

W509_The_Lord's_leading.mp3

[00:00:02] This is a recording made in the Chapel of the Open book and is number nine of the series. Spotlight. Under the same heading in our last meeting together. We were considering particularly knowledge. And acknowledgement and letters of other passages to the Proverbs. In all thy ways acknowledge Him and he shall direct thy paths. Each day. They in case anyone didn't get it before that were direct in Timothy's Bible was precisely the very word used two Timothy in the English expression rightly dividing. So he had no need for anyone to tell him what it meant. It was to rightly divide a pathway like a finger post. Well, this evening we are continuing the thought. If God directs our paths, there is another way of saying He leads us. And quite a number of God's children are continually either using the expression I felt led, which sometimes is a very misleading expression and one to be avoided, or they are not conscious that leading is theirs as a part of redemption. Let me explain what I mean. Can you say from a full heart the Lord is my shepherd? In order that involves with regard to redemption and so on. Well, if you can say that, you can say the next thing he leadeth me. You don't have to ask the shepherd to lead you is implicit. I don't say that we should never ask the Lord to lead us because that may be just too severe. But are the feeling that our prayers would be more full and more completely answered if sometimes we acknowledged that the Lord is leading us? But our problem is the following He doesn't drag us by the scruff of our neck.

[00:02:16] He says, Follow me or the apostle says, Follow me. But it's up to us whether we do sometimes or not because it's in the realm of practice. So let's leave them together, shall we? Lord leading is ineffectual if there is no corresponding following. And the following is a part of his gracious concern for us that he leads us to his leading. All our lives take a few passages of Scripture which may throw further light upon this question of leading. And the first passage I would like you to turn to is the last chapter of the Book of Exodus, the last chapter of the Book of Exodus. And there are two features that I think should be kept in mind all the time. We consider the question of the Lord's leading, and you will notice. The opening verse and the Lord spake unto Moses saying on the first day of the first month, shalt thou set up the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation. And then presently we have the statement in verse 18, and Moses reared up the tabernacle. And verse 19, he spread abroad the tent. And then comes the refrain

as the Lord commanded Moses. Now look at the end of verse 21, as the Lord commanded Moses, and look at the end of verse 23, and it goes on.

[00:03:58] It doesn't put two dots and say ditto. It spreads it out every time. This is a repeated insistence down this chapter on the one fact that in this closing chapter it's recorded that Moses did as the Lord commanded him. Well, that as reference to the Word of God. Now look at the next thing. It says in verse 33. And he reared up the court round about the tabernacle and the altar and set up the hanging of the court gate. So Moses finished his work. Finish the work. Well, now a Christian can only read the word's finished work without thinking of that supreme finished work which Christ accomplished on Calvary. So if we were permitted to interlink these two together as the Lord commanded, Moses refers to the Word of God, and the finished work refers to the work of Christ. And those two combined the redeeming work of Christ and the complete Word of God leads to what these words. At is in verse 36. And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys. But if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed. Not till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day and fire was on it by night in the sight of all the House of Israel.

[00:05:30] Throughout all their journeys, throughout all their journeys. Sometimes they were rebellious people and had to be chastise. But from the moment that tabernacle was finished, the cloud, whether it be day or night, never left them till they reached the River Jordan. And the Land of Promise was in front of them. Now, there is a typical lesson there for us all. You see there are a legitimate one, and I think most of us can realize that this must be true without the finished work of Christ and without the completed word of God. The question of leading hardly comes in. But the moment we realize that he has gone before made all this preparation and we get the assurance that it never left them day or night until the end of their journey was reached. Surely this should be a word in season for every one of us. What would it take? Another stage. We come back to Psalm 32 that we read just now. It says in verse eight, I will instruct thee. And teach thee in the way which thou shalt go. I will guide thee with my eye. Under the weather, you know. Spurrell's translation of the Old Testament. Sparrow was an ADA who gave. Great. Karen balancing and analyzing the Hebrew scriptures. And it's a very, very good translation to refer to if you can get a copy. Unfortunately, I did have a copy, but I had to let it go.

[00:07:10] But her translation gives this. I can't give you every word, but it gives this I will guide thee with mine eye. She suggests that we read nod to. It's the mistress just giving a nod to the servant. Now, you see, here's an important point coming out. You might be looking all over the place and you could hear what somebody says. But if the mistress nods to you and you're looking somewhere else, you don't see it, do you? So your eyes must be on him if he's going to guide you with his eye. So that's another lesson I think that we could take to heart. It's no good grumbling because we're not being led. If our eyes are on all sorts of objects instead of his. We don't have to follow those. We don't have to follow the opinions of our friends. Although we must be very, very gentle in refusing them sometimes. But we must ever keep our eyes upon him and he will guide us with his eye. He will nod to us without a word said, and somebody else will not know that a guidance has been given us. But we shall. So I think there's two thoughts. There's the provision made by God for the guidance of this people right through their 40 years in the wilderness. And you did notice that God changed it. It was a pillar of cloud by day, but it is a pillar of fire by night.

