



God is ... Our Guide and Helper (Psalm 25:1–10; Acts 16:6–10) Bob Nance

The temptation during this pandemic has been to take our eyes off the one who is in control of all things, our loving Heavenly Father.

When we hear on the radio and TV the statistics of how many people have caught the virus, and how many people have died from it each day, our attention is being drawn away from the God of the universe. While we concentrate on what is going on around us and all the negative things that are happening, then it is very easy to become despondent and go into depression, and this is becoming a reality in many peoples lives as we hear of the number of people committing suicide in our country.

But when we realise and grasp hold of the fact that we have One to whom we can turn to no matter what the situation and He will listen to us, comfort and reassure us that there is light at the end of the tunnel and an eternal hope in our Saviour Jesus Christ. That no matter what happens down here on earth, we can rest in His loving arms and in the confidence that He is in control and we will spend eternity with Him.

Just because we think everything is going wrong around us, it doesn't mean that that is correct. One of the greatest examples of this in the Bible is the account of the life of Joseph.

From an earthly perspective, Joseph's life was an absolute disaster.

He was hated by his brothers because he was his father's favourite; He was nearly murdered by his brothers but ultimately sold as a slave; he was falsely accused of rape and thrown into prison where he remained for a number of years due to the forgetful king's wine taster, before being released to become God's instrument in saving the lives of many, many people including his own father, brother's and their families.

There are times in our lives when, if we take our eyes off our Almighty, all knowing God, we can believe that everything is going wrong, when, for instance, we are told we have cancer. If you heard this news, for so many years it was assumed you were going to die.

I heard these words nineteen years ago, and because my faith was grounded in Jesus Christ, I knew that no matter what would happen to me, I could rest in His loving arms. My assurance came from part of Hebrews 13:5 which says:

".....for God himself has said, I will not in any way fail you nor give you up nor leave you without support. [I will] not, [I will] not, [I will] not in any degree leave you helpless nor forsake you nor let you down. [Assuredly not]. (Amp)

When you have words like these, they give you the confidence that we can move forward without worrying. It assures us that God is guiding and directing our lives.

God has assured us on many occasions that He will guide and lead us as we walk with Him each day.

Such verses as: *“The Lord will guide you always...”* (Isaiah 58:11) and *“..... You are my rock and fortress, for the sake of Your name, lead and guide me”* (Psalm 31:3)

This verse from Psalms recognises that as God leads and guides us, His Name is glorified, and I have found this to be true.

Just after my conversion, I was invited to join a group of men called “The Navigators”. I was extremely nervous about becoming involved with them because I had never heard of them before and I didn’t want to become linked to something that was not of God. I was to go with one of their members on Saturday morning, so during the week before, I prayed that God would show me if it was the right thing to do or not. I had been reading my Bible searching for the answer and I went to bed on Friday night still without an answer so I decided I wouldn’t go because I wasn’t sure it was the right thing to do.

On Saturday morning the clock radio alarm went off and woke me. I was still only half awake when a song came on the radio, I don’t remember what it was, but it was as clear as day that God spoke to me and assured me it was OK to attend.

During the morning, we were asked why we had attended the meeting and so I was able to glorify God by sharing how I had come to be there.

God loves to leave it till the last minute before He gives us the answer to our searching, but He does hear and answers when we search with all our hearts.

Gideon was another who sought God’s guidance concerning God’s plan for his life. Twice Gideon asked for a sign that he was hearing God correctly and God was patient with him until he was certain that this was God’s will and direction. God was patient with me just as He was with Gideon until we were convinced we were walking in God’s plan.

We are very fortunate to be living in the current age where we have been educated and can read and where we have God’s guidance in written form in our Bibles and the assurance that *“all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work”*

The way the early church received their guidance and leading was from letters written by the apostle Paul and the disciples Peter and John. One of the things these letters were able to do was to correct errors in teaching that had crept into the church.

This we see in the letter to the Colossian church where we see Paul emphasising that salvation was through Christ and Him alone and had nothing to do with all the add-ons that were being taught.

When Paul sent his letter to the Ephesian church, It was not to counter any false teaching, but to encourage them to recognise God’s blessings in their lives and particularly the fact that they had received the Holy Spirit and been filled with His power when they accepted, by faith, Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

He says “ Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession – to the Praise of His glory”

What an encouragement that must have been to the Ephesians. To know with absolute certainty, having placed their faith in Jesus Christ, that they have the seal of the Holy Spirit and an inheritance guaranteed for them in the future.

Not only that, in John 16:13 it says: *“But when He, the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth.”* As they walk with God, His Spirit will guide and lead them into all truth.

