

## **THOU SHALT GUIDE ME WITH THY COUNSEL**

**AND AFTERWARD RECEIVE ME TO GLORY. – PSA. 73:24.**

HOW WONDERFUL is the thought that the Almighty God offers to guide his people through the difficulties of the present life by his divine counsel. One of life's most important lessons is our own insufficiency, our own lack of wisdom. In childhood days we naturally sought parental counsel. In after years even, while recognizing perhaps the fallibility and imperfection of all human counsel, we nevertheless have found such counsel helpful – perhaps at times absolutely necessary to our welfare: nevertheless, under the realization that to some extent selfishness is a trait in all humanity, we have found it necessary to be on guard on this point also; lest the counsel which we received should be not only fallible but possibly biased by the interests or preferences of the counselor.

But when, after learning of the grace of God and his provision in Christ Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins and the reconciliation of ourselves to him, we not only accepted the forgiveness, but turning over a new leaf, sought to walk in life according to the rules of justice, conscientiously, we found that more than ever we needed counsel – good counsel, unselfish counsel. We found that the course we had adopted is quite contrary to the spirit of the world; and hence that the number who would be able and willing to counsel us along these lines is comparatively small. Then it was that we first learned to go to the Lord's Word for counsel: and as we studied it we found in it more and more of a heavenly wisdom, profitable not only respecting the life to come, but also respecting the things of the present life.

After we had learned more of our own weakness and imperfection and more of the wisdom and grace of God, and after we had heard him inviting us, "calling" us to a full consecration of ourselves to him, and thus to a jointheirship with our Lord Jesus in the coming Kingdom,

and after we had found the narrowness of the way to the divine nature and glory, we came more than ever to appreciate the necessity for a Counselor, and a very wise one. We found that even the best of earthly counsel is of value only as it has been directed by the divine counsel: and hence we learned that in every condition in life, in every perplexity, we should listen to the Voice Celestial. When we arrived at this stage of experience the words of our text brought us great comfort and joy, prophetically assuring us of the very thing which we had desired, namely, guidance by divine counsel. Moreover, there is in it the additional assurance that this counsel shall be sufficient for us, so that ultimately, by giving heed thereto, we shall reach the everlasting prize at the end of the racecourse.

It is not surprising that, misinterpreting the divine Word and hence the divine plan for human salvation, many should fancy that they are being guided by God's counsel when really they are merely following the imaginings of their own minds. How many have been even led to absurdities by following what they imagined were impressions of the holy spirit. We know of no more fruitful source of error than this: no channel which the Adversary more frequently uses to delude and mystify those who consecrate themselves to the Lord; some of them finally becoming bound with their own erroneous views as with a chain.

It is usually after having stumbled through severe experiences of disappointment by following their own imaginings, thinking that they are led by the holy spirit, that God's people ultimately, if honest with themselves, find the falsity of this method and look further and lay hold upon God's counsel provided for us in his Word – the Bible.

The Adversary seeks to keep us from it and therefore misrepresents it as self-contradictory, contradicted by assurances of Scientists so-called, etc., etc. But the child of God not satisfied with self-deception, but really in earnest in the matter, learning his need of a counselor, and seeking grace to help at the throne of grace, will be

providentially led of the Lord to his Word. He may even then be turned aside by some of the Adversary's devices, but if he be truly begotten of the truth, the heavenly Father will doubtless correct him with chastisements and disappointments, and providentially bring him again in contact with his Word, at a time when his heart will be more mellow, and when he will more than ever feel his need of divine counsel.

We are not claiming that divine power is limited, so that no other channel than the Scriptures could be [R2240 : page 6] used in communicating between God and his people. It would be far from our thought to limit the Almighty; but it is quite our desire to ascertain if he has in any degree limited himself as respects the channels which he would use in counselling his people. We believe in divine providences, but believe that they are means for the bringing of God's people into a condition where they can be taught of God from his Word; and that providences do not supplant God's written Word. We know of nothing whatever in the Scriptures to indicate that God is pleased to reveal his will to his people, or to counsel them, by impressing thoughts upon their attention. Perhaps we ought to make an exception of the apostles, for possibly the Lord may so have dealt with them, inasmuch as they were used in the writing of the divine counsel for our instruction – the Scriptures.

