

THE GUIDANCE OF GOD

A Series of Radio Messages

by

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The Guidance of God in Finding Rebekah

Today I want to raise this question: Could a person look to God for help in any situation that might arise any day in his life? We think of God as a living God. Does this mean that He would have a plan for my life or for your life? Could we count on the Lord to guide us in any particular problem that we faced, or any event that was going to occur? I want to talk about this with you and I am going to base my remarks on an incident that is recorded in the Old Testament. If you have your Bibles with you, will you open them to the Book of Genesis, the 24th chapter. I will not be able to read the whole chapter, but you could read and study it and while you are thinking about it, ask yourself this question: Can one have help and guidance from God? As we go along in our daily experience in living and come into situations that are uncertain and we wonder what to do, is it practical to turn to God and ask Him to guide us at a time like that? We have this case in point in the 24th chapter of Genesis.

Now the story here itself is simple, and to get it all before us, let me just tell you in my own words what the situation was. Abraham was a man who believed in God. God had blessed him. As the years were going by, we read that Abraham was getting old. You will remember that Isaac was not born until Abraham was already an old man. So that by the time Isaac was old enough to be married, Abraham was quiet a bit older. He was getting old and he realized- that he would soon be gone and that it would be time for Isaac to have a family of his own. The problem was that Isaac, the son of his old age, should be married. The custom in those days was for the parents to arrange for the marriage of their children. In this case, Abraham would arrange for the marriage of Isaac. As a matter of fact, he wanted to do that because he wanted Isaac's bride to be one of his own folks. And so the story goes that Abraham sent his servant to find a bride for Isaac. As you read along you will find that the servant brought up a practical problem: "Maybe the girl I pick will be unwilling to come." Reading from chapter 24, verse 7, Abraham told his servant in words like this: "The Lord God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence." All of which is to say: "God has been with me. God has been good to me. God has watched over me. I have reason to believe that God is going to bless me and I am satisfied that God will arrange for you to find the girl that you should find." So the story goes that the servant took ten camels and goods that belonged to his master and went to the country where Abraham's people were.

Now what would he do? We read in verse 12 that he prayed. "And he said, O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham." You see, he was asking for blessing upon his project. In fact saying, "let it come to pass that I will find the girl that should be the bride for Isaac. And if you do this, then I will know that you have shown kindness to my master." I think it is important to notice the circumstances under which this prayer was offered. It was not just that the servant was in need of help. It was not that he was just moving out into a problem that was unknown to him that he could profit by guidance. But there was a relationship. Abraham belonged to the Lord, to God. He had obeyed God and in the course of his lifetime God had blessed him. The servant had this in mind, and this gives the servant confidence when he prays. He said to the Lord, "Now you show me which girl I am to choose and bless me as I approach her, because in so doing you will be doing a kindness to my master." Now you read on in this 24th chapter of Genesis, and you will find in verses 15-50 the total story of how it happened. It wound up with the fact that Rebekah was chosen and she was willing to go. That is the simple story. Here is a man going out on a job that involves

something that is unknown to him. He realizes that if he is guided right, he will be successful, but he needs help. He asks for help. He prays that God will bless him and guide him for the sake of honoring his name with his master.

Now I want to draw certain observations from this for you and for me. Actually as I am talking I am trying to answer the question in my own mind and for you. Can we count on God having a personal interest in our affairs? If we come face to face with a problem, have to make a decision of some sort, especially when it comes to dealing with other people, is there any reason why we should believe that God would answer prayer so far as we are concerned? Could we find out God's will? In this case you might ask the question: "Did God have a girl in mind for Isaac? Would He lead the servant to her?" Now let us draw certain observations about this.

I want to draw your attention first to the fact that Abraham was a man who believed God and obeyed God. I think I want to say that because I am not so sure that this manner of praying for guidance in this way would do for a person who is living his own personal life in his own selfish way. I cannot help but feel that if a man were just doing as he pleased, planning everything out the way he saw fit, making up his own mind about everything that came up before him, I cannot feel any confidence to think that he would have the same grounds on which to approach God as Abraham had. In the Book of I John we read that "if we keep His commandments, then have we confidence when we come to asking what we have in our hearts." in any case, with Abraham being a man who believed in God, we can come to the conclusion that anything God would do for him would be for God's own glory. Because if God would bless Abraham that would encourage other people to put their trust in Him.

The second observation that I want to make is that the servant believed in God and trusted Him. We want to recognize that this kind of praying that we are talking about and this seeking of the will of the Lord is not some sort of thing that you can press a button and get the answer. This is not some automatic procedure. This is not to say that God has the whole universe wired in such a way that if anybody presses a button at a certain place, then a light would go on in some other place. That is not the picture here. The picture here is of a personal, living God who can be talked to and who can make up His mind, who can will and who can do. Now of course what we are interested in and wondering about is: does this living God have in mind what we are to do? Does He have in mind how things are to turn out for us? As I have said, the servant himself who made the request, who asked for guidance to find the girl, was a man who in himself believed in God. He trusted God and for that reason he could ask in confidence.

Now a third observation that I want to point out is that what he requested was in the revealed will of God. Isaac should have a bride. The family of Abraham should be continued. In Isaac and his seed all the nations of the world should be blessed. In other words, Isaac was to be married to somebody, and furthermore, he was to be blessed. Isaac was to be blessed, because the promise had been made to Abraham: "I will bless thee and thy seed." And Isaac was his seed. So you can expect Isaac to be blessed. Now when the servant was asking the will of God, he could know that God had promised to bless Abraham and this was in the blessing of Abraham. God had promised to bless Isaac and this was in the blessing of Isaac. So that when he requested and asked for guidance in the matter of the girl, it was not his own notion. It was not some personal private plan. It was not some matter that with benefit and with help he would be able to make personal advantage out of it. Nothing like that. What he requested was in the revealed will of God. Something that he knew would further the work that God Himself had in mind to do.

A fourth observation that I want to point out to you is that neither Abraham nor his servant presumed upon God. Now Abraham did not, as it were, claim that he would know, and the servant did not claim that he would know. I can think this: I can think that if a person would accept the notion that God is a living God and that He would pay attention to us here on earth; that there is such a thing as being well pleasing in His sight; that He has an interest in the things we do whether we obey Him or we do not obey

Him. If you were to bring up a person like Abraham, who is obeying God and doing God's will,. I can see how the people in the world would say, "Well, a man like that ought to know. God ought to tell him. After all, all he wanted to find out was a bride for Isaac, why not give Abraham her name? Why not give the servant her name? All they have to do is go over and send for her and she would come." It is not like that. And Abraham did not ask for that. He did not say to Almighty God, "Tell me which one." He sent the servant, and the servant did not say to Almighty God, "Name her for me so I will know which one." No, there was no disposition on the part of either Abraham or the servant to be cocksure. Now they were confident that God would bless them. They expected God to bless them. But they were not cocksure that they would know the answer as they approached God.