On the other hand, Peter's first letter was sent to guide and strengthen the faith of the scattered church. Peter was no stranger to persecution; he knew it first-hand. He had been beaten, jailed and threatened on many occasions. He had seen fellow Christians die and the church scattered. But he knew Christ, and nothing could shake his confidence in his risen Lord. So Peter wrote to the church, scattered and suffering for the faith, giving comfort and hope, and urging continued loyalty to Christ.

Now in John's letters, his emphasis and guidance were on living a life of truth and love. John had seen Truth and Love firsthand – he had been with Jesus and seen love and truth in action. John was guiding his readers in the way of Christian living, to always be truthful and demonstrate God's love by self-giving, caring and sharing with others.

In today's world, truth and love have become casualties, where truth is often twisted or completely ignored and where people are only interested in one person- themselves. We too, can be guided as we seek God's will for us, as we search through the Scriptures.

There have been many occasions when I have sought God's guidance through the Scriptures. When I was asked to be a Sunday School teacher, I went to the Scriptures and in one week, three passages spoke to me and assured me it was the right thing to become involved in.

Another time I was asked to become an elder in this church. Again, I searched the Scriptures, and God revealed to me that, as I was still a young Christian, I was not suitable for this position until I had matured in my Christian walk with Him. Sometimes God gives us a "yes" and sometimes a "no", and sometimes He uses other methods than the Scriptures to answer our questions and guide us. As we seek His will through prayer, the Scriptures and Godly people, God will answer and guide us on the path He has planned for us.

Many are the times that we only recognise that God has been guiding us as we look back on our lives and see how things have all fallen into place. We don't see it at the time, but in hindsight, there it is.

In Psalm 139:16 it says: *"All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."* God doesn't allow things to happen in a haphazard way because He has a plan for us. He knows the future and what will happen to us day by day.

Paul's assurance was stated in 2 Timothy 1:12 which says: *"... yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I believed, and am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him for that day"*

He knew and believed that everything that happened to him had a purpose and was part of God's plan for his life, leading him towards his final hope of being with his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ for all eternity. Even when things seemed to be going wrong, when he was being persecuted and run out of town, or when he was in chains in Rome, his faith and trust was still in his Lord.

It is important to heed God's guidance so that we are doing God's will in God's time and in the place He has prepared for us. In today's New Testament reading, we see that Paul and Silas had decided where God wanted them to go and proclaim the Gospel, and that was throughout Asia, but God knew the desperate need of the people in Macedonia, and so He guided them in a vision, to go to these people.

We always need to walk closely with God so He can guide us through whatever way is most appropriate at the time. It could be through the Scriptures, through prayer, through Godly counselling or through a vision as was the case with Paul.

Marj and I had a situation where things appeared to go all wrong. We had just started our holiday in Canada when I became ill. We prayed about what we should do, whether to continue on and hope I would get better or return home which would entail rescheduling our flights and cancelling our hotel bookings and side trips. Both of us received the same answer to our prayers – reschedule our flights and come home and cancel everything else.

Our new flight schedule required us to spend three days in Vancouver before leaving for Australia. The day before we left Whitehorse for Vancouver, we had attended a church service where we were introduced to a lady who lived in Vancouver and was a nurse in one of their major hospitals. When she found out I was sick, she prayed for my healing and safe travel home. Also, if when waiting in Vancouver, we needed help

with accommodation or advice, we could ring her, and she would organise something. Fortunately, we did not need her support, but we saw her as God's wonderful awesome provision for our comfort and guidance.

On the day of our departure from Vancouver, during our morning devotion, we received assurance from God through the Scriptures, that He would be with us, guiding us to our destination. These verses were from Proverbs 3:5-6, 23-26: "*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.*" These 2 verses encouraged us to wait on God's Holy Spirit to lead us into His truth and gain understanding of the passage.

The next few verses gave us the comfort we needed.

- ²³ *you will go on your way in safety,
and your foot will not stumble.*
- ²⁴ *When you lie down, you will not be afraid;
when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.*
- ²⁵ *Have no fear of sudden disaster
or of the ruin that overtakes the wicked,*
- ²⁶ *for the LORD will be at your side
and will keep your foot from being snared.*

God was assuring us of His presence with us and this was all under His control.

After I was admitted into hospital in Sydney it was found that I had a ruptured bowel and three different doctors commented that they didn't know how I got home alive. We did. We knew that we had been safe in the loving arms of our Heavenly Father, and our guide and Saviour, Jesus Christ the Lord.

As we pass through life, never forget that no matter what happens, things both good and bad, God is always guiding and leading us and He will never leave us nor forsake us - assuredly not!