways of God result in blessings upon the generations and even our enemies will experience the benefits (Psa. 128:1ff; Pro. 16:7).

Demands Sacrifice

Yes, it is not easy to abide by God's perfect will always. It may be costly and risky, but reverence and love for the Lord makes obedience a pleasure. Let us consider this truth in its various aspects and experience all the benefits connected to unreserved submission to God's will. After all, there is only one life to live in God's will, that alone will abide forever (1John 2:17).

Thank you once again for your prayerful support and suggestions. May the Lord's name be glorified.

Yours in His service,

NTK

COMMITMENT TO GOD'S WILL

Acts 16:6–10

Apostle Paul's deep commitment to the will of God found in Acts 16:6–10 is thought-provoking and exemplary. In fact, on the day of his conversion itself, he asked the Lord, 'What shall I do, Lord?' (Acts 22:10). He always held it as one of his priorities (cf. Acts 18:21; Rom. 1:10, etc.). Notice five lessons from this passage.



God has a very personal and distinct plan for each one of us.

Paul and companions were in their second missionary journey. No doubt preaching the gospel of Christ is God's plan for any born-again child of God at any occasion. Yet we see here twice the Spirit of God prohibits them from preaching. This shows that there is a general will of God for everyone irrespective of the person,

place, or period. However, there is a specific divine plan for each one of us. Not only does it vary from person to person but even with occasion and time as well. Of course, it will never be contradictory to what God has already revealed in the scripture. The psalmist says, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way" (Psa. 37:23). How seriously we ought to seek and fulfil the divinely set steps, for that alone delights the heart of God.

Our Lord Jesus also has referred to this same idea in John 7:6, "Then Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready." The timetable that the Father set for His Son and that for others, are different. It's true in every other aspects too. Notice, since God's will for each one is different, envy and competition are foolishness in Christian life. Even any effort to imitate another person also is not wise.

God, in His Sovereign will, not only leads us, but stops as well.

We are well aware of the divine leading and guidance in our day-to-day life (cf.

Psa. 23:3, 4; 25:9; 48:14; 73:23, 24; Isa 58:11, etc.). But seldom we consider how He stops us in His will, especially in matters like spiritual services.

We may not digest this truth that God would stop even a spiritual activity like singing, preaching, etc. In fact, it is possible that He has already stopped certain ministries, yet they continue mechanically, unwilling to abide by God's perfect will. Imagine the condition of the local church at Ephesus which the Lord had warned to be removed (Rev. 2:5c). Never forget, God's ways and thoughts are much higher than our ways and thoughts (Isa. 55:8, 9). God does not work according to our logic and expectation. The psalmist's warning in the context of divine leading is noteworthy in this regard: "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye. Do not be like the horse or like the mule, Which have no understanding" (Psa. 32:8, 9a).

The need to be passionately sensitive to the Spirit's leading.

Recognizing God's perfect will for our day-to-day life demands earnest longing for it. God has revealed His will for us through the scripture (2Tim. 3:16, 17).



Apart from the explicit instructions, we can draw lessons and principles from different stories and incidents found in the Word of God. Hence a thorough understanding of the entire spectrum of God's revelation is basic requirement to comprehend God's will for our life. However, there will be occasions when one may not find a direct or indirect injunction recorded in the Word of God. For a right decision at such a juncture, one needs to hear the 'still small voice of the Lord' (Isa. 30:21). It is possible only by being sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit, as a result of staying close to the Lord. Thus, we shall discern the heart's desire of our Lord (1John 2:3, 5).



God's perfect will may include painful situations.

Paul's further story tells us that even though they faithfully obeyed the will of the Lord, they had to face severe persecution in Philippi. They were brutally beaten and imprisoned, even to getting their feet fastened in the stocks (Acts 16:23, 24). So, seeking God's will does not mean we will be free from trouble; on the contrary, it may lead to untold agonies. But the comforting thing is, as the psalmist says, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But the LORD delivers him out of them all" (Psa. 34:19).

Ultimately God's will alone is good and perfect.