Another thing that I want to draw your attention to about these men is that the underlying basis in their thinking was the desire to obey God. So far as we can tell there was no disposition on the part of Abraham to be selfish and certainly no disposition to do anybody any harm. He was not malicious. The servant was not selfish and he was not malicious in his request. I think this is very important to remember. Then again, on the part of both Abraham and the servant, there was a willingness to listen. As far as the servant was concerned, he put it up to the Lord in the way in which he did, and then waited to see what God would do.

We notice in conclusion that God did more than they asked. Ho is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. Now as you think of this and turn all this over in your mind, you come to the conclusion that the living God does have the personal relation to us in our personal daily affairs. And it is a proper thing, if a heart is right with God, to come to God with the expectation that He will guide us and help us.

The Guidance of God In The Desert

Today, I want to raise this question: Would it ever be possible for a group of people to be led by the Lord, or would they have to figure out for themselves what they were going to do? Is there any way possible to have a group of people agree to do certain things which they believe to be the will of God? I am going to turn to Israel, for an example, and look for some evidence of this for an answer to this question. I am going, to be looking at that time in Israel's history that we call the Exodus.

In the great Exodus of Israel from Egypt to Canaan, this vast crowd of people traveled over an unknown route. They had never been that way before, and they would come into situations in which they would not know for sure what they should do, whether they should go here, whether they should go there, whether they should go further, whether they should not go any further on any given day. They would not know, and they would need help about this.

By the way, when we are talking about this group of Israel as a whole, you can be thinking to yourself that this is also true of the individual. For those of you who are listening to me will remember at once that as far as you are concerned, in a very real sense, you have never traveled the route of this particular day before. Now you may have been in the world a good long time and you may be older or younger, as the case may be, but this day, right now, that you are facing, that you are going on in at the moment you are listening to me, you have never been over this day before. So, in a very real sense, it is all new to you.

Now so far as Israel is concerned, they were traveling across the country. It is true they had Moses who helped them to understand what to do. They looked to him as a leader and he interpreted their circumstances and defined what they were doing and directed them, but Israel as a nation, as a group of people, had a certain help along this line. There was a certain corroboration of Moses' guidance that came to them in a very particular way. I suppose you have heard many times how they were led by the cloud and the fire, which actually was a pillar of clouds by day and a pillar of fire by night.

For those of you who study these things, you might make note of this. In the Book of Numbers, in chapter 9, verses 15-23, you will read a very clear description of the procedure. Let me bring it to your mind for the moment. This is the way in which it worked very simply. During the day a cloud would hover over them, and at night a luminous cloud which would look like a pillar of fire would be over them. The procedure was very simple. When the cloud stopped, they would stop. When the cloud settled down, they made camp. They stayed there until the cloud rose. When the cloud rose they made ready to travel. When the cloud moved, they moved.

In this connection I might ask you a practical question that I think will be helpful in understanding this. Have you ever asked yourself the question: Now did they follow the cloud? Have you ever, as a child, been outdoors and tried to follow a cloud as it traveled? I know that you would not even try to follow the cloud up in the sky. In the first place, you could not get up there. In the next place, it would be hard to be sure that you are travelling as fast as it is, because of the circumstances. How would you follow the clouds even among us today? Isn't it true that the cloud would cast a shadow on the ground? And wouldn't it be true that if you walked in the shadow you would be walking under the cloud? If the cloud moved it would be seen by the fact that the shadow had moved. So you would travel that way. Think of that with reference to Israel. You can picture the children of Israel walking in the shade and staying in the shade on every day the sun shone in that desert country. At night, the fire brought light to them. It made it clear before them, and they could walk in the light. We have a song that says "stepping in the light." This is the idea. You can

walk in the light at night time because of the brightness of the light, and walk in the shade in the day time because the cloud will cast its shadow before you. This is the way they were led. Very simply, they stayed in the shade in the day and stayed in the light at night. If you have ever had anybody guide you with a flashlight you will know that they can throw a light upon your pathway and you can walk where the light is focused on the ground. Now there might be things in the dark on both sides of you but they do not need to trouble you. If the light is shining in front of you, you can walk in the light. That is the way it was with the Israelites, and that is the way it is with you.

Now remember the question that we are raising up and that we are asking ourselves. If a group of Christian people or a group of people want to know the mind of God and want to know the will of God, is there any reason to think that God would show them His will? I think that this guidance of Israel would indicate that there is; that God would use means to show a group of people what He wanted them to do. There would be a way in which they could tell. I have already suggested for the moment that they could walk in the shade or walk in the light. Actually I think for us, for you and for me, much of this is given to us in Scripture. I think that if a group of people will study the Scriptures, they will learn from the Scriptures where the shade is. If they will walk in the shadow of the wings of God, they will be under His wings and they will be doing His will. Or if they walk in the light, as He is in the light, they will have fellowship, one with another. That is the way I John puts it.

Now I want to draw some lessons from this incident that happened in Israel, because we are interested in finding out if we can get help from God in the things we do every day. I want you to notice these things. First of all, these people were willing to be led. I think this is very important. Willing to be led. Every now and again you will find some person who will come to you and say, "Will you tell me what to do? Will you guide me where I am going?" Sometimes some of us who are not so very wise about these things go ahead and give them guidance. Then afterwards we feel badly because they did not go. Now God would know whether they were going to go or not. Let me say just now for a person who is coming to God and asking Him for guidance, the big question is: would you go if He showed you? That is the big question. Now these people were willing to be led. At this point I am making a comment. There is no reason to expect guidance for the folks that are not willing to be led. You know there are some people who ask God for guidance and then they are going to follow the guidance, if it is what they want. If the guidance is not what they want, they are not going to do it. Now you might just check off in your mind that God, knows beforehand whether He will or will not. If He does show you His will, you can be very sure that He will show you His will with the thought in mind that you are willing to do it. That is the main point.