But there is no intimation that God's people of the Church in general are to have any *plenary inspiration*, after the manner of the prophets and the apostles. Quite to the contrary, the Church is continually urged to search the Scriptures, that they may know the will, the counsel, of God, and the Apostle declares that the written Word is sufficient "that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished." (2 Tim. 3:16,17.) "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" – the Word of God which liveth and abideth forever. It is in harmony with this that our Lord prayed to the Father for the Church, saying, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy Word is truth." (John 17:17.) It is for the same reason

that the Bereans are commended, "in that they ...searched the Scriptures daily." (Acts 17:11.) It is for the same reason that the strongest and most faithful Christians in every period of the world's history have been those who loved and revered the Bible, and who went to it as the Word of God when [R2241 : page 6] they desired counsel from the Most High. This is the oracle of God, and as the prophet Isaiah declares, "If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." The prophet David says of some that "sit in darkness" that "it is because they rebelled against the words of God, and condemned the counsel of the Most High: therefore he brought down their heart with labor; they fell down, and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses." – Psa. 107:11-13. Compare Prov. 1:25,30.

Some reject the Word of the Lord *in toto*: others accept it nominally, but really never accept its counsels in the sense of putting them into practice in their daily lives. These latter are as truly rejectors as the former, altho they include the vast majority of nominal Christians. The Apostle calls attention to the difference between the hearer of the Word and the doer of the Word: also in the first Psalm the Lord points out to us the blessedness of those who walk according to the divine law or counsel, and not according to the counsel of the ungodly, saying, "He shall be like a tree planted by the river of water that bringeth forth fruit in its season. His leaf therefore shall not wither; and the thing which he doeth shall prosper." This class has one great, chief object in life: it is to serve the Lord acceptably, and thus to cultivate the character which he enjoined, and thus to be fitted and prepared for the glories and blessing promised to such in the life to come. As the Apostle Paul declared, so say all of these: "This one thing I do" – and such shall prosper in that one thing which they are doing; such will win the great prize set before us in the gospel.

Even in earthly matters, how great wisdom do we find in the Lord's counsel, the Lord's Word. How often his people have

ascertained years afterward, that it would have been wise for them, even from a selfish standpoint, to have sought first the counsel of the Lord in reference to the smallest affairs of life. For instance, how many have learned the wisdom of the Lord's counsel which says, "Be thou no surety for another." How many people have made shipwreck, financially, by the neglect of this admonition from the great Counselor. Nothing in this implies selfishness however, for the counsel of the Lord is that his people should be of a generous disposition. He counsels, "Do good, and lend, hoping for nothing [for no corresponding favors] again." (Luke 6:35.) We may do good and lend according to our opportunities and abilities, but are not to obligate ourselves beyond what we would be willing to give or to lend outright.

How many would have found it of great advantage to them in life to have followed the Lord's counsel which says, "Owe no man anything but love." How often in the neglect of this divine counsel, God's people as well as the worldly have suffered for years in endeavoring to pay debts which should never have been contracted. On the other hand, the Lord counsels us that we should "lay by in store" that we may have to give to charities. (1 Cor. 16:2; Eph. 4:28.) Economy and frugality, and provision for the necessities of our own household, and generosity toward others needing assistance, spiritual or temporal, are the good counsels of the Lord.

How many have suffered themselves and brought suffering upon others through neglect of the Lord's counsel which says, "A soft answer turneth away wrath; but grievous words stir up anger." Who cannot see that the whole world would be blessed by obedience to this counsel and that a very large proportion of the domestic infelicity of the whole world arises from a **[R2241 : page 7]** total or partial neglect of the course here pointed out by the divine Counsellor.

