



NEW LIFE

BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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“For the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev 1:9)

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Guidance and the Sovereign Lord

By Rev Ian Hamilton, Pastor of the Cambridge Presbyterian Church

Adapted from Banner of Truth website

It is a constant surprise to me that many Christians are worried about guidance. Please don't misunderstand me. I do not mean that Christians should not be concerned about doing God's will. But why is it that many (and I think 'many' is the appropriate word) Christians get worried, confused and at times even spiritually paralysed about guidance?

In Matthew 6:25ff, Jesus gently rebuked his disciples for worrying about the future. They were worrying about where the next meal would come from, and how they would be able to clothe themselves. Jesus' antidote, to their only too human concerns, was to remind them of the caring, loving heavenly Father who knew perfectly and intimately all their needs: 'your heavenly Father knows'. He called them to have a renewed trust in the sovereign goodness and gracious omniscience of their Father in heaven. Having directed them to the perfect Father, Jesus then spoke these words to his 'little faith' (v. 30) disciples: 'But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well'.

Perhaps you are wondering, 'But what has this to do with guidance?' The answer is, everything! Jesus was calling his disciples to re-prioritise their lives. The disciples needed food and clothing, but they needed to understand that a new priority had claimed their lives, God's kingdom and righteousness. God has given us the essential guidance we need for living lives to his praise in this world. He has told us how we are to live and what we are to do: we are to live to please him and we are to keep his commandments (cf. John 14:15). Guidance is simply 'doing the next thing' - unless it pleases the Lord to redirect our steps in some way or another.

The well-known verses in Proverbs best explain the point I am trying to make: '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' (Prov. 3:5-7). Guidance is pre-eminently the responsibility of the Lord. In our earthly families, the father will gently grasp the hand of his young child and lead him in the way he is to go. It is the father, not the child, who is responsible for the guidance. There will, perhaps, be times when the child does not want to go the way her father is leading her in - it looks too demanding, it appears to take her away from the pleasant scenes that beckon in another direction. The father can then do one of two things: He can simply insist and, notwithstanding tears and wails, lead on. Or, he can let go (as it were) and say, 'Let's see where you end up by pursuing your own determined will.'

The key to guidance lies in the child of God believing that his Father is perfectly good...

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and desires and pursues only his best. Indeed this is exactly what the cross of our Lord Jesus shouts out to us: 'he who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all — how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?' God has pledged in precious blood that he will give us all that is good and wise and needful for us to live fulfilled and useful lives for his glory in this world.

Perhaps by now you are thinking, 'This is all well and good. But how am I to know whether I should move home, take this job offer, marry this fine Christian, go into the ministry, be a missionary (or whatever)?' Listen again to your Saviour, 'Your heavenly Father knows... But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness...' Your heavenly Father is the sovereign King of the cosmos. He bends the universe to do his holy will. Your responsibility and mine is to 'do the next thing' i.e. the next thing that is pleasing to the Lord. He is well able to overrule our follies and stupidities. I have often thought that Augustine had it right when he said, 'Love God and do what you like.' Do you think this is a recipe for sheer hedonism? Far from it. To love God is to keep his commandments, to live to make his pleasure and praise the chief business of your life. The Christian who truly loves the Lord will only ever want to please him — pleasing HIM is what the child of God loves above all to do.

I suppose this is an appeal for Christians to take the unabridged sovereignty of their heavenly Father seriously. Yes, there are those no doubt who treat the Father's sovereignty as an excuse to 'go on sinning', as he will always be there to wave his sovereign wand and make all things well. People who think like that don't need to be rebuked, they need to be converted!

Yes, there will be times when you don't know which way to go, etc., and the internal agony may be great. But the sovereign Father is also the loving Father, who is resolved to conform you to the likeness of his Son, and at times that takes 'the crucible of affliction'. It is said that while the Puritans never wrote one book on 'Guidance', they wrote many books on the grace and godliness of 'Obedience'. That is where right thinking about guidance begins.

