

Taking God Into Counsel

by J.R. Miller

The sermon emphasizes the necessity of seeking God's guidance in all aspects of life and the peace that comes from complete submission to His will.

Scripture: Proverbs 3:5

Topics: "Divine Guidance", "Trust and Surrender"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the necessity of seeking God's counsel in all aspects of life, rather than relying solely on human wisdom, which can be flawed and limited. He encourages believers to acknowledge God in every decision, big or small, and to trust in His guidance, especially during difficult times. Miller illustrates that true peace comes from surrendering our will to God's, even when His path is challenging or painful. He shares a poignant story of a woman who found peace by fully entrusting her worries to God, demonstrating the importance of complete submission to divine will. Ultimately, Miller calls for a holistic approach to faith, where every part of life is lived in recognition of God's sovereignty.

Transcript

"I will commit my way, O Lord, to Thee,
Nor doubt your love, though dark the way may be,
Nor murmur, for the sorrow is from God,
And there is comfort also in Your rod.
I will not seek to know the future years,
Nor cloud today, with dark tomorrow's fears;
I will ask a light from heaven, to show
How, step by step, my pilgrimage should go."

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct our paths." Proverbs 3:5-6

We like to ask advice of wise and trusted friends. All life's paths are new to us. We do not know the road. It is always true of us that, "You have not traveled this way before." Joshua 3:4. We need guidance--a hand to lead us. We like, as we enter an untried way, to talk about it with someone who has tried it already, and can give us advice. This is one of the advantages which a young person finds in having an older friend. "Old men for counsel." If we turned oftener to God for advice, there would be fewer wrecks on life's broad and storm-swept seas.

Few promises mean more, when practically interpreted, than that one which tells us that if we acknowledge the Lord in all our ways, that He will direct our paths. We all need direction in our life-paths. We are continually coming to points where we cannot decide what we ought to do, which way we ought to take.

We turn to our friends for counsel. The little child puts its hand in the mother's. The blind man seeks someone with good eyes to lead him. Inexperience looks to experience. But human guidance is inadequate. It is short-sighted, and cannot know certainly, what is best. It is ignorant, and may mislead unwittingly. Wrong advice, though meant for good, has wrecked many a life destiny.

Even love may guide fatally. Peter in his impulsive warm-heartedness would have turned Jesus away from his cross. Many times human love has held back its dear ones from paths of sacrifice, hardship, and loss, which were the divinely ordained paths for those feet. Human guidance is not enough. We need something truer, wiser, safer, something infallible. And that is just what we have assured to us in this promise of divine direction. We may have Christ for our Counselor, and He never advises mistakenly. He knows all life's paths, not simply as God, all-knowing--but as man, having passed through every way. He has promised to direct all our paths.

There is a condition: we must acknowledge him in all our ways. Most of us acknowledge the Lord in some of our ways. We turn to him in the time of great trials, or in sore dangers. Even scoffers and atheists have been known, in the moment of peril, as in a storm at sea--to fall upon their knees and call upon God for help. The most ungodly people, when alarming sickness is on them, or when death stares them in the face--want to take hold of the hand of God. There are none of us who do not at certain times crave the divine direction and help. But the condition of the promise reads, "In all your ways acknowledge him."

Perhaps we acknowledge God in spiritual things--but shut him out of the other parts of our life. We talk to him about our soul--but not about our daily work, our week-day life. What did you pray for yesterday? Did you men talk to God about your business, your buying and selling, your farm-work, your common task-work? Did you women pray about your household affairs, asking God to help you keep tidy homes, and to train your children well, to be sweet-tempered, gentle, patient, thoughtful? Did you young people talk with God about your studies, your amusements, your friendships, and your books?

We make a mistake when we take God into our counsel in any mere section of our life. Someone has said, "Each act of life may be like a psalm of praise; and all we do in the home, the field, the counting-room, may be as truly to the glory of God as the most elaborate ceremonies of religion." Mr. Ruskin says, "Unless we perform divine service in every willing act of our life--we never perform it at all." That is what is involved in the counsel of holy Scripture that in all our ways we acknowledge God.

