

He Shall Direct Your Paths

Joe Slater

Whoever said life is a breeze was wrong! At home, work, school, and yes, even at church, we struggle with complicated issues. Sometimes we wonder which way to turn. How can we resolve life's thorny problems?

Pop psychology says to look within yourself for the answers. Follow your heart! Do whatever you think is right, and it will all work out.

Major problem: God's word says exactly the opposite! "*O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps*" (Jeremiah 10:23). So, according to God's inspired prophet, we are looking in the wrong place when we look within ourselves for direction. Why is that?

God, through Jeremiah, gives us the answer in 17:9 – "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.*" Ouch! It hurts me to admit that I am sinful. The world erroneously insists that people are fundamentally good, so we can find the right course by looking inside ourselves. God Himself says our hearts are deceitful and wicked; it is not in us to direct our own steps.

That's not to say that there is nothing good about us, or that we can never be correct about the direction we should go. A heart that has been cleansed by the blood of Jesus and trained in God's word might very well recommend the right path frequently. But that's just the point: bottom line, the right way is determined by God's word, not by whatever might be in my heart. Even the heart converted to Christ may be deceived by Satan's lies through the weakness of the flesh.

King Solomon wisely wrote: "*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own*

understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:6).

When the world calls you to look within yourself to find the truth, resist that appeal with all your might. Let God direct your paths; then you may be confident that you will arrive safely at your eternal destination!

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Never Surrender

During the dark days of England, when it seemed there was no hope for survival, Sir Winston Churchill stood before the House of Commons and, reviewing the situation, gave them the decision of Britain's leaders: "We have talked it over, and we will go on to the end; we will never surrender."

Every Christian is fighting in a spiritual war and is bombarded with temptations from all sides (Ephesians 6:2). To surrender cannot be an option.

The apostle John presents a very disturbing picture of this conflict in the book of Revelation. Yet he assures us that the faithful will be victorious. Jesus told the church at Smyrna, "*Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life*" (Revelation 2:10). To Ephesus He said, "*To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God*" (2:7). To each of the seven churches of Asia, He promised a reward to those who overcome and are faithful.

Paul assured the Romans that they were not only conquerors, but more than conquerors in Christ. "*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us*" (Romans 8:35-37).

In Christ victory is ours (1 Corinthians 15:57). We Dare Not Surrender!

-- Cecil Burch (Angel Fire, NM) via **Old Paths**

WALL FLOWERS

"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are" (1 John 3:1).

Have you ever felt like a wall flower? The kind that decorates wall paper? There to see, but not to interact? I have. When I was in high school, I made friends with the students who didn't fit in. They weren't in clubs or on sports teams. They weren't inside the gym dancing with other students during lunch break in the winter. They had no money to spend at the little convenience store up the road from our high school. They didn't have pretty clothes. You could practically see the words written on their fronts like scarlet letters. "I'm an outsider. I don't belong."

Why did they feel like the school's slush pile? Maybe for all of the above reasons. Perhaps they suffered because of problems at home, depression, or a lack of self-esteem. Some of these students dropped out of school. I was able to keep up with a few before I left our small rural community. They married, had families, and made it in society. But some didn't make it.

The walls of our homes, high schools, churches, and places of employment still enclose many people who feel they don't belong. Teachers struggle to reach out to those students with special programs and tutoring. Elders, ministry leaders, and teachers work hard to reach those on the outskirts. Parents struggle with their children.

The answer for anyone who feels like a wall flower is found in the Bible. God is our heavenly Father and longs to care for us and claim us as His son or daughter. He is the One who can fulfill our search for identity and love. We are lost in sin and ruination unless we find Him. How different many lives might be if people knew how much God loves them.

--Donna Wittlif (Denver, CO)