Despite the sufferings, Paul and the team found the ministry in Europe successful. Many prominent men and women got saved and local assemblies were formed in many cities of Europe for the first time. No wonder Paul wrote, 'the will of God is



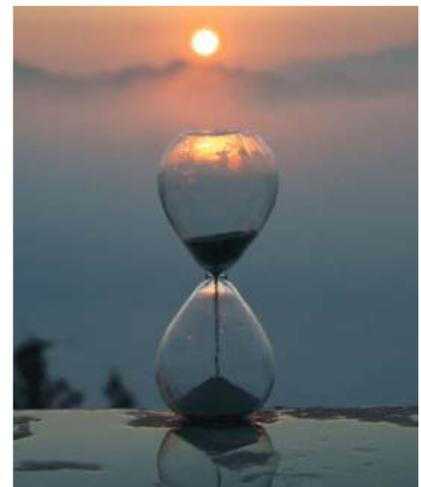
good, perfect and acceptable' (Rom. 12:2c). God's will alone is good for all. It has no flaws, for God does not make a mistake. No need to regret later. Further, it is acceptable to God and His people. Do we have this longing to know and do God's will at any cost? Our Lord is the supreme example; even in agony He prayed to the Father, "Your will be done" (Matth. 26:42c).

In this short span of life, let us be wise to seek and do God's will, for that alone will remain for ever (Eph. 5:17; 1John 2:17). Let us pray with the psalmist, "Teach me to do Your will, For You are my God" (Psa. 143:10a). **G&P**

▶ OUTLINE-1

LESSONS ON TIME FROM CHRIST

- ▶ **There is a timetable for God's eternal programs,**
Mark 1:15; cf. Gal 4:4; Acts 17:26; Acts 1:7
- ▶ **God does everything in His own time, even in our needs or crises,**
John 2:4; cf. Ecc. 3:11; Heb. 4:16.
- ▶ **God has a plan and time for each one of us,**
John 7:6, 8; 8: 20; cf. Psa. 31:15; Ecc. 3:1-8
- ▶ **Our time is just passing away,**
John 9:4 cf. Psa. 89:47; 90:12
- ▶ **All our activities must be based on this awareness,**
John 9:4; 13:1, 12: 28; 17:1 cf. Rom. 13:11; Eph. 5:15, 16
- ▶ **We should complete our duties in time,**
John 19:30 cf. 2Tim. 4:7



NTK

▶ OUTLINE-2

5 POINTS OF TIME



- The fullness of the times, Gal 4:4
 - The consummation of ages, Heb 9:26
 - The end of the age, Matt 13:39
 - The fullness of time, Eph. 1:10
 - The end of time, 1Cor 15: 24
- The birth of Christ.
 - The cross of Christ.
 - Close of the age of grace
 - The millennium.
 - New Heavens & New Earth

Source: unknown

▶ REFLECTIONS

Enoch Reuben Muniah, Johannesburg

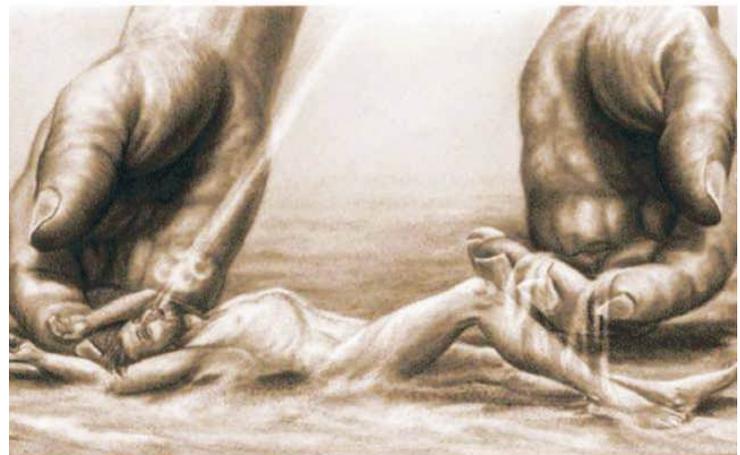
CREATION AND ITS CREATOR

(Part 7)

The Purpose of God Creating Man?

Some have said that the triune God had existed from eternity without men; why would He now create man and a space-mass-time universe in which man would dwell?

Well, are we as creatures, in a position to question or judge the creator? “O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" (Rom. 9:20).