The second thing that I want to notice here is they looked for tokens of guidance. You see the cloud was something that was seen, and the fire was something that was seen. These people looked for the evidence of how God would guide them and He did. I want to draw attention to the fact that they were judges in themselves of the tokens that they saw. I mean they, themselves, made the decision. They judged where the shade was and they recognized where the light was. If I asked God to guide me and then shut my eyes, that is not very wise. I say I want the Lord to guide me and I never look around. I never try to see His hand in my affairs. I just wait for Him. I do not know what I am waiting for. Maybe I wait for Him to shove me, or wait for Him to force me, or I wait for Him to call my name, or something like that. These were people who needed help from God on guidance and they looked for it. It was shown to them. They had the cloud by day, and they had the fire by night. They walked in the shade. They judged the cloud to be from God and they accepted that light to be from the Lord.

The next thing I want to draw your attention to is that their course, the route they took, was not chosen by their own knowledge of the land. When a man asks God for guidance, and looks to God for help, he does not go out then figure it out for himself, and then ask God to endorse it. I think sometimes people do that very thing. They say, "Well, we must pray about this." So they ask the Lord, "Lord guide us

and show us what to do." Then they sit down to figure it out and they are motivated, guided by their own pleasures. They already have in mind what they want to do. So they go ahead and make their plans and then they turn around and say, "Now, Lord bless what we are doing. We asked you about, it. Now bless us." But the actual decision was their own. They did what they wanted to do. Now the children of Israel were not like that. They had no plan where to go and they did not know any other plan than to follow where God led them. Their course was not chosen by their own knowledge of the land. They made no claim to foresee what was going to and no claim about knowing what was going to happen. They looked to God for guidance and when He gave it to them, that is what they took. Their confidence was in God, not in their progress or in their route. It was not that they felt they had been doing very well and would continue going on on their own. They trusted in God. And again their experience was actually one that would be better by walking God's way.

I do not know how much you can make of this, but truly I do notice that they walked in the shade, and I think the shade would be mighty fine in that hot country. I know they walked in the light, and I know walking in the light is better than walking in the darkness. In other words, if we do walk in the ways of God, we can expect that His yoke is easy and His burden is light. Things will work out for us. God watched over them in His wisdom and power. So how would we answer the question: Can a group of people be led in their daily affairs by the will of God? We do have the case of Israel and will have to say, "Yes, that can happen. God Himself will actually show His people what He wants them to do."

The Guidance of God in the Life of Moses

Today I want to raise this question with you: If God were leading a person, would that person always get a quick answer whenever he asks God for guidance? In other words, if a person were serving God and really wanted to do God's will, could he expect that God would always show him ahead of time exactly what he should do?

I am going to turn in the Bible to a consideration of Moses as an illustration. The Bible speaks of Moses in this way: "Moses, my servant." The Bible tells us in the words of God that Moses was a servant who was faithful in all his house. In many ways I suppose one could claim that he was perhaps, the outstanding servant in all Scripture when you do not include the Lord Jesus Christ. We do know, so far as Moses is concerned, that his life was specially marked with the blessing of God. When he was just a baby he was providentially spared and then as he grew up as a child, he was providentially cared for in the household of Pharaoh. We will remember that as a young man he made the great decision to forsake everything in Egypt that he might serve God. You will read about this in the Book of Hebrews. In Hebrews 11:24-27 you will get the description of the decision that Moses made. One could feel that if anyone ever received guidance, certainly it would be a man like Moses who gave up everything that he might walk with God and serve God. One could ask this question. After giving up so much (he gave up all the treasures of Egypt) would he not be kept from making any mistakes? Should he not expect God to watch over him at all times? Yet when you read the record you will see his first attempt to lead the people was when he was forty years of age. You will recall the result was that the Egyptian was killed. The next day when he wanted to get the two Hebrews to stop quarrelling, they turned on him. So we would have to say that his first attempt to lead was a tragic failure. How can one understand this? After an had he not turned to serve God? Had he not come in to serve God? And now he winds up at this moment with a tragic failure.

But the story is not finished. Forty years afterwards, forty long years afterwards, we find that God called him to undertake this task in serving God. So long, after he had given up so much. Now my question is: Would, you not expect a person like this to be able to receive a quick answer any time he needed to know anything from God? If God could lead anybody, would He not lead this man quickly and directly? You know that in all his contest with Pharaoh, God led him step by step, but if you read that story through in the early part of Exodus, you will find that there never was a time when Moses could know for sure what was going to happen. When Pharaoh would not let him do what he asked him to do, then he would talk to God about him. And when he would bring on the plague that God gave him the power to bring on, and they would cry out to him to stop the plague, then he would ask God about it. He constantly checked up with God as to what to do, but the Lord never did tell him days ahead what specific things he was to do. He did tell him how it was going to turn out. He was going to bring those people out of the land of Egypt. But how it was going to be done remained unknown to Moses.

Then you will remember the crisis at the Red Sea. If you recall the story, you will remember that he started out after the night of the Passover with the children of Israel. They travelled along until they came to the Red Sea. Then they were in a dilemma. Behind them Pharaoh was chasing them to take them back as captives. In front of them was this arm of the Red Sea, this water for which they had no boats and could not cross. They murmured about their lot that they had, the difficulty they had, and they turned to Moses. And Moses went to God. Now we are going to see how God would lead him. You would think that God would have told him about this, that God would have shown him ahead of time. Should he not

have expected God to keep him and guide him so he would not get into this kind of trouble? The answer to all that is No! No! No! Because

God did not show him ahead of time and God did not give him to understand what was going to happen and God did not fix it so that he never would have any trouble. Rather, when he got into the situation, he turned to God. Then God dealt with him. You remember how God answered him when he cried out to God. God said to him, "What is that in thine hand?" All the time Moses had this rod. He had been using it as a man would use a cane. He had this rod with him. Suddenly it becomes significant and the Lord tells him to lift this rod over the water and it will be opened before him. When he was led of God to do it, it was meaningful. Before he was led of God to do it, it would not have mattered if he had hit the water with that rod. The rod did, not have any power in it. But it did have power when it was in God's hand.

Then they came out into the desert. You will remember that he got into trouble in the desert again and again. First of all there was bitter water, and the people murmured against it. Then there was no bread and the people murmured against him. Then there was no water and the people murmured against him. Then there was an enemy who came and attacked him and he needed help from God. In all these crises he sought the Lord. Moses was a man that continually turned to God, yet we have evidence of the fact that he never did know at any one time everything that was going to happen in the future.

