

"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."

PSA 32:8-9

In these two brief verses God gives us one of the greatest lessons concerning guidance in all of Scripture. Verse 8 is a precious promise to us, a foundation upon which we can build a great faith. This foundation is His willingness to lead and guide us in everything!

As you read the entire chapter you'll discover that this promise is offered to a special people - those whose sin is covered, and in whom there is no deceit; who have the Lord's hand heavy upon them; who are godly, and pray in a time when they may be heard; who are hidden and preserved from trouble; and who sing songs of deliverance.

Yet the Word of God says a person may be such a believer - enjoying all the spiritual benefits of being a child of God - yet remain a stubborn mule when it comes to submitting to His ways of guiding and leading. God said of Israel, ***"Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways"*** (PSA 95:10).

Think of what God was saying: "After 40 long years of receiving My tender guidance and miraculous deliverances, they still don't have the slightest idea of the way I work! They never even try to understand My principles of guidance. To them My leadings are just a series of unrelated blessings, nothing more than open doors and escapes from crises."

Tired of Being a Mule!

Personally, I am tired of being a mule-headed Christian with no understanding of the principles of God's leading! I don't want God to say of me, "Yes, David was forgiven. He laid down his deceit, and My hand was upon him. He prayed and I delivered him from trouble, time after time. Indeed, I led him in wonderful ways. But in his heart he never had a settled knowledge of My ways!"

Beloved, don't make the Lord be stern with you in His leadings. Don't be as the mule, without understanding. God does not want to bark directions at His children or have to force us to do His bidding.

God wants a people who know Him well enough to move at his slightest urging!

Picture King David and his captains and counselors gathered together, with the enemy close at hand. The men's eyes are glued to David's face, waiting, watching. All they need is a nod or a little movement of his eye, and they'll know what he wants without a word being spoken to them. He is able to guide them with his eye!

Most believers do not spend enough time in God's presence to know Him in this way. Instead, they go about their business and never know what it is their Captain would have of them. So they have to learn the hard way. The Lord comes to them with a bit in His hand, and He has to corner them in order to put it in their mouth.

Saints, God would much rather lead us with His eye than with the bit and bridle. But some of us have a bit in our mouth right now!

The very term "to lead or guide" suggests that God has an ultimate goal for us - and it is not to lead us in circles for forty years. All the guidance Israel received in the wilderness, whether it came through a word of direction, a victory or a deliverance, was related to God's single purpose of bringing His people into a place of promised rest in Him.

The Israelites were muleheaded children, never seeing beyond their present crisis. They were to self-centered to trust God for their future. All they wanted was a quick, easy way out of the hard places. They learned nothing from the supernatural leadings that took them from slavery to the very edge of the Promised Land. God's glorious demonstrations of love were wasted on them because they refused to build their faith on His deliverances.

God Promises Us That, Even in the Greatest Crisis, His Eye Never Leaves Us!

No trouble or crisis that comes our way is ever a surprise to our Lord, because he sees the whole picture. His eye is on us from birth to our very last breath. He Himself is the beginning and the end.

"For the LORD's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheri-

tance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him."

DEUT 32:9-12

The term "apple of the eye" here refers to the reflected image in the pupil of one's eye. If you look into someone's eyes you'll see, in the center of the pupil, a little image of yourself.

Now think of what the Word of God is saying: "He kept him as the apple of His eye." It means you and I are, at all times, in the very center of God's vision. We are the image constantly reflected in His eyes, because His gaze never leaves us!

This is the rock-solid foundation of all understanding of how God leads us. *"For thus sayeth the Lord of hosts... for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye"* (ZECH 2:8). In other words, anyone who touches God's people sticks his finger in God's eye!

Before any trouble ever struck your life, God saw it coming. He was not surprised when you lost your job or were brought low by a sudden illness. *"Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy"* (PSA 33:18). *"His eye seeth every precious thing"* (JOB 28:10). *"The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous"* (PSA 34:15).

Do you really believe the Lord has His eyes upon you and sees everything that is happening in your life? Do you believe He sees the future - your future? If so, how could you even begin to think He would let you down or allow the enemy to triumph over you?

I can't begin to comprehend or explain the greatness of a God who keeps each of His children as the apple of His eye. Yet His word promises just that: "I am guiding you with My eye. Yes there is a whole world full of saints in great need. But you must believe with all your heart that you - yes, you - are the apple of My eye!"

You can say as David did: *"Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings"* (PSA 17:8).

In All Guidance, the Lord Has Two Eternal Purposes in View

God's first purpose is to gain the fixed confidence of His children. The second is to be exalted and honored before the wicked. You can rest assured that His every leading is ultimately to accomplish these goals.

God desires that our confidence be so fixed on Him that we no longer just live from one crisis to the next. Often, when we pray for guidance, we do it with one purpose in mind: "God, get me out of this mess. If ever I needed a miracle, it's now!"

We treat our blessed Lord disrespectfully when we allow ourselves to be consumed by our trouble or difficulty. Yet it doesn't take long for us to become convinced we are modern-day Jobs and the devil is out to get us - that God is either testing us or trying to refine us.

Beloved as you read this, can you face your problem or situation and believe that your Lord desires to do more than just get you out of another mess? What He is doing is of eternal significance! His purpose is for you to be able to say, as, David did, "He delivered me from the lion, He delivered me from the bear, and He will deliver this giant into my hand. I know I will face more troubles ahead. But in them all, I know I am more than a conqueror through Jesus!"

God hates formulas and "how-to" theories on guidance. All we need is simply to grasp that every trail is somehow related; that throughout our lives we will have them in some form; and that through them all the Lord wants more than just to deliver us: He wants to work in us a deep, settled trust that will help us face anything.

