

Guidance



Walking Through the Land of God's Promises (Part 7)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again. We continue our journey together through the rich and wonderful land of God's promises.

In my talk yesterday I dealt with God's promise to give wisdom to all who asked Him in faith. I explained that the wisdom presented in the Bible is not "super-spiritual" or dependent upon understanding complicated theological jargon. Rather, it is simple, practical, and down-to-earth.

In my talk today I'm going to deal with one particular way in which we often need wisdom and in which God makes it available to us. My subject may be summed up in one word: guidance. Or, if you want a longer phrase, How to find the right way in each situation and circumstance of our life. The promises of God cover this need.

We'll turn, first of all, to the promises that are found in Psalm 37:4-5:

> "Delight yourself in the Lord And He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, and He will do it." (NAS)

Now I believe the first verse that I read describes the kind of people who qualify for the promise of the second verse. The promise is, "Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, and He will do it."

But before we look at the promise, let's look at the kind of people that this promise is addressed to. God says, "Delight yourself in the Lord, and He'll give you the desires of your heart."

When I was a young believer, I understood that verse in this way: that if I take pleasure in God and do what God wants, then He'll give me the things that I want, the things I want to do or to enjoy. But as I became more mature, I saw that the promise goes much deeper than that. If I delight myself in the Lord, if I really seek to please the Lord and find my satisfaction in Him, then He will give me the desires of my heart in this sense: that by the Holy Spirit He will implant in my heart the desires that He wants to fulfill and my desires

will become godly and God-pleasing rather than self-centered and self-pleasing.

So, delighting yourself in the Lord will lead to a change in your desires, your motives, and your ambitions. And instead of being selfish and self-centered, you will receive from God, by the Holy Spirit, desires and motives and ambitions which are godly and God-centered. And through answering those desires and fulfilling those ambitions, God will be glorifying Himself and extending His kingdom. So, you understand that to claim the promise that follows in the next verse we have to become the kind of people who delight ourselves in the Lord in such a way that He implants in our hearts those desires which He Himself wants to fulfill. And let me say those desires are much better for us, much more profitable; they will do us much more good than our own selfish, personal, natural desires and ambitions which are often harmful to ourselves.

Now let's look at the promise that follows, Psalm 37:5:

> "Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, and He will do it." (NAS)

The first is an act: "Commit your way to the Lord." Committing is a single act that has to be performed just once.

Interestingly enough, the original Hebrew says literally, "roll your way on the Lord." Why do you think the psalmist says, "roll your way on the Lord"? Well, I'll tell you. I have my particular answer to that question. It's based on experience.

I was the principal of a college in East Africa for training African teachers. The principal of the college was everybody's servant. He had to do everything. If a tap leaked, he had to mend it. If there was a food shortage, he had to come up with food. One of the things I often had to do was go down into the local city and collect the food for our students and one of their favorite items of diet was rice. So I would collect these big sacks of rice, each of which weighed 112 pounds, and bring them in my little station wagon to the door of the storehouse where the food was kept.

Now one of the things that I found it necessary to impress upon Africans who were being educated was that it's not undignified for an educated person to work with his hands because they began to get the attitude that once they'd been to school and college, then it was below their dignity to work with their hands. So I used to sometimes set them an example by helping them to unload these sacks of rice from the back of the station wagon. And I discovered that if a sack of rice was standing on the back of the station wagon, it wasn't difficult to get it out on my back and carry it into the storehouse. But what was difficult was to get it off my back again, because it was easy to injure your back if you made the wrong movement. And that's why I learned about rolling my burden on the Lord. Because I discovered that instead of doing it rather slowly, I had to give a little quick jerk and roll that sack off my back in one movement so that it stood up on its end on the floor beside me, and I became quite skillful at doing that.

Well then, I saw why the psalmist says, "roll your way upon the Lord," because the choosing of our way through life is like that 112 pound sack. It's too heavy for us to handle by ourself; it's too big a decision and responsibility. So the psalmist says, "Don't try to carry that sack. Just roll it off your back and leave it at the Lord's feet and He'll take care of it." So that's the first phase, "Commit your way to the Lord," or "Roll your way onto the Lord."

Then the second phase is an attitude. Trust. Commit is an act; trust is a continuing attitude. Once we have committed, we don't go on committing, but we take the attitude that it is committed and all we have to do now is go on trusting. Commit is the act; trust is the attitude.

The third phase is, in the English translation, God will do it. However, as a matter of fact, in the Hebrew it says literally, "God is doing it." So I understand it this way. First we commit our way to the Lord; then we maintain an attitude of steady, continuing trust. The matter is in God's hand and as long as we continue trusting, God is doing it. In other words, He's working out whatever we committed to Him. Whatever decision, whatever course we need to take, God is working it out.

