

It's God's Always-Practical Revelation to Us

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[0 : 0 0] So we're going to turn to our Bible reading. And this morning, Willie is going to be finishing his series on why we treasure the Bible. And this morning's readings are from Deuteronomy chapter 29.

I'm going to read verse 29, but also have a finger or a marker in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. And we'll be reading verses 1 to 12 from there.

But first, Deuteronomy 29, verse 29. The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of the law.

And over to 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. Paul says, Paul says, Amen. Amen. This is God's word.

[2 : 5 1] We'll return to this shortly. Well, maybe you turn to 1 Thessalonians 4 and the passage that we read there a little earlier.

In this last sermon on why we treasure the Bible, I want to say something this morning about things that many Christians struggle with. And that is the whole business of guidance, finding God's will, as they put it.

And I want to say that if we've taken seriously the things that we've learned so far, we should have seen that the Bible is God's guiding word. That it's his always practical revelation.

And so that we can, and indeed we must, trust and obey it throughout all of life in all things. And if we treasure the Bible as we ought to, then we can live our lives before God in peace and with certainty that we are walking in his will as his people and living under his gracious care.

And yet many Christians, I find, are anxious, they're worried, they're uncertain, sometimes to the point of inertia, even paralysis. Because they feel they're not clear about what God's will is for some aspect or other in their life.

[4 : 0 9] They want some special guidance, some special confirmation before they can act, before they can make a decision. And often too, I find that they're very afraid of making a wrong decision in case they get themselves out of God's will and somehow lose God's blessing in their life.

But friends, if we take the Bible seriously, then that should never be. That way of thinking isn't Christian at all.

It's not the way of biblical faith. In fact, it's very opposite. That's the very mark of false, of pagan, man-made religion. The thing that the Bible itself constantly condemns.

Read Jesus' words, for example, in Matthew chapter 6. And you'll see that that whole anxiety-driven approach to life is what Jesus says the Gentile pagans do. And what Christians are not to do.

Don't be like them, he says. Yet they often do. And pious words and vocal prayers can't hide the real truth that so often Christians are just living like irreligious pagans.

[5 : 17] That we are by nature rebellious pagans in our thinking. And the truth is, even as Christians, that we find ourselves constantly slipping back into those natural ways of our old self.

And that sinful desire to use God. Even to control God. So that we can actually get what we want from God. Now I can dress it up in very pious language about wanting to know God's will for our lives.

But in fact, it's just the very opposite of trusting obedience that God calls us to. The trust that acknowledges that God is God and we are not gods.

That we are just creatures under his sovereign care. To whom he reveals what he says we need to know. And not always what we demand to know. What we think we ought to know.

So the real truth about the problems we so often have to live with. Is that we're thinking about guidance in a completely wrong way.

[6 : 19] And the issue of guidance is not really an intellectual problem. It's first of all a spiritual problem and a moral problem. And we might be saying that we're very concerned to know what God's will for our life is.

We might even think that. But in fact, we're really often more concerned about our lives. And of fitting God's approval of what we want to do into our lives.

Thinking about the things that we're concerned about. Rather than really being taken up with the thing that God majors on. The things that God's already made plain to us in his word.

That he wants us to get on with in our lives. Regardless of the dilemmas that we might have about particular questions about this and that. That's why actually that verse that we read at the end of Deuteronomy 29.

Is one of the most important verses in the whole Bible about this area of guidance. The secret things belong to the Lord our God. But the things that are revealed.

[7 : 20] They belong to us and to our children forever. So that we might do the words of this law. There are secret things he's saying. Things that are above and beyond our creaturely knowledge and understanding.

Sometimes theologians speak about God's decretal will. The things that he's decreed. The infallible purposes that he has for this world and its future and so on.

How unsearchable are his judgments. How inscrutable his ways. Who has known the mind of the Lord, says Paul. And yet God has revealed many, many things to us.

Many amazing things. Read Ephesians chapter 1 or Ephesians chapter 3. They tell us how God has revealed the mysteries of his will set forth in Christ. Things that were not made known in former generations.

But have been now made known to us through the gospel. God has made us known enormously wonderful things to us. And yet. There's still so much that we simply do not know as Christians.

[8 : 23] We know, don't we, the ultimate future for this world. But none of us know what's going to happen next week. We don't know if our economy is going to recover.