How many have failed to properly apply the divine counsel which assures us that, if rightly exercised thereby, *tribulation* worketh a hope which will not be put to shame, because of the love of God shed abroad

in our hearts by such experiences. If all the Lord's people would give attention to this, what a willingness to endure tribulation for the truth's sake would take the place of fear; and what growth in grace would speedily be manifested.

The Lord's counsel speaks to us again, instructing us as to the attitude of heart necessary if we would receive and be profited by his counsels. He says, "The *meek* will he guide in judgment, the *meek* will he teach his way." Ah, yes! But how often pride, and haughtiness of language and demeanor, mark those who would be teachers of God's people. But such marks to those who are looking to the Lord for counsel, should be indications that such teachers are not meek, are therefore not taught of God, nor in an attitude to receive his instruction; and that consequently they would be very unsafe helpers and guides respecting the heavenly counsel.

The heavenly Counselor instructs us, saying, "Forget not the assembling of yourselves together – and so much the more as ye see the day drawing on." The meek who receive the counsel will seek so far as they are able to make use of all the means of grace which the Lord provides, for all possible fellowship of spirit with those who have the mind of Christ they will enjoy and seek to use. Those who do otherwise are rejecting the counsel of the Lord against themselves – to their own detriment and injury. Wherever the spirit of the Lord is in any heart, it will surely seek fellowship in others of like spirit. Hence, if our own hearts are in good condition, we will proportionately desire fellowship with the Lord, expressing ourselves in prayer and hearing the testimony of the Lord through his Word in reply; and similarly we will enjoy mingling with the Lord's people. "He who loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen." Any lack of fellowship with all who love the Lord and are consecrated to him should be considered by us as a sure sign of a spiritual decline, and should be correspondingly opposed with all our energy, until our hearts come back to that condition in which we have

(as an assurance that we have passed from death unto life) the fact that we love the brethren. – 1 John 3:14.

Our heavenly Father counsels us again in the words, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." How often would this good counsel of the Lord, if remembered, bring a blessing and a relief from the attacks of the Adversary who fain would make us believe that our unavoidable weaknesses and imperfections are proofs that we are not the Lord's. With this counsel before us, what a strength we should have in combating the besetments of the world, the flesh and the devil. How it should lead us in the moment of temptation to lift up our hearts in prayer to the Lord for "grace to help in time of need." The Lord wishes us to learn the lesson of our own weakness and imperfection and to learn to go to him for strength and succor – not before we need it, but "*in time of need*," in every time of trouble.

What a blessing comes to us with a true appreciation of the Lord's counsel, "Godliness *with* contentment is great gain." The combination of godliness and contentment is necessary to our peace and spiritual prosperity. However much *godliness* the discontented may have or seek to have, they cannot have true happiness. However *contented* any may be in sin or ungodliness, he is certainly losing a great deal in not having godliness – not only as respects the present life, but also that which is to come. Godliness with contentment does not mean indifference to our condition and welfare, either spiritual or temporal: the child of God is to be ambitious, especially in spiritual things, and in the use of every earthly talent to the Master's praise: but while putting forth every energy and not slothful in the Lord's business, nor in any other business in which he may engage with the Lord's approval, but fervent in his spirit, serving the Lord, he may be *content* with such blessings upon his efforts as the Lord is pleased to grant, so that while still pursuing and still achieving he may continually be thankful and restful at heart, singing, –

"Content, whatever lot I see,  
Since 'tis my God that leadeth me."

No counsel of the Lord could be much more important than this at the present juncture; for we are in a time when more and more the whole world of mankind is growing discontented as well as losing Godlikeness. God's people have therefore all the more need to cultivate these qualities; not only for their own sakes, but also as helpers, counselors and exemplars for the world.