After he had led, the children out of the land of Egypt and had led these children of Israel across the desert and had faced one problem after another, there came a time when they were going to get ready for the day when they would enter into the land. Moses was to learn from God what God's will for them was. So they stopped at a place called Mt. Sinai. Moses went to the top of that mountain and stayed there for forty days. That is forty days in prayer. For what? He was going to find out something from God. I can see how somebody would say, "Well, why didn't God just tell him?" I do not know. It just takes time. Daniel found the same thing to be true. When Daniel was praying for God to guide him about something, the messenger came through three weeks later and told Daniel from the very first your voice was heard. But just took this long before we could get to you in the way in which things go in the spiritual world. So here is Moses, who is the servant of God. He is in God's will and he is doing God's word. He is carrying out everything that God wants him to do and he gets into trouble. When he turns to God, he does not get immediate relief. Forty days it will take to bring this thing up.

From this incident I want to draw certain lessons for you and for me. Because a person is serving God and sincerely wants to do God's will, that is no guarantee that you will not make mistakes. I would like to promise you that God will see you through, but I certainly cannot promise you you will not make mistakes. The blessing we have from God does not mean that He keeps your foot in every single case from stumbling, or that He keeps your hand in every single case from making a mistake. Why this is so, I would not know. I have an idea. I think God would have me act according to the best of my capacity for Him but there is always a challenge for me to learn more about how to do it. But first of all I want to say that because a person is serving God, and Moses certainly was, that is no guarantee that you will not make mistakes.

The second thing I want to point out is that because a person is obeying God is no guarantee that he will have special wisdom. Just because you really want to do God's will does not mean you suddenly become real smart. It does not mean that you will know everything. Just because there is no question that you really want to honor God, no question that you really want to obey Him, that does not mean you can trust the first idea that comes to your mind. It does not mean that you will have special wisdom that will make you peculiar. No, you will need guidance even then. Let me point out again that because a person is faithful there is no guarantee that he will be shown the will of God at once. You may have to wait. Moses spent forty days to see and to learn. It is a test for our faith. It draws things out and God knows why He is doing that. I will not give you all the reasons except I know they happen. I have seen them happen and you have seen them happen.

I want you to notice again in this story that Moses' faith is to be seen in his persistence. He stayed up there. Forty days is a long time. He did not come down at the end of twenty. He did not even come down at the end of thirty days. He waited until the Lord showed him. Forty days it took for the Lord to show him what he wanted him to see. Now Moses's confidence is to be seen in his seeking God's will. Moses did not know for sure what it was going to be and he did not know what to do, but he knew God knew. And so he approached God. He did not get an immediate answer. He stayed there.

And then we can remember this with appreciation: Moses did receive God's guidance and strength. God showed Moses the truth and gave him favor. Eventually it did come to him but it did not come right away. So we will say to each other when you are seeking to have the blessing of God upon you by way of guidance, you can get it. It will come to you, but there is no promise you will get it right away. You may have to take time.

Mistakes in Following the Guidance of God

If a person were a believer in God, and yielded to God and obeyed God in his life, could such a person ever step out of the will of God? Do you think he could ever make a mistake? Would God ever allow one of his own people to make a mistake? I want to draw your attention to several persons that are in the Bible and you will recognize right away that they are among those who really did want to serve God.

First I am going to be thinking about Abraham. I chose him because he is the outstanding example of faith and if ever there was a man who could be spoken of as being faithful it would be Abraham. In fact the Bible calls him "the friend of God" And yet there was one time in his career when this man actually acted in ways out of the will of God. In the Book of Genesis, chapter 20, verses 3-16, you find his dealings with a certain king by the name of Abimelech. The story as it unfolded was a very simple story. Abraham was a complete stranger. He was a foreigner in a foreign land. Apparently Sarah, his wife, was a very beautiful woman and he was afraid that Abimelech, when he saw Sarah, would want to take her for his harem. Since it was against the customs of their culture for this king to take any woman who was somebody else's wife for his harem, it was a very simple matter to fix it that she would not be the other man's wife by just killing the other man. So Abraham could very easily be frightened to think that when Abimelech saw how beautiful Sarah was he would kill Abraham so that he could have Sarah. We read that Abraham put Sarah up to a trick, you might say. He had her tell the truth that gave a wrong impression. He asked Sarah to say that she was his sister. Now the actual fact of the matter is she was his half sister, and the ordinary way of speaking about that would be to say that she is his sister. They did not use the term "half sister" back in those days. So it was true that she was his sister. But of course that was not the whole truth. She was also his wife. This is one of those cases where a man who really is an honest man, generally speaking, tells half the truth and wants to get by with something.

Now God intervened in that case as you will read in chapter 20, verses 3-7. He intervened to keep Abimelech from sinning in the matter, and Sarah was restored to Abraham. Then Abimelech called Abraham in and asked him, "Why did you do this?" I want you to notice that what Abraham did was certainly not the will of God. In other words Abraham, in this particular case, was not acting according to faith. But he tells you why and this is what he says: "Because I thought, surely the fear of God is not in this place." If you boil it right down you have it "because I thought". In other words, Abraham is acting in his own judgment and he is out of the will of God. You will remember I asked you this question. If a person were a real true believer and honestly and sincerely wanted to do the will of God, could such a person ever make a mistake? Here we have Abraham; he did.

I want to use one more example before I comment on this. This is the case of Joshua. Certainly in all the Old Testament characters we would say that Joshua was an outstanding servant of God. I want to draw your attention to what happened to him in his relations with men of the city of Gibeon. You will read this in the Book of Joshua in the 9th chapter, verses 3-27. Here you find that after Joshua had led Israel into victory at Jericho, then at Ai, and before in various other parts of the country, the men of Gibeon, we read, "did work wilyly". That is, they worked in a cunning fashion. They worked out something tricky. They made as if they had been ambassadors from a far country. They told him they had come from a far country and they presented the evidence of how far they had travelled and this is what they did. They had old sacks to carry their provisions. Old wine bottles that were already bursting and of no more use because they were so old. Old shoes, old garments and dry, moldy bread. When they talked to Joshua they told him

their shoes were new when they put them on. Now they were old and scuffed. Their garments were new when they put them on and now they were old and tattered. The bread was fresh out of the oven and now it was dry and moldy.