Can the creature question the creator? “God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power and of love and of a sound mind; who hath saved us and called us with a holy

calling, not according to our works but according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began (2 Tim. 1:7 & 9); “The Lamb, without blemish and without spot was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world” to be slain (1 Peter 1:19 & 20), “The names of the redeemed had been written in His book of life before the foundation of the world” (Rev. 17:8).

Creator’s Will and Pleasure

These are the things that happened before the beginning of time and space. We were chosen in Christ before the world began. You are not here by chance; you are not here by accident; you are not an after-thought. We were thought of, way back in eternity past. Man was created at God’s will and pleasure that He might demonstrate the exceeding riches of His grace on man’s behalf through all the ages to come. God is a God of love; but that love is a reciprocal relationship when we love God who first loved us.

Worship the Creator

Another reason for which man was created; to worship the creator. That is something that God cannot do for Himself.

We are His subjects and He is the object of our worship. However, the commandment given concerning the forbidden fruit, was broken. Broken commandment meant broken fellowship with God. The ‘fruit’ seemed good for food (the lust of the flesh); it was pleasant to the sight (the lust of the eyes) and there was wisdom to be gained (the pride of life) (Gen. 3:6).



Deception & Fall

Satan tried to thwart God’s plan and purpose for man. He chose to deceive the weaker vessel of the fairer sex, Eve, when he appeared to her as a serpent (1 Pet. 3:7).

He began by sowing the seed of Doubt with the words, “Did God really say that”? (Genesis 3:1). Then came the Denial, “You shall not surely die” (Genesis 3:4). This was followed by the Deception, “You shall be as gods knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:5).

It is interesting to note also that God held Adam accountable for their sin. They tried to hide from God. God was not ignorant of where they were when He called out to Adam, “Where are you?” (Gen. 3:9). God was not asking about their geographical position but pointing out their spiritual state and standing.

Sin made them aware of their nakedness and so they covered themselves with an apron made of fig leaves. Adam played the ‘blame game’ as he accused Eve of sinning. Two things that subsequently followed: the bruising of the serpent’s head and this happened at Calvary; their apron of leaves soon shrivelled and God provided for them a covering of skins.

Atoning Sacrifice

It may be inferred without a shadow of doubt that an animal had to die to provide the coats of skin (Gen. 3:21). From Genesis chapter 12 on, animal sacrifices typified the perfect sacrifice of Christ on the altar of Calvary. Hundreds and



thousands of animals were sacrificed to cover man's sin. The blood of the Lord Jesus did not just cover our sin but removed our transgressions as far as the East is from the West (Ps. 103:12). "He will subdue our iniquities and shall cast our sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19). "Their sins and iniquities will I

remember no more" (Heb. 10:13). God not only forgives us our sins; He also forgets our sins which He has pardoned.

It is so re-assuring to know that the Old Covenant (Old Testament) in which millions of animals have been slain, has given way to the New Covenant (New Testament) that was ratified by the blood of Christ on the cross. The hymn writer puts it, "Not all the blood of beasts, on Jewish altars slain, could give the guilty conscience peace, or wash away one stain."

The New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed (latent) and the Old Testament is in the New Testament revealed (patent). The Old Testament points forward to the coming Redeemer; the New Testament reveals the promised Messiah. Since Calvary, we look back to the cross as the finished redemptive work of Christ and then we look forward to His glorious return. Maranatha!

G&P

(To be continued (DV) ■

I am satisfied that when the Almighty wants me to do or not to do any particular thing, he finds a way of letting me know it.

Abraham Lincoln

I have so much to do today that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer.

Martin Luther

VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIFE

A Study: Part 7
(Based on Joshua 1–8)

