

## 136 "Guide me, O thou great Redeemer ...." - 1

As we pass along through life we take literally thousands of decisions - some great, some small, but all significant in their way, for they reveal over time who we really are, and what our lives are really about. How important it is for us to seek, know and follow the Lord's guidance in our decision-making, but that can sometimes be easier said than done. So over the next few Reflections we will take a fresh look at the whole question of guidance (and make them into a pdf booklet when complete for free downloading from the website).

The first thing to realise is that the decisions we take are always to be OUR decisions! No matter how much we have sought the Lord's guidance, when all is said and done, the decision has to be taken - by us. In taking it, we accept responsibility and we live with any consequences. Should I apply for that job? Should I ask that girl to marry me? Is the Lord telling me to take the Gospel to the Amazon jungle? Should I buy lottery tickets? Should we go on that world cruise? Decisions, decisions: OUR decisions, taken under the Lord.

We know how easy it can be, when faced with a major decision, to do nothing at all, while waiting and waiting for the Lord to tell us what to do - when what He wants us to do is already clear as day! We can think for example of a man considering an "iffy" investment that offers tremendous financial returns but in ways that are clearly not quite "of the Lord". He should take responsibility for his decision, and walk away from the deal, but he dithers and wriggles, waiting till he can convince himself that the Lord Himself is telling him to go ahead - a classic case of "passing the buck".

While some of us delay too long over decision-making, others of us go to the other extreme - the "bull-at-a-gate" approach! "I know best, it's obvious what should be done, mind out of my way - I'm deciding on Course X!". Here we have overridden the possibility of the Holy Spirit speaking quietly to us concerning a possibly complex situation. We have crashed ahead with a high risk of getting things wrong, and have not actually sought the Lord's guidance at all.

The second thing to emphasise over God's guidance is that any decision we take will always involve a dose of faith. Noah had to act in faith over building that ark. He had to trust that he had indeed heard the Lord correctly as he kept at his task, while everyone else, over the decades, was hooting with laughter at him. Abram "upped sticks" by faith - believing he had heard the Lord aright. Later on the prophets had to trust, as they frequently entered into danger, that they had heard the Lord's instructions correctly. Then we see John the Baptist deciding what the Lord God was calling him to do, and then stepping out in faith and doing it, believing throughout that he had truly heard the Lord. The Lord Himself decided

on twelve close companions, by faith. On numerous occasions Paul had to decide, by faith, where he should go, with whom, and what he should say on each occasion. Every one of these figures, chosen from the many more examples in Scripture, waited on the Lord God for His guidance, then decided for themselves, then held on in faith, trusting that they were truly on the Lord's path.

So in this Reflection we have started to consider God's guidance with just two key points: first, the decisions we take are **to be our decisions**, under the Lord, for which we are to take responsibility as spiritual adults; and second, the decisions we take will always involve us in **an act of faith**, for we do indeed, at this stage, still walk by faith and not by sight (II Corinthians 5.7).

Next time God willing, we will tackle some very practical guidelines concerning guidance. But for now, you might care to review your own decision-making under the Lord: too dithery? too bull-at-a-gate? too me-centred? When we get things wrong, as we do, we go back to God the Father in repentance and confession; we receive afresh His forgiveness through the Lord Jesus Christ; and then on we go - hopefully slightly older and wiser when it comes to God's guidance!

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