[00:08:41] So if your circumstances are day one, you will have one kind of guidance. And if you're in the night of darkness, he will give you another kind of guidance so that you shall see he meets your circumstance. And you have to, of course, retranslate this over and over again as days go by. So there's two features with regard to the question of guidance. Psalm 123 might be added to this while we have the Psalms in front of us. Psalm 123. And they lift up my eyes. O thou that dwellest in the heavens. Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters. And as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of a mistress. So our eyes wait upon thee, the Lord, our God, until the day have mercy upon us. So you see that idea of the eye being the servant's eye, looking at the master or the mistress is confirmed by this other passage of scripture. Now let's turn back again to Psalm 107. There are two passages with regard to the leading of the Lord that it is sometimes wise for us to put together. Psalm 107, verse seven. This is a psalm dealing with the movements of the children of Israel and supplementing, in some measure, the passage we had in Exodus chapter 40. It says in 107, verse seven. And he led them forth by the right way. That they might go to a city of habitation.

[00:10:40] He led them forth by a right way and most of us. In the ordinary, everyday circumstances would say, well, that's what we must expect. When God leads, it will be a right way. But don't be too glib over that, friends, because you may be up against a circumstance and all the leading of the Lord seems to be leading you. What should I put it in a roundabout way, and you begin to wonder. So will you turn to another passage where you get that very expression? Exodus 13. It's a right way, remember? But see what it says here. Exodus 13. Verse 17 and 18. And it came to pass when Pharaoh had led the people go that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near. There, that's a temptation for. And you see. I even this present world has got a proverb. A shortcut is often the longest way round. And possibly there are some of you here. Yes. Don't I know that to be sorrow, he says. Let's read it again. And it came to pass when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near for God said, lest peradventure the people repent when they see war and they return to Egypt. But God led the people about through the way of the wilderness. He led them round about. So God leads you a right way, but the selfsame time he leads you around about way because he sees a lot more than you do.

[00:12:30] Have you never, in your experience, looked back over a part of your life and say, Oh, I am thankful, God shut that door You were clamoring away for all your worth. You see, this is the one thing I must have, or this is most obviously the will of the Lord. And then you suddenly realize he was gracious enough not to take you at your word. He led this people around about way because it was right and proper for them, although the shortcut was through the land of the Philistines. But as we've said, the shortcut can often be the longest way round. So we get these little sidelights upon that, which is a very practical issue with every one of us. The Lord's leading and how it is brought about and its characteristics. Another word of warning, I think might be lifted from the Book of Proverbs. Of course, the proverbs has to do with wisdom and guidance in connection with one's walk and manner of life. Chapter 21, Verse two. Verse two. Every way of a man is right in his own eyes. What if it was right in his own eyes? I suppose that poor wretch would ever get anywhere. But there's always a warning. Don't put all your trust in your own conception. There's another side. The Lord ponder the hearts.

[00:14:00] Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord pondering the hearts. It's more important that your heart should be right then that your feet should be

in a certain direction. Let's talk about another one that has a certain amount of reference to this Proverbs 16, verse 25. Proverbs 16:25. There is a way that seems right. I do. I mean, what are you again? All your experiences and the advice of your friends and so on and your heart's desire on top of it seems right. But the end thereof are the ways. Okay. So you see, there's evidently a reason why God should put this in the word more than once to warn us that his leading is a right one, but his leading may be a roundabout one. His leading will always be in harmony with the circumstances, whether it's day or night. But don't forget that when you make up your mind to do a thing, it may be a wrong leading. And so we have to be very, very careful and prayerful that we do not mistake our ideas and call it the will of the Lord. It's. Now should we look at Deuteronomy chapter eight? For another light upon the circumstances of some of our experiences in life as what the purpose is? Deuteronomy Chapter eight. Verses two and three. And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these 40 years in the wilderness.