In the 14th verse of chapter 9 you read these words: "And the men took of their victuals and asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord." In other words, Joshua actually made a treaty with these people and in so doing he imperiled the security of the nation; because he allowed these strangers and these enemies to stay right in the land. He did this thing because of rash acceptance.

Now I have chosen these two incidents. They are rare. I do not know of another case, in the case of Abraham or in case of Joshua, just like this. But I wanted you to see that even though a person were really obedient to God, it is possible for such a person to make a mistake. But there are things for us to learn about this. It does not come from nothing. After all there are conditions about the matter. So let me draw your attention to the following conclusions that we will see. In the first place, being a committed believer, really wanting to do the will of God, gives me no favors. Actually, just because I really want to do the will of God and I have done the will of God; I have suffered for the Lord and I have done these things in order that I might appear before God with integrity; in spite of all that, being a committed believer gives me no favors. What is true for others is true for me. If I do walk carefully I can make a mistake. Just like anybody else can.

The second thing I want to say is that the blessing of God, if you are going to have the help of God and the blessing of God and the protection of God, it is not arbitrary, but practical. In other words, when you ask God to bless you and you are going to have the blessing of God, that just does not come out of the blue. For instance if a man is starting on a trip in his car and he prays for God's blessings, but then he drives too fast, does that make sense? It does not make sense and he is liable to have a wreck. Asking God's blessing is all right if it is genuine and sincere. But God is not going to bless him when he acts foolishly. In other words, you might say to me, "Well the praying did not do any good." That is too much to say. We are going to be studying about that. I want to tell you that you cannot just pray and fix it automatically that you pray to God in the morning and act as you please all day and have it come out all right at night. No, it will not, because actually the blessing of God will be upon me according to what I do. That is what matters.

Now I can ask God for his blessing, and that is proper. I can depend upon God for His blessing and that is proper. But the blessing of God is not going to come if I ask for It, and it is not going to come because I claim I have it. The blessing of God is going to come exactly according to the way I do. That is what will bring it to pass. let me go on to point this out. Having a clear conscience in my relation to God does not guarantee that all my actions are wise. I may be just as sincere a Christian as anybody could possibly be, and I could have it in my mind that I am going to do just exactly what God wants me to do in every way, but that does not mean I will have good sense. I can still do a foolish thing. You know when I will be wise? When I do what He wants me to do. Saying I am going to do it does not make it that way. Saying I belong to Him does not make it that way. But if I yield to Him and follow His will and if I walk in His ways, then I will be wise. That will be the wise part so far as my life is concerned. That is something for us to keep in mind. Having a clear conscience in my relation to God,. being absolutely sure that there is nothing between Him and myself, no kind of barrier, I can turn to Him any time, that does not guarantee that all my actions will be wise. Abraham was certainly a man who believed in God and yet he acted foolishly about Sarah and Abimelech. Joshua certainly was a man who trusted in God. The history of Joshua as given in the Bible is remarkable for the great things that this man Joshua actually did Yet he could make a mistake and imperil the security of his nation by signing a treaty with people that he should not have had any dealings with.

I have already pointed out that having a clear conscience in my relation to God does not guarantee that all my actions will be wise. And having a clear conscience in my actions, even if I do the thing I think

is right does not make me wise, does not give me good sense. Finally following my own judgment can lead me into error. That is what it did with Abraham. He did what he thought was the right thing to do, but he was wrong. Now he was God's man. He belonged to God. I can belong to God. I can belong to God and start out on a piece of work and then figure it out the best I know how, act on my own judgment and then expect God to bless. Not so fast. If I act on my own judgment, then what I am going to get is my own judgment and what it is worth. If it is worth nothing, I get nothing. Again let me say that there is no substitute in dealing with God for careful, humble obedience. That is the thing that really counts. So when we raise the question, as we did here today, if a person were a believer in God, would it follow that he would never step out of the will of God? That is not true. A person could really belong to God, be committed to God and do a foolish thing, get into trouble. That is what happened. It happened with Abraham. It happened with Joshua. It could happen with you and it could happen with me.

Seeking God's Guidance in Prayer

We believe God is a living God. We have in mind that God does care about us. We have noticed in the things we have been talking about that the people who belong to God and who trust in God can look to Him for guidance and can expect it.

Just now I want to raise this question with you. If God were going to lead me, would He show me all Ms will at once? Would I know any time I came into any situation immediately what God wanted me to do? If I was to ask Him what He was going to do, if I was going to ask His guidance, would I expect that if everything was right between myself and the Lord that I could ask Him now and immediately God would show me just all that He wants me to understand? Would it take any time for me to come to know God's will? Now I have several incidents in the Old Testament that I want to use for us to look at and to study.

The first one is in the Book of Genesis in the 18th chapter. It is the story in connection with the life of Abraham. It is one that I am sure many of you will remember very well. You will recall that Abraham was praying to God about the destruction of Sodom. In the course of this you might say that Abraham was seeking to know what the possibilities were that Sodom might be spared. I want you to notice that this good man Abraham, who was so faithful in his relationship with God, a man who believed God, forsook everything that he had to walk with God. I want you to notice that he did not ask God in so many words, "Tell me what you want me to understand." Rather he approached Him in a tentative way, offering various ideas. So if you look in chapter 18, verse 23 and from there on, we find after God had told Abraham that He was going to destroy Sodom, this is the way it reads: "And Abraham drew near and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?" And then he got an answer for that in verse 26: "And the Lord said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes. And Abraham answered and said, Behold now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes: Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it. And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do it for forty's sake." And then he came down to where he asked Him if there were thirty, and He said He could not do it if there were thirty. Then He asked Him if there were twenty and He would not do it if there were twenty. Then he asked Him if He would destroy it if there were ten and He said He would not do it if there were ten. Then we come to the end of this prayer session between Abraham and God and this is what we read in the last verse of chapter 18. "And the Lord went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place." The reason I am bringing this up here is that I want you to notice that Abraham did not come into that situation and ask God to tell him "how many righteous people will there have to be before you spare the city." He did not ask Him that question. He came in and thinking about it decided that he would try with fifty. Then he tried with forty-five. Then he tried with forty. He did this moment by moment. It took time. He thought about it and prayed about it and he went on down until he had ten. And then we read: "The Lord went his way as soon as he had left communing with Abraham." It does not mean that Abraham necessarily quit. It means that the Lord went His way. That the Lord quit. Now what I want particularly to bring out at this time is that Abraham did not get an immediate answer. He did not come into the presence of God and say, "O Lord tell me how many

righteous people there will have to be, and have the word come back six or seven, or three or one, or forty, or whatever. He did not have any answer like that. I am proposing that so far as you and I are concerned, if we want to come to know the will of God about anything, it is not going to be practical for us to ask the Lord, "Tell me now specifically: Yes or No." No, that is not the way in which it goes. We think about it. We consider it. We concern ourselves about it and we arrive at something that seems to us might do. We try it before God to see if that will be all right.