How many of God's consecrated people, through neglect to appropriate it to themselves, have lost the great comfort and peace which should go with the promise of our Counselor, "All things work together for good, to them that love God; to the called ones according to his purpose." The well-instructed soul has learned that the good here referred to is not always, nor very often, earthly good, – temporal advantage: they that love God and are called according to his purpose, and have been giving attentive heed to his counsel, **[R2241 : page 8]** know that the "all things" include chiefly the trials and disappointments and perplexities and difficulties and temptations of the narrow way, in which they have consecrated themselves to walk; and that the "*good*" which will be worked out, will be in the chiseled and polished characters, likenesses to the character of Christ, which through faithfulness unto the end will be perfected in the divine honor and glory and immortality promised by the Lord to his faithful. **[R2242 : page 8]**

What good counsel comes to us in the words, applicable to all who desire to please and serve the Lord, "I will set a guard upon my lips, that I sin not with my mouth." How many heart-aches and heart burnings would be saved by a careful compliance with this good counsel. And a great blessing comes from every attempt to follow it; because, the lips merely give expression to that which is in the heart. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Whoever, therefore, starts to guard his lips will find if he be a child of God, if he



have a new heart, that the controlling of the lips will necessarily mean a correction of the heart in righteousness. He who would guard his lips will soon find that the easiest as well as the best way to do it is to get his heart filled with love and good wishes – to the Lord's people and to all others; then the good thoughts and good sentiments within will leave no room for bitter expressions, slanders, malice, expressions of hatred or strife, which gender roots of bitterness and defile many.

Another counsel of the Lord which seems to be overlooked of late is, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for some thereby have entertained angels unawares." In olden times the spirit beings on numerous occasions presented themselves in human form to deliver messages to mankind, but the Lord's general method during this Gospel age seems to be to use his people in the flesh as his messengers. Yet, it is nevertheless still true, that all who have the Lord's spirit should be hospitably inclined; especially toward any whom they may have reason to believe are fellow pilgrims in the path of life and fellow servants of the great King. And all who are ever thus entertained as the Lord's servants, and because they are his, should be extremely careful that as ambassadors for God their influence, wherever they may go, may be an influence for good, a blessing upon their fellow servants, an influence that will glorify our Lord.

We might take up hundreds of the testimonies of our great Counselor and find them full of wisdom and blessing to us; yet the blessing would be not merely in the knowing of his counsel, but in proportion as we should *obey* the counsel, and thus *do the will* of our Father who is in heaven. We will not go further with this part of the subject, except to call to memory that the point of the Lord's counsel most prominently set forth is, as the Apostle declares, summed up in the word, Love – to God and to our fellows. All the meekness that he instructs us to have, all the patience, together with all the experiences in life which he permits, are designed merely to cultivate, and to bring to a large development in us, the spirit of Love which, as our Counselor declares, is "the bond of perfectness;" because Love

represents the only condition of the heart which could be entirely acceptable to God.

While the outward affairs of life are to be regulated and harmonized with the Lord's character and will, as expressed to us in his Word, yet the object sought is to have these good qualities proceed from an *inward source*, a regenerated heart; a heart from which Selfishness has been dethroned, and in which Love has been enthroned as the moving impulse of life. Love to God will regulate all of our obedience to him, so that it will not be merely outward and formal ceremonies, but worship in spirit and in truth. Love to fellow-men – especially to the household of faith – will guide us in our dealings with them; for love thinks no evil, love slanders not, love backbites not, love bears no false witness, love seeks not her own interests merely, but also the welfare of others, is not proud, but humble, meek, gentle, easy to be entreated, long-suffering and patient.