[00:16:10] For they had an experience which I suppose they never could forget. Those people. Think of where they came out of Egypt and into that wilderness. And there was no water. And when they did come to a well, it was bitter. And then when the tree was put in it by the water, sweet again, a first lesson was learned that it wasn't the world itself that were provide. It was the tree, which has a significance in the Scriptures all the way through. Then after that, they came to the palm trees and the wells and they were able to settle for a time. So that there is this thought here. Thou shalt remember all the way, which the Lord thy God led thee, these 40 years in the wilderness. And these are the reasons to humble thee. For most of us have got a certain amount of pride that is destructive and needs to be curbed. To prove the. You see, sometimes we read the word temptation and we think it means tempting us to do evil. But the word temptation also means to test and to try not to tempt, to do wrong, but to test and try whether you will believe in spite of circumstances. So it goes on to humble thee, to prove thee to know what is in thine heart. Whether thou wouldest keep his commandments. Or no. And he humblebee and he suffered the tohunga. And he fed me. You see, God did both.

[00:17:49] It doesn't say God said that with matter and they suffer with hunger sometimes. For some reason, though, one could give. God says, I was responsible for both. I suffered thee to hunger. I fed thee with bread from heaven or manna, which thou

knowest not knew is not. Neither did thy fathers know. And he is the reason coming out. That. That. That he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only. The physical body. Yes, but the spiritual side? No. Not merely that which the world provides is not enough. Man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord does man live? And you remember that our saviour who took our place and in our stead he went through this. He was 40 days, not 40 years, but symbolically the same. 40 days in a wilderness and hungered. And then came the tempting or the testing if thou be the son of God. Come on. These stones are many baked bread. And the Lord quoted this, quoted this. And so we if he took that line, most surely we must take that line. Then, instead of being surprised or grumbling or murmuring because of circumstances that come our way. Say what? He knows our hearts. He knows our thoughts. He knows our weaknesses. And these testings are very, very necessary that we may please him and be walking worthy of the calling and adorning the doctrine of God, our Savior, which should be our great desire.

[00:19:33] So the Lord does lead and He's given us certain index as to the way in which it is done. There's one little part in Ezra, if you would turn to chapter eight, which always appeals to me. Chapter eight. And we've all got our own peculiar independent. I didn't mean to say the word independent make up because that's just the point. I'm afraid I have an exceedingly personal, independent nature, and I've never run after a gift, and I don't think I ever shall. In fact, my mother told me when I was grown up that I embarrassed her because instead of taking a penny from a friend who came to visit us, I said, No thank you. I've got my own money box. Walk away. As a kid. Well, that's all very well. So. So far. But so far we could go too far. Now it says here. Ezra Chapter eight. Ezra is leading the people back from captivity to Jerusalem to restore the city and build the temple. And here it says in chapter 821. Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava that we might afflict ourselves before our God and seek of him a right way for us and for our little ones and for all our substance. Well, now, what's the matter with the man? Oh, we haven't let him finish. What's his trouble? For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way.

[00:21:19] Because we had spoken unto the king saying the hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him, but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him. So we fasted and besought our God for this, and he was entreated of us. Now, do

you feel any sort of echo in your heart? I was ashamed to ask this man who was not a man of God. I was ashamed to ask him to give me protection because I had already stood in his presence and I had boasted in his presence that the Lord, our God we serve. He could protect. He could supply. He can lead. Oh, that's a attitude, friends. We want to remember when sometimes we get an easy way given to us. But it means compromising with the world that knows not God and is not in line with his purposes. Let us now turn to the acts of the apostles. The Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 13, verse two. And you will remember that this is where the Apostle got his first great call. Verses one and two. Now, there were in the church that was at Antioch. Certain prophets and teachers. As Barnabas. And Simeon that was called Niger and Luke Lucas of Sarine and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch.

[00:22:52] And just thrown it at the end. Someone the name of Saul. As he stood in the list of the first case. So and so like that, you see. As they minister to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me, Barnabas. I think he came first, didn't he? Yes. And Saul? He came last for the work Whereunto. I have called him. So here is the call of Barnabas and Saul and they start on their journey. But as a consequence, we come to Chapter 16 to see a little word on the way in which the Lord sometimes leads. These men have taken the Lord at His word and they've gone across part of the ocean. They've landed on the south shores of the what we call Asia minor. And now we discover that was already called Galatia in these days and they've got up country. Chapter 16. Verse six. Now when they had gone through Phrygia. And the region of Galatia and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia. Don't read the word Asia to mean that which includes China and the East. This is Asia minor, as we call it. Now for distinction. They were in Asia minor. Now, when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, notice that they got out at the call of the Holy Ghost. They'd gone to this place ready to preach, and then they were forbidden.