Let me go on to another incident. This is found in the Book of Judges in the 6th chapter. The last five verses of this chapter have to do with something about Gideon. Gideon was a great man of God. He was a man whom God called and whom God blessed and whom God used in a remarkable way. Here Gideon had a call from God to go to battle. The story is well known. I suppose everybody that is listening to me has heard of Gideon's fleece. When he was using that fleece, what did Gideon want to know? Gideon was seeking assurance of victory before he went to battle. He was going to go to battle because he thought God wanted him to go. But he would like to think he was going to win. He thought that if he knew he was going to win it would make his men stronger and would make the whole matter easier. So in any case, he wanted to know. I want you to notice that he did not ask God "yes or no." He did not come before God and say, "Will you give me the victory? Won't you give me the victory?" That is not how it was done. You will remember how he did it. He prayed to God something like this. He said, "I am going to put a fleece out on the ground. If you want me to go, tonight have it so that the fleece will have the dew upon it and that all round about it the ground will be dry. And then I will know that is unusual and I will believe that it is of God." You will remember that when day came, the ground was dry but the fleece had so much water in it that he could wring the water out of the fleece. Then we find that Gideon comes back and he asks God not to take offense at him, but he says, "Let us do it again and this time let the fleece be dry and all the ground around it be wet with dew." The exact opposite. And it turned out just exactly as he had asked. Then he concluded from that that God was going to be with him. Maybe you would not want to do it that way. Maybe you would have some other way that you might think of, but I want you to notice that here is a man whom God used. A man who knew God, who could have dealings with God. A man who in approaching God did not expect to be given immediately, pronto, at once, in black and white, so to speak, spoken out the exact answer to his query of what he wanted to know. It did not come like that.

Now let us think of one more instance. This is in the Book of I Kings in the 18th chapter, verses 41-46. Here we have the case of Elijah. This is part of the event on Mt. Carmel. You will remember at the end of Elijah's experience on Mt. Carmel, that he promised that the drought would be broken. For three and a half years it had not rained, but it was going to rain that day, and he had promised to Ahab that it would rain that day. We find that Elijah went up to the top of Mt. Carmel and got on his knees and bowed his head between his knees and began to pray. And he prayed and prayed and prayed. Then he sent his servant to look. What was the servant to look for? The servant was to look for evidence that God would send the rain as He had promised. The evidence was going to be a cloud and he was to look for a cloud. I want you to see how reasonable this is. I want you to see how in getting to know God's will, and in seeking to find out God's will, you pay attention to the practical situation. Why a cloud? Because rain comes from clouds. That is exactly why. That is why he told him to look for a cloud. And more than that – this is of great interest to me – he told him to look towards the sea for a cloud. Why look towards the sea? Because actually that is where the rain comes from. The water would come from the ocean and would be taken up into the clouds and they would have rain. So he told his young man that was his assistant to look for the clouds and this he did.

This is of interest to me that he sent him to look toward the sea. There will be people who will say, "Well, if God is going to do it, He can do it under any circumstances whatever." Some people think they are honoring God when they say, "I just believe God can do anything. I believe He can make it rain out of a blue sky." Now I would not want to ever be quoted as saying something that God could not do, but I just

do not expect that God would make it rain out of a blue sky. Rain comes out of clouds. Now God might bring the cloud up and He might cause the clouds to rain. Sometimes the clouds do not rain, and He might cause the clouds to rain. But the rain is going to come from the clouds, and the clouds are going to come from the sea. This is true even in God's will.

So let us have in mind that if God were going to lead me, there is no reason for me to expect that He will show me everything at once. There is rather reason for me to think that I may need to seek His face and to wait before Him, to consider things before Him and to pray before Him. In the case of Abraham you will remember he started with fifty, went to forty-five, went to forty, then thirty, then twenty, then to ten. What is this? This is a man seeking to know the mind of God. Probing this way, that way. There might be another way of doing it. I do not know. But what we want to see here is that God does not show immediately all He is going to do at once, even to His own people. It takes time to find out the mind of God about your affairs.

Yielding to the Guidance of God

Today I want to discuss a practical aspect of Christian living. I want to pick up one of the problems that I think many of us would face, and discuss it with you. As I approach this matter that I have in mind, I would say that there are several things that many of us who know the Christian Gospel would hold in our hearts. Of course the whole Gospel relates itself to God, and we would be ready to say that God is a living God. He is actually as much alive and more alive than we are. He knows everything we do, and is touched with all the feelings of our infirmities. This God is a Living Person. Then we would say that God is Sovereign, that He is in control. He is Almighty and He is interested. He will bring His will to pass. We would also say that what we know about God would indicate that God cares about us. Now this Living Sovereign God who cares about us is what we have in mind when we read the problem we want to discuss now. Does this God have a plan for our lives? More specifically, does He have a plan for my life? Does He have a plan for your life? Will God insist on working out His will in my life, in your life?

Now for an answer to this I intend to turn to the Scriptures. I am going to discuss two well known persons in Scripture and certain incidents in their lives to bring out what I think the Scripture would teach along this line. In connection with these two men, each of them is going to be a man that God dealt with. God made His will known and felt in the lives of each of these men. But the two men responded differently. One of these men yielded to the will of God, and we will be noticing how it went with him. The other did not yield to the will of God, and yet he lived and went on with his life, but we will see some of the results from the fact that he did it his own way.

Now the first man I want to bring to your mind, a man who obeyed, or shall I say yielded to the will of God, is Joseph. Most of the Book of Genesis concerns four great men. When I name them to you, you will recognize at once how important these names are in the Bible: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. I expect all of you know the story of Joseph, but let me remind you about it just to indicate how the hand of God was upon him. I shall not spend much time with his boyhood and his childhood. His mother died when he was young, and his father brought him up in a favorite way, and loved him and gave him a coat of many colors. You will remember how the Bible talks about that. But I want to pick up his story at this point. This man Joseph was hated and sold by his brethren. I should think that for a young lad that would be a very shattering experience. His own brothers sold him as a slave. They sold him to the Ishmaelites and the Ishmaelites in turn sold him to the Egyptians. He was taken into a foreign country where he was worked as a slave.