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Why the Christian Life is Hard

*By Rev William Harrell, pastor of Immanuel Presbyterian Church, Norfolk, Virginia
Adapted from Banner of Truth website*

Do you think that the Christian life is hard? If so, what makes it hard, and if not, why does it seem so hard for so many professing Christians?

We can begin to consider this matter in terms of the context of the question and in terms of our defining what we mean by the word hard. Regarding context, the Bible alerts us to the fact that it is through many tribulations that we must enter the kingdom of God. The sufferings of the apostles in the Book of Acts illustrate some of the sufferings of the faithful. Yet, do we always suffer? Is our calling in Christ always to be under the yoke of stress, straining, persecution, affliction, and sacrifice? And are these things the only elements that compose the Christian life? The true context in which we face the challenges and difficulties inherent in our pilgrimage of faith is one composed of trials and triumphs, sorrows and joys, pains and holy pleasures. Therefore, when we understand that the Christian life contains such mixed elements, we cannot and should not think or characterize the life of faith as being hard in the sense of it being unalloyed pain and suffering.

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While the Bible is clear that the tribulations of the saints can be many, varied, and at times exquisitely painful and profoundly perplexing, the Word of God is emphatic in stating that all of our pains serve useful and sanctifying purposes in our lives. The thorns we cry to our God to remove from our flesh serve as prods to direct us to the abundantly sufficient grace of our Lord. The afflictions we endure come upon us by no accident or negligence on God's part, but are ordained by him for the production in us of an eternal weight of glory. It is when we appropriate the divine grace that we begin to rejoice and boast in our afflictions and weaknesses, seeing the connection between them and God's glory and our good. It is when we feed upon the sure hope of that glory in view of which all of our sufferings should be considered as momentary, light, and, in fact, beneficial producers of glorious gain, that we begin to count ourselves blessed when we suffer for Christ's sake.

But there is more to this matter than our faithful appropriation of the truths and promises of God's Word and the enabling grace that he ministers to us by his Spirit. There is something intensely and essentially personal that transforms the pain of our sufferings into the blessedness of glory. We are not simply called to be nourished on grace and hope but rather to be strengthened by these qualities as they come to us in relation to their source, namely, our living and loving God. It is God's grace that enables us not only to endure our thorns in the flesh or resign ourselves to them, but also to rejoice in them. It is the hope that God gives us that feeds and fills us with joyful anticipation of the day when we shall see the face of our Redeemer, whose loving self-sacrifice has washed away all of our sins, whose healing hand shall wipe away all of our tears, and whose glorious beauty shall perfectly and perpetually captivate us and hold us in the matrix of the holy love that blessedly holds the three persons of our triune God in most perfect and joyful unity.

There is a priority that we should ever observe when we live our lives in Christ. There are principles of godliness and ordinances of divine grace, but above and before these is the living and loving person of God. It is neither by the principles of godliness nor by the ordinances of divine grace that we are saved. It is by the person of God through the ordinances of his grace.

Jesus calls us to come to him and promises us that he will give us rest. While we can only truly come to know Christ and his will and provision for us through his written Word, we should ever bear in mind that above that written Word stands the living Word. It is that living Word who has loved us and given himself for us. It is that living Word who has reconciled us to God and brought us into his loving family and given to us glorious, eternal, abundant life.

We should learn to perceive in the written Word of Scripture not only the propositional directives and declared truths, incentives, commands, and prohibitions of God, but also the powerful and intensely pleasing aroma, the sweet, refreshing breath, the loving hand, the compassionate and merciful heart of our God. Although Scripture informs our prayers, we do not pray to the Bible, but to the living God who has revealed himself to us in Scripture. When Paul says that he can do all things, he does not say that he does so through the directives of Scripture alone, but rather through the Christ whose loving divine person and reconciling work form the central testimony of all Scripture.

God has given us his Word, not so that in it we might find the ladder of our performance that leads to heaven, but rather so that we might apprehend the beauty of our holy, loving, and redeeming Lord. It is our God who has made and redeemed us for himself. Our hearts are restless and our lives appear hard, until we find our rest, our peace, our contentment, our joy, our all in him, in whose yoke we find felicity throughout our pilgrimage on earth (Matt. 11: 28-30), and in whose presence in glory is fullness of joy, and enduring pleasures (Psa. 16:11).