Let us remember, however, that this condition of perfect love is not to be attained in a moment, but is to be the *result* of the experiences of the present life, in obedience to the divine counsel. However, the degree of success and rapidity in cultivating this spirit depends very largely upon our zeal, and the heed which we give to the great Counselor. Those who have given themselves wholly to the Lord and who have been accepted of him, have doubtless even from the beginning of their new life in Christ known considerable of this devotional love for God and for his people, which should increase daily. But the devotional flame which at the beginning of the Christian's experience is fearful and merely seeks the Lord for safety, may by and by reach such a development that it cries out to God, "Oh Lord, I delight to do thy will. Gladly will I toil and suffer, or bear thy reproaches, and serve thy people; if thus I may know that I am pleasing and acceptable to thee!" This is the right spirit, and this spirit should continue all the way down to the close of the battle. But such will find testings and trials by the way, to prove how deep and how sincere is their spirit of love: and where it is genuine, where the good seed of the

divine truth has fallen into an honest heart, it will grow, it will thrive upon trials, disappointments; and against every opposition it will bring forth in life a fruitage of good works, of service [R2242 : page 9] for the Lord and for his people, – which may be large or small according to the opportunities enjoyed by all the "overcomers."

### **"AND AFTERWARD RECEIVE ME TO GLORY."**

It will be noticed that this prophetic promise is not, "Thou shalt guide me by thy counsel" and *if* I will render obedience to the counsel, I will afterward be received to glory. On the contrary, the statement is made, not to nominal Christians, nor even to all who make a consecration to the Lord; it refers merely to those who will ultimately be overcomers and constitute the body of Christ, the glorified Church, the bride. The promise in other words is to the entire Christ, Head and body. Each member of the Christ will be guided by the divine counsel and as a result will be received to glory. *All who hear* the counsel of the Lord and are *guided* by it in this present time, will be ultimately accepted as members of the body of Christ, and as such will be received to the divine glory.

The Counselor is wise, infallible, unerring; he knows the end from the beginning, he knows exactly what will please himself; he knows therefore how to direct us in his way. His Word of counsel "is sufficient." His spirit is the spirit of holiness, the spirit of love, the spirit of the truth; and wherever this spirit dwells in the hearts of his people it must be through a conformity to his Word of counsel, his guidance. For all who thus put themselves completely under the Lord's supervision, and who resign their wills entirely to his will, there can be no question as to the result. Assuredly, such will afterward be received into glory.

Our Counselor through his Word tells us that there is an earthly or terrestrial glory, and that there is a heavenly or celestial. (1 Cor. 15:40,41.) Hence his counsel is appropriate not only to the class which is now running for the prize of the heavenly glory – seeking to make

their calling and election sure through faithfulness unto sacrifice – but the same counsel will be appropriate to the world in the coming age. It will be just as necessary for the world to hear the Voice of the great Counselor as for us. They, too, will need to learn the various lessons which the elect learn in the present life.

Those who will hear the Voice of the Counselor then, in the Millennium, will hear it through the glorified High Priest; and those who will render obedience to that counsel will be received to the *earthly glory* while those who will not hear his Voice will be cut off in the second death. (Acts 3:23.) The earthly glory was represented in the first man, Adam, and such as attain to it will attain to a condition of glory similar to that which he enjoyed before he sinned. The heavenly glory is represented in our Lord Jesus since his resurrection, highly exalted, the express image of the Father's person, and all the faithful of this Gospel age (tested by the severe trials of the present time) shall be made like unto their Lord and share his glory; as it is written, – "We shall be like him and see him as he is" – "partakers of the divine nature."

If there are difficulties in the race-course set before us in the Gospel age, there are advantages also. If we are required to walk by faith and not by sight, nevertheless the Lord's grace is sufficient for us, and the results promised are "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." If the trial is sharper and the conflict more intense, it has also the advantage of being shorter than that coming upon the world in the Millennial age; so we may say with the Apostle, these "light afflictions which are but for a *moment*," work out for us a better hope.

Let us, dearly beloved, take yet more earnest heed to the Word which has been spoken, remembering the Master's expression, He that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him to a man who builded his house upon a rock and the rain descended and

the floods came and the storm beat upon that house and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock – a sure foundation.

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