Steps to Stand on the Victory Side, Josh. ch. 3

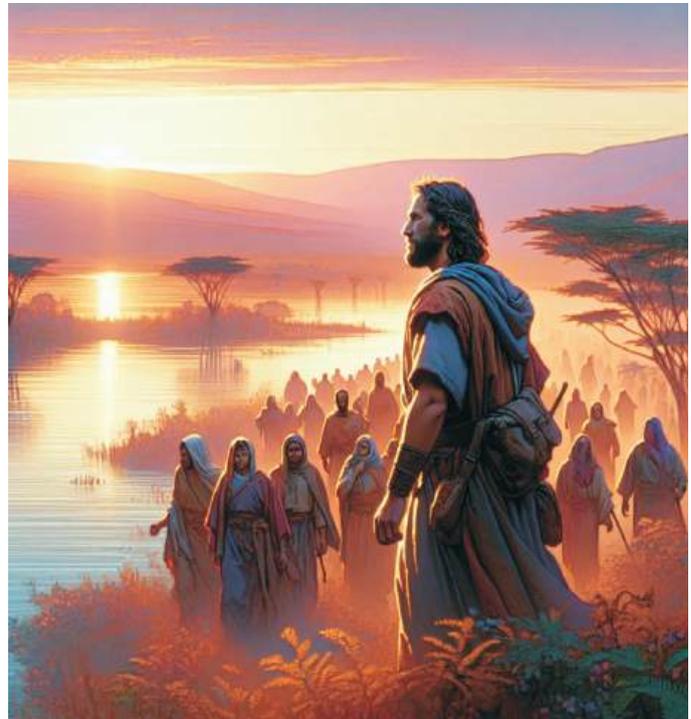
Review: We have seen the difference between the Red Sea crossing of the Israelites and their crossing at river Jordan. One was to escape from bondage, and the other was to escape the wandering self-life of the wilderness. Unlike the crossing at the Red Sea, Israelites had to fulfil certain requirements before God could wonderfully open the way through Jordan to reach the other side. It speaks of the steps we ought to take before God will take us through victorious Christian life.

Be movable, Jos. 3:1, 14

They moved from Shittim to the Jordan which is around 8 miles in distance (v1, 14). They did not settle in one place. Even though they did not see any sign of divine work yet they were willing to move, ready to take a step. It is instructive - God never takes a believer forward in spiritual prosperity unless he is movable.

Think of a bicycle handle; if it is not flexible you cannot control it. Similarly, be movable, willing to change, ready to take

any step as the Lord leads. It is imperative for growth. Natural human tendency is to keep the status quo, but all who climb the ladder of achievement know, change is essential for growth and advancement. Be teachable and changeable. Allow the Lord to direct you. It demands faith. Without faith they could never move from Shittim to Jordan – even unto the river.



So, when we take a step by faith, then He will direct us. When by faith we appropriate what God has promised, He will do for us according to His promises.

Similar idea is found in Paul's words in Phil. 3:12–14. Paul does not think that the race is over, but forgetting the past, he presses on, stretching forward to reach the goal. Notice his readiness, movable attitude, etc., which are very much essential for a victorious life.

Be patient, V. 2

Though they moved from one place to another easily, they were not in a hurry to overtake God's way for them. They were willing to wait to get clear guidance from the Lord. God allows 'delays' as well as 'halts' to make us wait, think, consider, and take a conscious, definite stand. We must be alert to the Lord's direction at every moment. Never run ahead of Him, be patient. Moreover, we need perseverance too.



Someone commented, 'if Columbus who discovered America had returned after his long and dangerous voyage nobody would have blamed him, but then nobody would have remembered him either.' To inherit promises, we need faith and patience (Heb. 6:12).

Be focused on Christ, V. 3

“When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God” – They were not to center their attention on the land ahead, nor on the overflowing river before them, but on the Ark. The Ark of the Covenant represented the presence of God among the people of Israel. When they moved from one camp to another, the Levites carried it on their shoulders, after covering it with a cloth. Usually, the Ark went in front of the main procession (Exo. 25:10–22; Num. 4:5-6; 10:33, etc.) being carried by the priests. To cross over the river, Joshua says, the priests shall carry the Ark to lead the way. The people were supposed to look for the movement of the Ark of the Covenant to get guidance for their further steps and follow it. The Ark of the Covenant typified the person of the Lord Jesus Christ who dwelt among us as God with us. As the Israelites had to keep their eyes focused upon the Ark, Christian believers are told to look to Jesus, Heb. 12:2, 3. He is our Captain; He goes before us, John 10:4. Fix your eyes on Him, His glory, perfection, example, etc. (Heb. 3:1). The troublesome circumstances should not divert our attention from the Lord.