To me, it's rather like going to a bank and depositing money in a savings account. The depositing of the money is the act of commitment. After that you don't keep running back to the bank every day and wondering if your money is bearing interest. You just know the bank is adding the interest to your money day by day. That's an attitude of continuing trust and as long as your leave your money safely deposited in the bank and maintain that attitude of trust, the bank is doing it. And it's the same with God. "Commit your way to Him, trust in Him, and He is doing it."

Now we look at another promise of direction from the Lord. This is found in Proverbs 3:5-6:

> "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight." (NIV)

The alternative translation is, “He will direct your paths.” Let’s take that alternative and legitimate translation. God will direct your path, He will make the right way through life for you. That’s the promise. It’s the one we need in this present situation.

Now what are the conditions? In a way, they are rather similar to those of Psalm 37. The first condition is, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart.” Maintain that continuing attitude of trust and you will find that with trust there always goes peace. When you become fretful and anxious, it’s a pretty certain indication that you’ve stopped trusting.

The second condition is negative. “Do not lean on your own understanding.” Don’t go back to trusting your own judgment and try to work it out yourself. One of the greatest hindrances to receiving answers to prayer from God is that we pray and then we try to work out how God should answer our prayer. Well, God is not committed to answer our prayer the way we might think and when we are trying to work it out we actually are in an attitude of mind and spirit in which it makes it difficult for us to receive the answer that God is working out on our behalf. So don’t lean to your own understanding.

The third condition here in Proverbs 3 is, “In all your ways acknowledge him.” What does that mean? Well, let me explain what I understand by acknowledging God. It means that at any given moment, any given situation, time or place, when you want to acknowledge God, you stop and you say, “God, I thank you for your faithfulness to me. I thank you for all the good you’ve already done me. I thank you for the way you proved yourself in so many situations and circumstances in my life. You’ve brought me this far and I trust you to continue to lead me.” That’s to acknowledge God in all your ways.

I remember in 1964 I resigned a rather secure pastorate that I held in a city in the Pacific Northwest and I committed myself to become an itinerant minister without any fixed salary or any fixed place of abode, no capital -- not even a car of my own. A wife and child to support, and yet I knew that God was thrusting me out into this new ministry. And as I was waiting upon God and seeking Him for some form of security in this new ministry, God gave me this Scripture that I’ve just been quoting: “In all thy ways acknowledge him and He shall direct thy paths.” And I want to testify that I’ve proved that true in all the years that have intervened (that’s fifteen years or more now). I’ve proved the trust of this beautiful Scripture. “In all thy ways acknowledge him and he will direct thy paths.”

Every time you come to a turning point or choice of a way in your life, pause and begin to acknowledge God. Thank Him for all He’s already done for you, for all His faithfulness, for the way He’s answered so many prayers and solved so many problems in the past. And then, having acknowledged Him, just go on trusting Him to be as faithful in the future as He has been in the past. Know that He will direct your path.

All right. Our time is up for today but I’ll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I’ll be dealing with a specific problem that confronts particularly those who are in places of employment. My theme will be “How to Find Acceptance in a Work Situation.” In this connection, I’ll be sharing with you some promises that I’ve proved in my own personal experience.

Radio Program

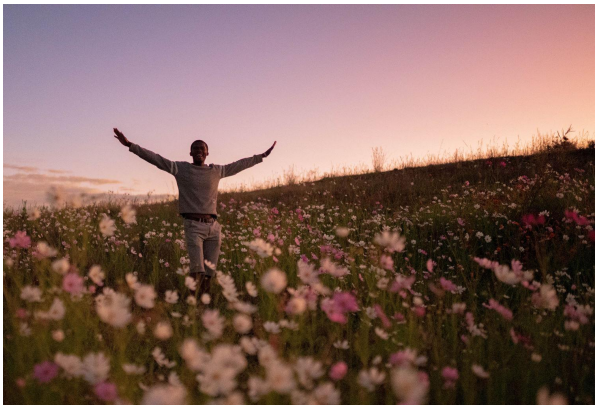
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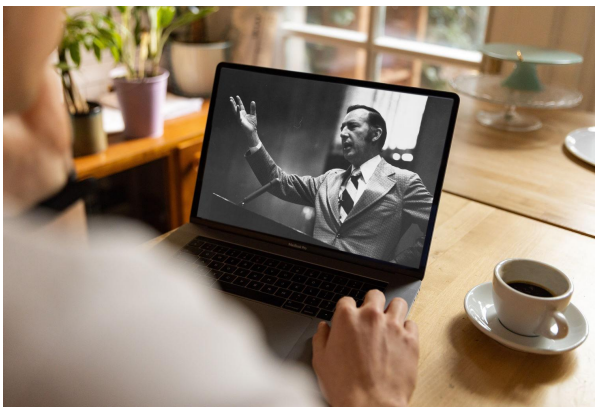
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