Think of how the elderly Israelites must have gathered their grandchildren and told them all the hair-raising stories of God's leading - stories of seas opening, voices thundering, water springing from rocks. Do you think they saw these as just a series of unrelated events that left them high and try in the

howling wilderness? No! Everything was done to get them into Canaan!

I could tell you story after story of how the Lord has led me the past thirty years: how He repeatedly rescued me just as I was about to go under... how He made a way when there was no way... how He wrought miracle after miracle to supply our needs, literally hundreds of times!

But what good was any of it if I learned nothing about my Lord? What good was it all, if tomorrow I face a trial and am flustered and worried, wondering if He'll come through again?

If I have not learned His ways of faithfulness - if these experiences have not brought me into the Canaan of rest and confidence in Him - then I am a mule with no understanding!

God Wants to Provide a Stage to the World - to Bring Down the Enemy For All to See

God's purposes in sovereignly leading us are even broader than to build our faith and confidence. His second purpose is to provide a stage upon which the world can watch Him bring down the enemy. He wants to set up scenarios in which He will be glorified in the sight of all His opponents!

I want the Holy Spirit to show you a truth so powerful you will never again fear the activity of Satan in your trials. It is simply this: The enemy is on your heels because the Lord is leading him into a trap, a destructive showdown in which he will be defeated soundly. You see, God is dealing not just with us but also with our enemy!

This is vividly illustrated in Exodus 14. The Lord guides Israel into a seemingly hopeless situation. God says plainly to Moses, *"Encamp before Pihahiroth between Migdol and the sea, over against Baalzepon."* (EX 14:2). With detailed instructions from the Lord, Moses leads Israel to the brink of the Red Sea.

The Lord had forewarned Moses that He would harden Pharaoh's heart once again and draw him near for a showdown. God said, *"I*

will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them" (EX 14:4).

How would you react to such guidance? Imagine the Lord had come and warned you: "I am going to put you in a situation in which only a miracle can save you. You will have no place to turn but to Me. I am going to allow the enemy to bear down on you as if to wipe you out. But this is not your battle - it is Mine. I am going to be honored through what I do to the enemy, so that all will know I am the Lord."

You can see clearly in this example that God wants to accomplish two things. First He wants to establish a people who will walk in His fear, holy and unmoveable, by not rescuing them from a desperate situation. And second, He wants to use the hard place to deal a fatal blow to all their enemies from hell. This is God's battle with the devil, with you right in the middle of it all!

What are you going through right now? Is your back hopeless against the wall? Is the enemy roaring down on you? Do you hear the frightening hoofbeats of demonic powers? Does your mind imagine all kinds of dreadful things about to happen to you and your family? Does your situation look hopeless?

Beloved, if you love the Lord you are not about to go down. Instead, you are actually on the brink of two victories - your miraculous deliverance, and the honor that this victory will bring to the Lord. Your enemy is going to be buried in the process of your deliverance! People will be amazed. They will say, "The devil could not bring them down. They won - because their God fought the battle for them!"

Don't Become As a Mule, Allowing Your Circumstances - And Not the Lord - to Rule You!

Scripture says that at first the Israelites marched out boldly, without fear. But before long they allowed their circumstances to overcome their hearts: *"The children of Israel went out with an high hand. But the Egyptians pursued after them... and overtook*

them encamping by the sea... and when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD." (EX 14:8-10).

Israel reacted just as we often do - like dumb mules! They had witnessed incredible miracles while in Egypt but quickly forgot them. Now they cried out to Moses. "What kind of deliverance is this? You brought us out here to die! We knew all along we were better off back in our old ways. Now it's absolutely hopeless!"

Dear saint, right now you might be in despair. You may be afraid because you cannot see any way out of your crisis. You questioning God's leading, and wonder about his faithfulness - because all you can see is the devil pursuing you, his sword glistening in the night.

But be encouraged: God did not chastise nor rebuke Israel when they panicked. Instead, He brought them His message of hope: *"Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show to you to day: for the Egyptians, whom you have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord will fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace"* (EX 14:13-14). You are not alone! God is fighting for you!

If you keep going on with God, God will credit it to you as faith!

Even though the Israelites were afraid, their onward march was credited to them as faith. *"By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land"* (HEB 11:29).

Even though they had to have been frightened. David described the scene at the Red Sea: *"The voice of thy thunder was in the haven: the lightnings lightened the world, the earth trembled and shook"* (PSA 77:18).

There they were, with the enemy bearing down on them, the wind howling like a hurricane, awesome lighting flashing all around, thunders shaking the earth and the mighty waters rolling back. Yet when God said, "Keep moving on,"

they obeyed. Yes they were still fearful and shaking - but they kept going!

What was the outcome of their obedience to God's great leading? They received a vision of God's power over all the enemies that would come against them: *"And Israel saw the great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians; and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and His servant Moses"* (EX 14:31).

It is tragic that so many Christians today are easily defeated when they come to a dead-end crisis. They think that when everything goes wrong, with no deliverance in sight, God has abandoned them. They simply lie down to die, allowing the devils chariots to roll over them.

Little do they know, had they just kept moving on, praying, clinging to the word and going to God's house, scared or not, the sea would have opened up for them and a way out would have been provided. Their enemies would have been destroyed.

The Israelites so easily could have quit. They could have said, "that's enough. We've had it. What will be will be. We give up - we're dead. "But they didn't let this happen. Instead, they persevered.

We have a greater promise today than Israel had. Colossians 2:15 says, *"and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it."*

Keep going on with God! Don't drop out; press on in faith that He will deliver you. Trust Him that through all your circumstances He will anchor your confidence in Him. And watch Him defeat the enemy altogether!

If you do, you'll come to know in fullest measure His glorious work on our behalf: *"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."* (COL 1:13).

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