You will remember he had risen to the place of responsibility in his master's establishment until he was in charge of everything his master owned. Then he was slandered by his master's wife. She had tried to entice him. He had resisted her and in her fury about this, she had lied about him, and he had been thrown into prison. He was helplessly slandered by his master's wife. Now this would be a shattering thing for a man. He had worked up to a place of responsibility, even as a slave. He had done well. He had proven himself trustworthy, but when it actually came to a showdown, so to speak, the word of a woman against a man in an intimate matter such as concerned them, and the word of the master's wife against the slave was such that although Joseph was honest, trustworthy and truthful he did not have a chance in the world. He was thrown into prison. When he was in prison, he rose to where we would call him the chief trustee. He was in charge of all the others. In fact, he had charge of the whole prison, and took care of it. You will remember that two men were thrown in prison. They were the butler and the baker. One of these men, when he came out, promised Joseph that he would bring his case to the authorities, so that they

might know that this had been a miscarriage of justice and that Joseph really should not be in prison. Then you will recall he forgot him. I think of all the various things that could have happened to discourage Joseph and make him downhearted, probably nothing would be more so than when a man came and promised him that he would bring his case to the authorities and actually forgot him and left him there.

Now every part of Joseph's story up till now must have been a discouraging, frustrating experience, until God's time came. Then this same man was raised to authority and given a place that was the highest in the kingdom, right next to the emperor so that many people were blessed through his ability and his diligence in the administering of his public office. When you consider this man Joseph as a whole and look at him, you see that as a boy he had dreams of great prestige. That was not his idea. He was not responsible for those dreams. They came to him. They gave him ideas that one day he would be a great man. You will recall how his brothers hated him for it. Then as a man there was trouble upon trouble, disaster after disaster. Everything seemed to be against him.

Now you and I are trying to understand about life. We are trying to understand whether the hand of God is ever to be seen in our affairs. You know as well as I do that not everybody has the same kind of experience. You know perfectly well that some people are fortunate where other people are unfortunate. You know just as well as I do that there are some people who have trouble, trouble, trouble. Other people seem to have very little trouble. Maybe you know these people well enough to know that it does not always follow that the people who have trouble are bad people and that the people who are fortunate are good people. That does not always follow. Every now and again you will come across people who have the highest integrity, and are wonderful people to meet, and they have troubles. There is death. There is sorrow. There is calamity. There is an accident, harm, crippling, just one thing after another that will happen to them. Then someone else will be found around whose life is really not what it ought to be and they will seem to get by without any troubles at all. This we all know. Joseph was one of these men. Everything seemed to go against him. And then suddenly – good fortune.

Now as you review the whole life of Joseph, perhaps it would help you if you stop and ask yourself this question: "Is there any record at all, any bit of evidence, that Joseph ever complained about this? Is there any evidence he ever became sulky, that he was sullen about it, or that he was unfaithful, that he became a criminal because of this kind of treatment?" Not a thing in the world. If you go through that story, the most amazing thing you find is that this man Joseph was always faithful. When he was a slave, he was faithful. When he was put in prison, he was faithful. When he was put at the head of the government, he was faithful. When he was just a son at home with his father, he was dependable and his father trusted him. Always trustworthy. Always constructive, forward looking. I think possibly if you and I had met him, we would have found him to be a cheerful person. You might ask, "How is that possible? How can a man take it on the chin so many different ways and still come up with a strong spirit, perhaps even smiling?" I do not know, but he was certainly steadfast and forward looking. Now I can tell you this that we know from this distance when we look at the whole picture. We know one thing – God had a plan to make him great. If you and I stop to think about it, every single experience he had contributed to that end. It was just because he had gone through what he had that he was forged into the kind of a tool that could be used of God in a great way "to save much people alive." God allowed him to suffer disaster. No one person was responsible for all those troubles that came on Joseph. Certainly Joseph was not responsible. Yet God brought him through to a high place of activity to high performance. Now he, himself, realized this. I think this is the explanation of the fact that you do not find him sulky. You do not find him brooding. He does not become negative about things. He is not opposed to people. He is not bitter about things. Why wouldn't he be? Everything against him – why wouldn't he be?

You will remember his brothers were afraid that he would feel bitter and they came and told him a story. They knew they had done wrong to him. They had sold him and now he was helping them all out. They were afraid that Joseph would get even with them now that their father was gone. So they got

together and made up this story: "Our father said that when you were dealing with us you were not to punish us for what we had done before." Then Joseph gives a remarkable answer. This answer of Joseph's, I think, is actually a clue to his whole life. "And Joseph said unto them,. Fear not: for am I in the place of God?" I am reading in the Book of Genesis, chapter 50, verse 20. "But as for you, ye thought evil against me." That is the honest actual fact. To be realistically true about it, you meant me harm. "But God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." You thought evil, but God meant it for good.

Here we have a man who had one thing after another happening against him,, and he stands strong and steadfast all the way through. You come right down to it and you ask him, "Joseph, why are you able, how are you able to stand this way? Why do you do as you do and still trust God?" He will give you one word, God is going to work it out. God means it for good. "God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." Then he went on to say, "Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them." I know you and I will appreciate that, and we will honor Joseph. We think, "What a wonderful man." But before we are through thinking about him, let us remember this. This is not entirely what a man would have done in his own strength. This is not altogether what a man would do because he was just so good. This is what a man would do who has to trust in God, who understands and interprets everything that happens to him as being from God. Since everything is from God, he can rest quietly, confident that God would take care of him. God meant it for good.

Now I want to turn to another man who is also an Old Testament character. This was also a good man. This man's name is not so well known as Joseph's and yet I am sure it is well known to many of us. The man I am talking about is Hezekiah. He was one of the kings of Judah. Perhaps you know his story. It is not too difficult to outline it. I will just sketch it for you. He was a good king. Hezekiah was an honorable, righteous, believing man. He was faithful in his trust toward God. He doubtless made mistakes and so on, but he was what you would call a good king. He obeyed the will of God in the things he tried to do in his government. Now this man had lived a full time of life and he had passed through a severe political crisis when the enemy came to besiege Jerusalem. But God heard his plea and actually got the enemy to leave without destroying Jerusalem. All this had been done.