[00:24:37] What a strange at first, isn't it? After I become to Mysia they assayed to go into Bithynia. And the spirit suffered them not. That's twice. But when they began to do. Do we turn back and go home? I don't think the apostle will be very pleased with that idea. But it was a baffling thought. They'd come to preach and they couldn't go to the left and they couldn't go to the right. Well, there's only one other way to go then. Let's go on, isn't it? Don't you see, Friends? Sometimes the way that the Lord leads you is by

shutting doors. Shutting doors? I can see a little tiny toddler going along the passage. There's a half open door that leads downstairs where you keep your firewood in it and somebody leans over and just shuts the door like that in time. The Lord has to do that for us sometimes. Friends, here are these men. Bahelia pausing to hear about Bithynia. Oh, Peter was there or he was going there. Oh, the Lord said Bithynia is all right, Paul. You needn't worry. I've got my messenger for Bithynia. You've got something else to do. I'm leading you by shutting doors. So let's see the sequel. After they were come to be here and assayed to go into Bithynia. But the spirit suffered them not. And they passing by. Missia came down to Troas. That is the ancient Troy, right on the northern coast of Asia Minor.

[00:26:12] Right up the other side, you see. And a vision appeared to Paul. In the night there stood a man of Macedonia. Macedonia. Was that in Europe? That's the other side. There stood a man in Macedonia. And prayed him saying, come over into Macedonia and help us. What was the consequence of that vision? And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia. Assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them. Isn't it good that they didn't try to push those doors out in which the spirit had shut? Isn't it good that they waited? Isn't it good that they realized here was an opening that they never dreamed of? It's possible. Paul had never given a thought to going into Europe itself, but here he was. He'd seen the vision and they crossed. And the first company to be ever formed in Europe as a little company of believers was Philippi. Philip II. And it all took place when the apostle found a group of women at a little prayer meeting on the banks of the river. And when he writes to the Philippians, it says, Help those women which have served with us in the gospel. So God can use, you see, those that were in some measure set aside in the ordinary way. He could use shut doors to lead. And what a blessed thing is that they responded to the vision for if he had never gone to Philippi, may never have gone to Rome, he may never have gone to Corinth.

[00:28:00] We may never have had those mighty epistles to the Ephesians and whatnot. God is not tied to one person, but he had chosen this man and blessed be God. He followed the leading of the Lord. Most of us, I think, can bring out of our own experiences if we've lived long enough. Indications. There are evidences of leading about which we know very little at first. I think you will pardon me if I just say when I look back 50, 60 years, I can see what I didn't see then. Most of you know that I was born

and brought up in Bermondsey. And to this day, if a novelist wants to write about a terrible person, you read a line in the mystery thriller and there was a dreadful thud. And Bermondsey Bill streaked out into the night. You see, that's the sort of. I was very near the River Thames and its dockland and a tremendous lot of. For children only. You may say five minutes walk from where I lived was a ragged school where there were hundreds of boys and girls who had no shoes, no stockings, just bare feet. There was I. I left my school when I was 14. And I got a heartbreakin job in Mincing Lane. I was the eldest of a family and all the rest were girls.

[00:29:38] But as I was four years older than my sister when I was ten. The eldest girl was six. So you knew who did the washing up in our home to help Mother, don't you? You know who had to do the cleaning of the windows? You know. Oh, yes. That was me. And if I didn't get into a job in medicine, laying in a broker's office and did a lot more of it. David, I think I've told you this story before. I got so weary of this job that I maneuvered and got the sack. When I was 15. A was 25. I was taking a party around the British Museum and a little crowd was standing there and one of the public drew near as he had every right to listen to me. And when I dismissed him and said, I'll meet round there, I turned to him and said, You seem to be very interested. He said, I am. I said, You don't recognize me. You said, no. I said, You gave me the sack ten years ago. Is he 15 and 25? And that boy that got the sack and this person who's taking him around the British Museum were so miles apart. She couldn't believe it. But there was a leading there with their friends because I would never have dreamed of a thing like that. And so. I don't know why. Right there in Bermondsey with nobody to speak a word about it.

[00:30:59] I heard someone just drop a remark in Southwark Park when he was speaking from a platform. About Greek. I thought I'd like to learn Greek. You'd like to learn Greek? But I understand that you work at a bench. Yes. You leave home at seven and you walk to the city. Yes. And you get back home at 8:00 at night? Yes. And you want somebody to teach you Greek in Bermondsey after eight? Well, that's cry for the moon, isn't it? Why should I want it? Don't ask me, I said. Somebody said, Try the Bermondsey settlement where Scott Lidgett had started. And I went there and I tried to dissuade me and say, Well, wouldn't it be better to learn French or German? I said, I know all about my aunt's got pens down the garden, but but I said, Do you want classical Greek or New Testament? Greek or who? I said, I don't know. They said, Well,

we don't know because I was obviously a boy or a young feller that ought to be playing a jazz band or something. In their estimation. That's all I was. So at last they put me in the Greek class of the New Testament. I wasn't a Christian. But I was sent to Booksellers Row by a teacher, which is now non-existent. Booksellers row to get a second hand Greek grammar. And while I was hunting through the box, a young man I had never seen his face.