To acknowledge Christ is to recognize him as Lord and Master of our life, and then to look to him in all ways, great or small, for guidance. Elizabeth Fry, during her last illness, said to her daughter, "I believe I can truly say that, since the age of seventeen, I have never waked from sleep, in sickness or in health, by

day or by night, without my first waking thought being how I might best serve the Lord." In this continual recognition of Christ as her life's guide she fulfilled the condition on which we are promised that he will direct our paths.

It was a prayer of George Herbert that he might be led wholly to resign the "rudder of his life" to the sacred will of God, to be moved always "as your love shall sway." A writer says, referring to this, "How much fretting, how much worry, it would spare us all, if we asked our heavenly Father that he would cause us to lean utterly, in perfect faith, in cheerful, unquestioning obedience, upon his will and wisdom, whether in life's trivial concerns, or in those shadows of darkness from which we recoil in fear!"

But here again we must not forget that it is submission "in all our ways " that leads to peace. We are very willing, most of us at least, to acknowledge God in a sort of grateful way while he directs us in paths in which we incline to go, paths that are pleasant and agreeable. We can easily worship the "sweet will of God," when this will is indeed sweet to our natural taste. But how is it when God directs us to go the way we do not want to go, to do the thing that is unpleasant, that will cause pain or require sacrifice or loss? How is it when the voice of God, answering to our question, bids us take the path that leads to a heavy cross; or bids us turn away from the pleasant thing that we crave; or bids us give up the friendship that has grown dear to our heart--but is drawing us away from God; or bids us give into the Father's hand--the child, or the loved one, we so desire to keep with us? "In all your ways" means the hard ways--as well as the easy ways; the thorny path--as well as the path of flowers; when it breaks our heart--as well as when it gives us joy or gladness.

Yet we are continually coming to points at which we hesitate. "In all but this, dear Lord," we say, "I can take Your way and do Your will." Still the answer comes, "In all My ways, My child." There must be no reserve, no withholding, no exception. The beloved sin must be given up, though it seem only a little one, though giving it up be like cutting off a right hand, or plucking out a right eye. The hard path must be taken, though it leads among thorns that pierce the feet, over sharp stones, through fire and flood. The painful duty must be done, though it costs place, ease, position, though it lead to poverty, suffering, homelessness. The bitter grief must be accepted, though it seems to take all and leave nothing. All must be accepted sweetly, lovingly, cheerfully, with unquestioning faith.

Here is a little story from an English magazine, that fits in as illustration. A poor woman in the hospital was told by the doctor that she could not recover, that her illness was incurable. It is very hard to be told this--that one never can hope to get better, that one's life-work is done. However, this poor sufferer was not overcome by what the kindly doctor told her. She did not shrink from pain and death. But there was still one point, at which she could not yield to God's way. With tears she said that she gladly and patiently accepted God's will so far as her own pain and death were concerned--but she could not bear the thought of leaving her children alone. She declared that no one could induce her to feel resigned on this matter.

The visitor to whom she said this, had no words with which to chide her. She could only say to the poor woman, "Yours is untold sorrow, far beyond my understanding--but God knows all about it; God understands. Will you not tell him just how you feel? Tell him what you have told me, all your pain, your anxiety about your little children, your sore dread at thought of leaving them alone in this world." Then the visitor went away, promising to pray for the poor woman in her sore struggle. In a day or two she came again, and found the sufferer calm and patient. She had told God--had poured out her whole heart in unrestrained prayer, and she said to her friend, "I am just leaving everything with God; not only whether I shall live or die--but each one of my little children, if I am to be taken from them. Everything is safe with

him. I feel it now--I know it."

She had acknowledged God in this hard way, as in all other and easier ways. She had acknowledged him, too, by telling him all about her trouble, by going over her anxieties with him, and now there was no trouble, no anxiety, any longer. There was now no "anything but this" in her submission. To the Master's words: "In all your ways," she could now respond, "Yes, Lord, in all my ways!"

This is the secret of peace--this losing of our will--in Christ's. So long as we struggle, and fail in even the smallest degree to acquiesce in the divine will and way--our peace is disturbed and broken; but if we cease all resistance, and just lie quiet in God's hands, and let Him have his way with us, the peace is full and complete.

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