Then there came a time when the prophet Isaiah came to Hezekiah and brought him the word of the Lord in this way. That God had sent word to him that his time was up, and that he should now set his house in order because he was to die. We read that Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and wept. You know what that means? He did not want to die. He did not want to go. Now he had lived a full life and God did him this great favor of letting him know his days had come to an end; gave him a chance to wind up his affairs and do it in the way he would want to. But this man did not want to die. He turned his face to the wall and wept. Now this was a good man in many, many ways and he was a believing man. But when God revealed His will to him, he did not want it that way. So the story goes on. God sent Isaiah back to him and Isaiah came to him and told him that God had heard his cry and that God was going to give him fifteen years more. Then Isaiah made a poultice of figs, which has a kind of medicinal quality, and he put it on the boil that was on Hezekiah and it caused the infection to cease and Hezekiah got well. So his life was prolonged, and this answered the prayer.

This fact that he called upon God and, God prolonged his life was marked by a certain miraculous event – the shadow on the sun dial went back a number of degrees. The like of it had never been heard. It was talked about far and wide. The reputation went into foreign countries. People came to see the sun dial where this thing had happened. They came to see him. When they did, something shows up now. Here is this man whose life has been spared in answer to prayer. God wanted him to go, told him his time was up,, but he wanted to stay. He did not accept God's will; made his own; and now we find that when people came to see him that he has become vain about the miracle. Can you imagine that? He actually became

vain and proud of the way in which God answered his prayer and let him live. So in becoming vain and proud that way, he became what we would call expansive. He showed himself off and showed off what he had. Strangers would come in and say, "We want to see this man that was healed." So he showed himself. They said to him, "We want to see the sun dial where the shadow went back." He took them out and showed them that. While he was in this way of showing off everything he had – you and I would say bragging about how God had been so good to him about so many things – these men said, "You must have a lot of money. You must have a lot of gold." He said, "Oh yes, God has given us a lot." And they said, "Now where, show us that." So he went in and showed them all his treasures. He showed them everything he had. In doing this, he was being very foolish. All he was doing was something vain. You will remember Isaiah came and met him after these five were gone. Isaiah asked him a few questions. "Who were those men?" He told him they were people from Babylon. Then Isaiah asked him, "What did you show them? What did they see?" The king told him what they had seen and what he had shown them. Then Isaiah told him, "Every single thing you showed them, you will lose. These are enemies. When you vaunted yourself the way you did and bragged the way you did, you put yourself in their hands. They will rob you. They will strip you. They will take away everything you have." Then he told him also, "Because you have been a godly man, a faithful man, God will spare the nation while you live, but as soon as you are gone, it will suffer because of your conduct."

In addition to that, during this fifteen years time (you remember he was to live fifteen years longer) Manasseh was born, and Manasseh became the next king of Judah. He was the most wicked king that Judah ever had. As a matter of fact, because of the sins of Manasseh, Judah was destroyed. And after that in Manasseh's time, the enemy did come as Isaiah said they would, and they plundered Jerusalem. The gold was taken away. The treasures were taken away. The city was stripped of its wealth because of this foolish pride on the part of this man Hezekiah, who got proud over the fact that God answered his prayer.

Now here was a fine record of a good king, but he was not willing to yield to God's will. God said, "I want you to come." He turned his face to the wall and wept. He did not want to go. He did not want to do God's will. So he got his own will, and with it all this trouble. He suffered loss, suffered shame. The people suffered loss. The whole nation suffered loss because he had become vain and proud. You see, when the time comes that I do not yield myself into the will of God, all the other evil things crop up. They show up one after another.

Now we have seen this: the case of Joseph, who yielded to God's will and was greatly used. The case of Hezekiah, who did not want to do God's will, but chose his own instead and this resulted in shame and in loss. Now I want to make some observations about this. It would appear from these two men that we have been looking at, that God does have a will for His own. I am not sure that what I am talking about would fit anybody in the country. I am sure it could fit anybody, but I am not sure that the Bible gives us any reason to believe that God does like this for everybody in the world. I think He does like this for those who put their trust in Him. You know that wonderful passage of Paul says, "All things work together for good to them that love God." That leaves something open for those who do not love God. We remember when the Lord Jesus washed the disciples' feet. We read that the Lord Jesus knowing who He was 'and where He had come from and what He had come to do, arose from supper, having loved His own, He loved them to the end. In various ways I could get the idea across to you that so far as all people on the face of the earth are concerned, some believe in God. God has a special interest in those who believe in Him. And the interest He has in them is that He is going to bring them to Himself. He has their future worked out, and He has a will for His own people. But it comes out in this study of these two men, apparently He will not coerce them. Apparently God will not force His will to come to pass. It seems from what we are able to see here, that man does have some choice.

Now in my life I am putting my trust in God and looking to Him and wanting to obey Him. According to what we have been looking at, we can expect that God will work things in my life according

to His will. Now in it there will be a challenge. Whether I will want to do the will of God or whether I will want to do my own will. I think the way that would show up is something like this: whether I will accept things as they come, or whether I will resist them as they come and wish them to be something else and try to make them something different than they are. It is the foolish person who would just simply say, "I do not want to do it." It is the wise person who would accept things the way they come and say, "Thy will be done." That is not such a terrific thing to say. When a man says to God, "Thy will be done," do you think he is throwing anything away? You think if a man turns himself over to God and says to God the Father, "Thy will be done," do you think that man is resigning from anything? Really, isn't he putting his case in the best hands that there are in the whole universe?

If a man were sick, and he is going to a doctor, wouldn't it be the part of wisdom for him to turn himself over to a doctor? Shouldn't he, in his heart and spirit, have in mind that anything the doctor would advise, he would do. Any medicine the doctor would advise, he would take. Do you think it is a smart thing for a person to hire a doctor, pay him his fee, get his advice, get his instructions, get his medicine, then never take it? Never do it? Well, now, don't you think that is the way it is with those of us who believe in God but we do not yield to Him?

Those of us who talk about these things have a way of saying that so far as the will of God is concerned, it can be spoken of as the directive will of God and the permissive will of God. We seem to feel like this: God has a way that He wants me to go and if I will not go that way, there are other ways He will let me go. Now He will not let me do anything. There are limits to what He will allow me to do. But God will let me have my way up to a certain point, but it will cost me. There is a passage in the Old Testament about Israel and it reads like this: "God granted them the desires of their hearts and sent them leanness unto their souls." So far as you and I are concerned, you know we would be just the wisest as we ever could be if you and I would make up our minds to let God have His way. "Thy will be done."