Be followers of the Lord, V. 3

The Israelites were not only to notice the movements of the Ark, but they had to follow it, even to the river. Similarly, we must follow the Lord Jesus Christ and His example whatever may be the cost. He is the victor, and our victory is in Him. Consistently following Christ, His instructions, and examples are essential to

experience victory in Him, (cf. John 10:4; 1Pet. 2:21; 1Cor. 11:1; 1Thess. 1:6, 7, etc.). Do not be discouraged at failure. Self-designed paths and efforts will always lead to continuous disappointment. There is no short cut in spiritual life. Follow the Lord whatever be the condition, wherever be the path, even if to the ‘river’!

Be holy, v. 5.

‘Sanctify yourselves’. Joshua made it very clear that without sanctification you cannot see a mighty work from God. It may be ceremonial cleansing like washing their body and cloths etc. Also, it may refer to keeping themselves pure of all kinds of evil. Without such a spiritual exercise, God would not work among them. It is true always. All the revivals began with a high standard of purity and cleansing, (cf. Isa. 59:1, 2; 2Cor 6:16–7:1; 1Th. 4:3; 2Tim. 2:21; Heb. 12:14).

Exalt the Lord. V.6

The priests had to walk before the people carrying the Ark of the Covenant. As already seen, the ark typifies Christ. So, in a general application we can say that as priests (1Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6) all believers should exalt Christ and walk as examples. We all must exalt Christ in our daily lives that many may see Him in and through us and follow Christ. When we exalt and glorify the name of the Lord, heaven begins to do wonders for us (1Chro. 20:17, 21, 22; Acts 16:25). And this is especially significant for leaders. They should be in the front, being examples. They should walk before the people exalting Christ that people could see and follow Him to spiritual victory.

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To be continued (DV)

▶ ANECDOTE -1

TIME IS MONEY

If you had a bank that credited your account each morning with \$86,000 that carried over no balance from day to day. Allowed you to keep no cash in your account, and every evening cancelled whatever part of the amount you failed to use during the day, what would you do? Draw out every cent every day, of course, and use it to your advantage!

Well, you have such a bank, and its name is TIME! Every morning, it credits you with 86,400 seconds. Every night it rules off as lost whatever of this you failed to invest to good purpose. It carries over no balances, and it allows no overdrafts.

Each day, it opens a new account with you. If you fail to use the day's deposits, the loss is yours. There is no going back. There is no drawing against tomorrow.

Source: Unknown



▶ ANECDOTE -2

THE TIME WE USE

According to a study published in 2017 on how much the average American spends on various activities during his or her lifetime of 78 years:

- Sleeping: 28.3 years
- Working: 10.5 years
- Television, video games, social networking: 9 years
- Doing chores: 6 years
- Eating and drinking: 4 years
- Education: 3.5 years
- Grooming: 2.5 years
- Shopping: 2.5 years
- Child care: 1.5 years
- Commuting: 1.3 years
- Living to accomplish personal goals: 9 years



Alexander Atkins

▶ ANECDOTE -3

THE FOLLY OF THE WISE

The story is told about Sir Isaac Newton, the famous scientist, who lived in the 17th century. He had two pet cats, a mother cat and her kitten. They wanted to go out or come into his study. They troubled him to open the door for them whenever he was busy. He thought of an idea and called in the carpenter to make two holes in his door for both cats to be able to go in and out of the room. He sent instruction that there should be a large hole for the mother and a small hole for the kitten in the door. When the carpenter came, he had a good laugh at the idea. When Sir Isaac questioned his humour, the carpenter replied, “Don’t you think that one hole was enough for both cats to go through? The kitten could go through the same hole as its mother.” Sir Isaac Newton did indeed look very foolish that day for there was no need for two doors when one was good enough.



Source: Unknown

GOD WHO CROWNS THE YEAR



“You crown the year with Your goodness” Psalm 65:11a

Often in retrospection only we see the good things in life. Many look forward with worry and doubt. But as we look back to the path that we already tread, we can't but burst out in gratitude to God Almighty for all the benefits and blessings that He has graciously poured upon our life.

Here the Psalmist meditates upon the blessings God bestows upon His creation. Verse eleven is the summary – God crowns the year with His goodness. From the beginning of the year to the end, His eyes are upon His people and He fills the earth with His goodness. (Duet. 11:12).

Think of the rain in its seasons, the sunshine that gives new life and the air that we breathe freely, all speak of the care and faithfulness of the Creator. Not only that, consider the way God upholds and protects His creation. We can certainly confess as the Psalmist does, “You crown the year with Your goodness.”

