

One who leads the birds of the air. The Apostle Paul wrote: *As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God* (Rom. 8:14; cf. Job 39:26-27). This is a defining characteristic of the children of God – they are led by God. In Scripture, the premier illustration is God’s leading of the Jews out of Egypt, (Deut. 8; Ps. 105-106). The beautiful metaphor used to picture this truth is that of a shepherd leading his sheep (Ps. 23).

Although there are many passages of Scripture that promise and describe God’s guidance, we will consider just one, **Psalm 32:8-9: *I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. Be ye not as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.*** I have chosen this passage for two reasons. First because here we have a clearly stated promise: God says, *I will instruct thee, and teach thee . . . I will guide thee . . .* But also notice, secondly, we have a detailed statement of *how* God leads. *I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go, I will guide thee with mine eye.* Observe we have three parallel statements, each building on the previous one, each adding a new element. When we consider them carefully, in turn, we will find this is a detailed statement of God’s method of guidance. With this in view, let us consider what these verses teach us about God’s guidance.

GOD’S PROMISE OF GUIDANCE

Who Promises to Guide?

Notice first, that it is God who promises to guide. Some argue that the *I* in v. 8 refers to David since he is the author of the Psalm. But the last phrase of the verse – *with my eye (upon you)* – almost certainly negates that view, being a reference to God’s providential care. But also note that since this is a promise of God, faith is required. Biblically, the connection between God’s promises and God’s people is always faith. We know God leads us, ultimately, not by evidences, feelings, or supernatural signs, but by faith in His promises revealed to us in Scripture.

Who Does God Promise to Guide?

God does not promise to guide everyone. In fact, many who claim to be led by God are actually led by their own fleshly lusts and by the devil (cf. John 8:42-47; 2 Cor. 4:4; Titus 1:16). It is important to note who the *thee* in v. 8 refers to. Since the whole context of the Psalm is the blessedness of forgiveness it seems safe to assume this promise is given to all who are justified by God. Consider vv. 1-2: *Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity . . .* and vv. 5-6: *I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. For this shall everyone that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found . . .* Truly, one of the most profound blessings of forgiveness is the promise of God’s providential guidance in our lives.

GOD’S METHOD OF GUIDANCE

God Promises to Instruct Us

The most basic element of God’s guidance is instruction. The Hebrew word (שכל) translated *instruct* refers particularly to the understanding or the intellect (Neh. 8:13). Here it is causative and therefore has the idea of *making* one understand (1 Chr. 28:19). God instructs us through His Word. As we read, study, and meditate on the written Word, God, by His Spirit, enables us to comprehend divine truth (1 Cor. 2:6-16). He opens our eyes of understanding (Luke 24:44-45). As He illuminates our hearts through the truth, our minds are renewed (Rom. 12:2). Indeed, if our minds are not daily being renewed through God’s Word, we can never expect a clear sense of God’s guidance in our lives.

God Promises to Teach Us in the Way

The second element of God’s guidance, assumes and is closely related to the first. As we are illuminated by the Spirit through the Word, God will *teach us in the way we should go*. This is a way of saying, He will teach us how to live. The word translated *teach* (ירח) is a word that literally means *throw* or *shoot* (as in an arrow), but metaphorically came to mean *point out*, *show*, or *instruct*. It is the word from which we get *Torah* (the five books of Moses), which means *instruction*. The added phrase, *in the way you should go*, is what advances us beyond the first element. Intellectual understanding of divine truth generally is not in view here, but rather specifically, the discernment of right and wrong and the

direction of our moral conduct. This is a promise that He will teach us through His Word how we are to live from day to day and how we are to walk in His truth. He will give us discretion and enable us to discern the way of righteousness.

God Promises to Guide Us with His Eye

As our minds are being renewed and our characters are being transformed through the truth, God promises that He will guide us. The Hebrew word here (יָעִץ) means to *counsel* or *advise*. It is a word that is often used in situations where plans or courses of action are being considered. Moral or character issues are not in view here, but rather questions of wisdom – *what is the wisest course of action in this specific case?* Jethro gave *counsel* to Moses regarding delegation (Ex. 18:19); Ahithophel gave *counsel* to Absalom in regard to military strategy (2 Sam. 17:11); and King Rehoboam sought *counsel* from his peers regarding the political climate (1 Kings 12:9). These were not questions of moral rectitude, but rather of sagacious judgment. God promises us that He will give us counsel, the ability to act judiciously and make wise choices from day to day.

Next we observe the nature of God's guidance or counsel as expressed in the phrase *with my eye*. Notice here that the translation should not be *guide thee with mine eye* (KJV) but rather *guide thee with my eye upon you* (see NASB). The phrase, *with my eye upon you*, speaks of God's providential care. It unites three important ideas: omniscience, protection, and care. First, God's eye surely refers to His

omniscience. Nothing is hidden from His sight - past, present or future. What an unspeakable blessing to have an all-knowing God guide us in our daily lives. But it also speaks of His protection. If we say, *the shepherd has his eye upon the sheep*, the implication is that the shepherd is looking out for the sheep with a view to keeping them from danger or predators. God guides us with a view to keep us from harm - not just physical harm, but especially spiritual harm, including Satan, false teachers, sin, worldliness and foolish decisions. Finally, the metaphor of God's eye certainly includes the idea of concern or pity (cf. Deut. 7:16; 32:10; 1 Sam. 24:10; Ps. 17:8; Ez. 5:11; Zech. 2:8). God cares infinitely for His children and pities us in our ignorance and helplessness. His leading is not governed by indifference, but by immeasurable love. See Psalm 33:18-22 for a wonderful description of what it means that the Lord's eye is upon us .

GOD'S WARNING AGAINST STUBBORNNESS

Finally in v. 9, God warns us against being like a horse or mule. Horses and mules are notorious for being stubborn. They refuse to be led because of their lack of understanding. Indeed, there is one thing necessary if you will be instructed, taught, and counseled by God in your daily life: you must be yielded to the divine will in all things. This is the mark of an understanding heart. And it is the only one He teaches. *The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way* – Ps. 25:9.

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GOD'S PROMISE OF GUIDANCE

By Dean Good

In December of 1815, a young man was walking the seven miles from Cummington, Massachusetts to Plainfield. He was feeling dejected and forlorn because he was taking up a position in law, while, in his heart, he longed to be a poet. As he walked, pondering his future, he observed, against the evening sky, a lone waterfowl. This bird, though flying alone, seemed so sure of its way. He began to consider the destination of this fowl, its reunion with his fellows in a distant pond, and summer days of nesting among the reeds. As he thought upon these things, he was encouraged to think that the One who was guiding the waterfowl would also guide his own steps in the coming days and years. That evening, when he arrived at his destination, he wrote a poem expressing his sentiments. The young man was William Cullen Bryant and the poem, one of the most beautiful in English, *To a Waterfowl*. The poem closes with this stanza:

*He who from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy
certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone
Will lead my steps aright.*

As far as I know, Bryant was no Christian; and we might say that his poem expresses a quaint romantic sentiment and nothing more. Yet surely, the Christian can know with certainty that he is led by the same