[00:32:24] I hope to see one day in glory slipped a bit in my hand and invited me to go near a lecture on sceptics and the Bible Skeptics attracted me, not the Bible for it. I been brought up in a home that was a happy one and upright one, but no place for God or Christ or the Bible didn't know a word about it. But I went and I was nearly knocked flat by this man who so spoke about that book. I couldn't get away from it. So wait. One told me, Father. I didn't know what he'd say, but he was quite a good chum. My father left it at that. As I left that meeting that night, I shook hands with the speaker and I said, What are you going to talk about tomorrow night? He said, We're not the good old gospel. Oh, I thought, I'm not going to be here. That's a lot of hymn singing. I don't want that. But all day long, while I stood at the work balancing, I thought, Oh, let him speak again. I went. He started straight off. He that hath the son hath life. He that hath not the Son of God hath not life. Oh, I'd never heard it before. Although I lived in London. Never heard it in my life. Are. Then he challenged. He said, if anyone at the end of this gospel service has believed in Christ, will he stand up and say so? I had not thought about a thousand people here.

[00:33:55] I couldn't help myself. I had to stand up. I went home and I told my father what had happened again. It isn't quite quietly. Now I want you to know more. So I'll wait till that Exeter Hall meeting the next night. And to my joy and surprise, my father was at the back of that hall with a face like a sheet. He responded, and he stood up and said, I believe. So we were both going home together. And that series of gospel meetings was followed by a series of Bible expositions by Griffith Thomas and to this day. I can see him now. He got me. He said, we're looking at the gospel, according to John. And I didn't know anything about the gospel, according to John. But he said, you'll find this is the structure of it here. Arc of the word. He says. Revelation. Reception. Rejection. You know he can do his own his own received him not as many as received him. So nobody's going to sit for an examination, believe me, at the end of the term. But they didn't have enough to do it. At about seven years afterwards. Griffith. Thomas wrote to

me from the United States when he became president or principal of the Philadelphian Bible Training College and asked my opinion on certain problems, would you believe it? And I wrote to him and gave my opinion and he printed it.

[00:35:20] What did he wrote the second time? And I said, Oh, I must tell this man that I told him. And he rejoiced. Don't you see he is a leading that I knew nothing about. He does lead friends. He does shut doors. He does against all your inclinations. I didn't know what was being thrust upon me at that time. The Lord did. And so the time came after. I'd had a tremendous discipline. When I began to see the truth. And over 50 years ago I wrote the first lines of ever printed in this collection. X 28 to Dispensational Frontier. Why it should be given to me. Don't ask me, friends. I don't know. But isn't it a good thing to know that even in this modern day you can look back and see in a pathway that you've tread? There's been a guidance there that you knew nothing of at the time. You only went step at a time you didn't know why. But he doesn't need you. He doesn't leave you without leading. And so I felt it might be a word in season to some of you friends to know that it takes place now. Or we could go on after this very minute and indicate things in our lives that have shown how he's gone. Before her shut certain doors made it look like disappointment, only to lead you to something better. So I trust that this spotlight on the question of the Lord's leading may prove to be a word in season.

[00:36:51] If if to no one in the chapel yet to someone who in some other sphere, perhaps in some other land, will realize that it's perfectly true today and they will sit back and say, If the Lord is my shepherd. He leadeth me. I did not ask him to lead me. I will ask him to give me grace to follow. And as you study the word, he will speak through it. As the Lord commanded Moses, As the Lord commanded Moses. And you can be sure of it because it's the consequence of a finished work. As we read in Exodus and that pillar of cloud by day and night, nevertheless, that people, even though they murmured sometimes and complained, and once you belong to the Lord, you have no reason really to say, Oh, Lord, leave me. You have to say, Lord, I know you are leading me, but my heart sometimes turns in a wrong direction. All give me grace to just consistently follow. I leave it with you friends and pray that I may be being guided led, if you may like to put it this night, to take this line for someone that I don't know anything about it. It'll turn out to be a word in season that God has planned. And that will be. The best answer we can give to anybody who says why that subject this evening?