Then, let us not wait for another year-end to acknowledge the gracious provisions of the Lord. Each moment, even now His eyes are upon us to beautify our days, weeks, and months. So, let us trust Him wholeheartedly for the days ahead. He is not only our ‘Ebenezer’; He is our ‘Jehovah-Jireh’ too.

G&P

Divine Leading: **BELIEVER'S PRIVILEGE**

Being led and guided by the Lord is one of the wonderful privileges of a Christian. Before we came to Christ, we were wandering as sheep. We could never have come back to our Master. It pleased the Lord to search and find us as a Good Shepherd, by giving His life. In His grace, He has brought us back to the fold and is constantly leading us as a Great Shepherd (1 Peter 2:25; John 10:10; Heb. 13:20).

Even though we know this truth, are we truly conscious of it and living accordingly? He is our Lord and the Master who is concerned about our safety, satisfaction, and progress. But do we take this seriously and abide by His leading and guidance?

Listen to what the Lord says to the Israelites, “Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, The Holy One of Israel: “I am the LORD your God, Who teaches you to profit, Who leads you by the way you should go. Oh, that you had heeded My commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river...” Isaiah 48:17, 18a.

Be Submissive

Notice how passionately the Lord God is calling upon the people of Israel to be submissive to His leading, for that alone

can bring joy and peace to them. Beloved, in this uncertain world, as our knowledge and ability are limited, it is the care and control of our Lord that sustains us. He knows exactly the path we ought to take. Our impression and preferences may go wrong. “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.” Pro. 16:25. How we ought to yield ourselves to His leadership. Let us consider a few aspects of this divine leading in our lives.



1. He leads us by holding our hands, Psalm 73:23

“Nevertheless, I am continually with You; You hold me by my right hand.” The Lord is not far away from us. We walk together; He holds us and even upholds us on His shoulder, Psa. 37:24; Luke 15:5. We do not need to worry about the steps ahead. Our responsibility is to hold on to His hands

and walk along with Him.

2. He leads us by His counsel, Psalm 73:24.

“You will guide me with Your counsel, And afterwards receive me to glory.” As we walk with the Lord, holding on to His hands, He gives us valuable lessons, Mat.11: 29. Are we really committed to hear His counsel and live life accordingly?

3. He leads us with His eye, Psalm 32: 8c.

“I will guide you with My eye.” He is watching every movement of a believer and carefully observing our path. Isaiah says, “He will lead His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom. And gently lead those who are with young”, Isaiah 40:11. See, how thoughtfully the Lord takes a note of our state. He leads us fully knowing our state; He will not allow anything that is beyond our ability, (Cf. Duet. 32:11, 12).

4. He leads us continually, Isaiah 58:11a

Without any stop or interruption, the Lord leads us. If at all we face any failure or feeling of an absence of divine leading, it is because of our own failure to acknowledge and appreciate the sustaining hands of God. Even when we fail Him, He does not take away His attention towards us. In fact, in the most adverse circumstances of life God’s people have the privilege to recognise the divine hands that lead them mysteriously. May His name be glorified.



5. He leads us to satisfaction, Isaiah 58:11

When He leads us, there is no confusion or complication. He will make darkness light for us and crooked places straight (Isaiah 42:16). He will lead us only to the right path and destination: to peace (Luke 1:79), to refreshment (Psa. 23:2), and to the right decision (Psa. 25:9).

Beloved, there is much more about the various aspects of the guidance and leading that a Christian is privileged to experience through the Lord Jesus Christ. He leads us by example (Jn. 10:4); He leads us to the end (Psalm 48:14). Do not forget, it is through the Word of God that God speaks to us today. To be led and guided by the Lord, one should read and meditate upon His word. The satisfaction and peace of mind resulting from God’s guidance and leading are indescribable and incomparable.

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For further details contact:- gracepeaceu@gmail.com / Whatsapp: **+91 9869638285**

Prepared, and posted by **Nelson Thomas Kumaramparampil (NTK)** for the Glory of God & the Joy of the saints.

Editorial assistance: **Tom Jacob**

Design & Layout: **Jiju Mathew & Dhanya Mohandas**

Technical Support: **Robin Johnson (RJDeals)**

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