

Call to Obedience #382
 PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA
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God led them not...

By Pastor Reimar A. C. Schultze

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...But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness. . .—Exodus 13: 17, 18

The beginning of Israel's travels from Egypt to the Promised Land is a perfect example of the lives of Christians: either **God led them not...** or **God led them...**

The principle of obeying God's leading is key to Christian living. Every person can be described by one of those phrases: *God led him* or *God did not lead him*. This concept governs whether you live happily or miserably upon this planet. Everyone's eternal destiny will also be determined by this measure. Notice, it is not a matter of whether a man has had a conversion experience, has been baptized, has been active in the church or such things. No... he either *has been led* by the Holy Spirit or *he has not*. If he has been led then he has done the will of God. If he has not, then he has done what he chose to do.

This criterion is summarized by John the apostle: *And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever* (John 2:17). Jesus said: *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me* (John 10:27). *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me* (Matt. 16:24). And Paul agreed: *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God* (Rom. 8:14). We are either led by the passions of the world or by the Holy Spirit, which is the will of God. Here are some modern examples of Christian life in which God does not lead.

He led them not:

Here is a Christian young lady. She loves to go to church and prayer meetings. She dreams of a godly man who will join her in her spiritual pursuits. The years go by and she impatiently lowers her standards to marry someone to whom sports mean more than church. She believes she can pray him in. But alas, her husband and her sons are at a ballpark on Sunday mornings. A little later her daughters say to her, "Why should we go to church since Daddy does not?" Too late that she realizes that **God led her not**.

A young couple really wants to do everything right. They carefully plan out

every step of their lives: their budget, their choice of college, their vocations, their home, the number of children they will have and their retirement plans; all without seeking God's will. Later, all their plans begin to crumble and they too find out that **God led them not.**

A young minister, much beloved by his church, is called to a larger church with more prestige and benefits. He prays. God says NO. He prays with a man of God. God says NO. The big church keeps offering more and more to get this young man and he finally yields. Soon, in his new pulpit he is in adultery with the church secretary. **God led him not.**

My friend, you can plan and organize all you want. But Jeremiah said: *I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps* (Jer.10:23).

God led them not could be written on what most people have in their homes and their garages; over most people's plans and intentions. Even many church people are much like Eve, the mother of mankind: she *saw* that the tree was pleasant, she *desired*, she *reached*,

she *took*. And she brought forth children in pain, she had strife with her husband, she lost fellowship with God and she died. **God led her not.**

God led them not is an epitaph that could be written on nearly everyone's gravestone, even on those of many sincere religious workers! If we do not let God lead, we will likely be crushed before we get to the Judgment Day; and, once there, we will stand defenseless in the presence of the One whose eyes are as a flame of fire and out of Whose mouth proceeds a sharp two-edged sword.

Look again at the story of Israel. The first thing we learn after Israel was released by Pharaoh, is that **God led them not on the way they wanted to go.** It was written for them on the very gateway to the Promised Land: **you will never reach the Promised Land any other way but God's way. You will never have what God wants you to have and you will never walk with God unless you go His way.**

God led them not by the way of the Philistines, *although that was near.* The *near* way is the direct way, the easy way, the common-sense way, the most traveled way. The highway to the Promised Land was lined with restaurants and motels. It was the way of the great caravans. Yes, Israel well knew that the land of milk and honey was only a 4 to 5 day journey. The fruit of the land seemed to dangle before them. But although this was the quickest way, the best way in the minds of men, God led them *not* that way.

God instead took them through a wilderness. There were no restaurants

there, no motels, no road signs, nothing to eat and drink to keep a nation alive. It was God's choice, *it was where God led*. By taking His people through the wilderness, God took them away from everything the world had to offer. There they were to learn that their only chance of survival was by utter dependence upon God. This is what it means to take up the cross and follow Jesus (Luke 9:23). Friends, until we get this, we have no Christianity. Christianity is the will, the way, the power and glory of God. It is nothing less than that.

This is why Jesus made *thy kingdom come, thy will be done* the first petitions for us to pray. If we are not in His will, we have no legitimate right to pray for our daily bread, for the forgiveness of our sins, for deliverance from evil, because by not doing God's will we have chosen evil and canceled out our right to ask Him for anything until we repent.

This is the principle we need to teach new converts as soon as they take their first steps in the Christian life: **that the new life can only be lived victoriously by God leading!** Only by God leading, will we be in His will. And God's will is everything. God's will is the kingdom of God! We were not designed to live outside of God's kingdom, as a fish was not designed to live outside of water.

To find God's *leading* there must be *waiting*. Since doing His will is what we are on earth for, waiting upon God to find His will and His leading for each day is the *most important activity* of our lives. The Church today is trying to have Christianity without this supernatural element, rushing about with great activity, but without God's leading, and without fruit. Also in waiting upon God, God will cleanse us of our carnal natures. He will show us how weak we are, and how much we need to depend upon Him. Israel did not know how weak they were, they did not know the Philistines were waiting to defeat them. In their weakness they would have run back to Egypt. But God did not want them in Egypt, He wanted them to learn to follow the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. God wanted them to learn His ordinances and laws so that they might be a holy people, prepared to cross the Jordan and then to defeat the Philistines.

All men can be divided into two categories: *those led* and *those not led* by God. We see this from the beginning of Israel's journey towards freedom. We see this division in the affirmation of Paul, the apostle when he said: *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God* (Rom. 8:14).

Being led by the Spirit is proof of our son-ship, not being led by Him is sin and death. My friend, what will be written on your gravestone? *God led* or *God led not?*

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