WELCOME TO NEW LIFE B-P CHURCH LONDON

Our worship services begin promptly at **11.00 am and 4.00 pm.**

Please stay back for Bible Study and fellowship lunch after the morning worship and for tea after the evening service. Do invite your friends to come to Church.

Worship Services			WELCOME
Morning	<i>Today: 15/03/2009</i>	<i>Next Week: 22/03/2009</i>	We extend a warm welcome to all worshippers this Lord's Day. We like to welcome Janet Lee, Freddie Tan and Vishal to our worship services last Lord's Day.
<i>Chairman:</i>	Joey Seow	Jonathan Kim	
<i>Preacher:</i>	Eld George Chew	Pr Gervase Charmley	
<i>Message:</i>	The Meaning of the Cross	God's Strange Work	
<i>Text:</i>	1 Corinthians 1:18-25	2 Kings 5	
<i>Organist:</i>	Joy	Anthony	
Evening			NEWS/ANNOUNCEMENTS
<i>Chairman:</i>	Jonathan Kim	John Poh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome: We would like to welcome back Eld George Chew, our speaker for this Lord's Day. • Calling of Resident Minister: Continue to pray for the Lord's calling for a resident minister. The church leaders are calling Rev Timothy Ki to serve as resident minister. Pray for Rev Ki's visa application. • Church Easter Camp – 10 to 13 April: Registration forms can be obtained from John. Also, if you would like to assist with the church camp, please see John. • Pray for those who are sick: Douglas (knee pain), Maria (ankle and joint pain), Constance (left heel pain), Anthony (recovery from collarbone fracture), Margaret (cough) • Pray for those who are seeking permanent employment: John • Pray for on travel: Douglas • Pilgrim Tabernacle 4th Ladies Conference, 9 May: This will be held at Eldon Road Baptist Church, Wood Green, starting at 10am. Please contact sis Kim Eng (Tel: 020 8368 8080) for more details.
<i>Preacher:</i>	Eld George Chew	Pr Gervase Charmley	
<i>Message:</i>	House Cleaning	The Mother of Us All	
<i>Text:</i>	John 2:13-22	Galatians 4:22-31	
<i>Pianist:</i>	Hubert	Sophia	
Other Duties			
	<i>Today: 15/03/2009</i>	<i>Next Week: 22/03/2009</i>	
<i>Ushers</i>	Daniel / Sharon	Joshua / Evelyn	
<i>Sunday Sch:</i>	Hannah	Hannah	
<i>Lunch:</i>	Constance	Maureen	
<i>Washing-up:</i>	Volunteers	Volunteers	
<i>PA Crew:</i>	John	Nicholas	
Appointments of the Week			
Fri 20 Mar	7:30pm	Young Adults Fellowship: Fellowship activity	
Sat 21 Mar	4:00pm	Prayer Meeting & Bible Study: Led by Jonathan Kim	
<u>Last Week's Worship Service Collections</u>			
Offering:	£364.35	YAF: £25.70 Lunch: £34.35	
<u>What to Do with Injuries</u>			
<i>Adapted from "In Green Pastures" by J.R. Miller, D.D.</i>			
<p>What must we do with the wrongs and injustices and injuries inflicted upon us by others if we are not to avenge them? How are these wrongs to be righted and these injuries to be healed? Do not fear the consequences of any wrong done to you. Simply roll the matter into God's hands and leave it there, and he will bring all out clear as the noonday. He will not suffer us to be permanently and really injured by any enmity. Our duty, then, is to bear meekly and patiently the suffering which others may cause us to endure; to bathe with love the hand that smites; to forgive those who injure us; and to commit all the injustices and inequities of our lives and all wrongs into the hand of the just and righteous God. The oyster's wounds become pearls; and God can bring pearls of spiritual beauty out of the hurts made by human hands in our lives.</p>			