We don't know if there will be a terrorist attack in our city. We don't know if we'll get cancer next year. We don't know any of the secret things that belong to the Lord our God.

But we are to rejoice that we know that a sovereign God is in control of these things. And we're to leave him to be in control of these things.

That's what it means to trust God. But God doesn't just leave us to trust in his hidden secret will. Now in his mercy and in his wisdom there are many things that he has revealed to his people.

His preceptive will. As theologians call it. He's made these things crystal clear. The things that he wants us to know. And the things that he wants us to do. So that we have clear guidance for all of our lives.

[9 : 29] We're not to speculate about these things. We're to do all the words of this law. Says God. That's what it means to obey God. Trust and obey.

That's what walking by faith really means. Trusting God about what he hasn't told us. And obeying God in the things he has told us. And that's the heart of everything really that we need to know about God's guidance.

We assume that what he has revealed very clearly is what is very important to God. About guidance for our life. And those should be the things that take up our attention and our energy.

And the things that God hasn't made clear to us. We assume are the things that he doesn't think are important for us to know and be taken up with. But the problem is as Christians very often we turn it exactly the opposite way around don't we.

We are taking up with seeking God's will about all sorts of things that are of primary importance to us. Lord I need guidance. Should I marry Jane or Jemima or maybe Juliet?

[10 : 37] Or should I be working in Glasgow or in Inverness? Or should it be Timbuktu? Or should I buy a house in Cumnick or in Clarkston or in Clydebank or wherever? Come on Lord I need guidance.

I need to know your will on these things for my life. And God says to us well. Read 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5. Because I have laid out there for you my will for your life in black and white.

Have you Lord? That's terrific. Oh yes so you have. Verse 3. For this is the will of God. Great. Here's my answer. So let's look and see what it is.

This is the will of God. Your sanctification. Your holiness. Your holiness. Verse 7. That you should live a pure life sexually.

Verse 9. That you should live in brotherly love. Verse 11. That you should live quietly and decently. Work hard. Not be a slacker. Not be dependent. And be a good witness therefore to others who are not Christians.

[11 : 39] Right down to the end of chapter 5. Verse 16. The will of God. You are to rejoice always. You are to pray without ceasing. You are to give thanks in all circumstances. For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

There you are my child. Says the Lord. I have revealed my will for your life. Clearly and perfectly. So on you go. Well that's not what I meant.

That doesn't help me. But my child. That's what's most important for your life. It really is. Follow this guidance. And you'll gladden my heart.

And your life will be fulfilled. And your life will be joyful. And you will be a blessing to other people. I know that Lord. But what about these other things?

There's things that are really important to me. I need to know these things. You need to know. Oh yes I do. Don't you trust me.

[12 : 35] To organize. The whole world. And your little life too. Without you being in on every little secret. Well no Lord. It's not that.

It's just. It's just that. It would be better. If your eyes were opened. So that you would be like God also. Knowing good and evil. Oh yes I suppose that's it really.

Oh dear. Haven't you read. Genesis chapter 3. Don't you see that's what you're doing. What you want.

Isn't actually to know my will. And to do it. What you want. Is to be in control. What you want to be is. To be me.

To be God. Isn't that right? See that's the essence isn't it. Of rebellious unbelief. That's Adam.

[13 : 33] That's the antithesis. Of godly trust. And obedience. Let's be honest. That is often the way. Isn't it. That we lead our lives. Just like.

Adam. Who wanted autonomy. Just like. The pagan religion. Jesus speaks of. Craving that. That tree of knowledge.

That God has told us. Is not for our consumption. While ignoring. The plain and the clear word. Of God. That he has given us. To obey. And that he says. He wants us.

To trust. And to obey. To live the way. That we are to live. Now in practice. We often. We often. Are doubting. Therefore. The sufficiency.

Of the word. That God has revealed to us. In the scriptures. And we're saying. Oh we need something more. We need some. Some guidance. But that's because. We don't really trust. God. In our hearts.

[14 : 30] We're rebelling. Against the authority. Of God. We don't want to fully obey God. At heart. Deep down. That we would all rather. Be pagan fortune tellers.

To know the future. To know God's secret will. So that we can know the answer. That will lead us. Into the life of blessing. The answer. That actually has nothing to do. With just being.

Obedient. Day after day. To God's. Revealed word. Rather than the Christian will. Which is that. Simply obeying. God's clearly. Revealed.

Will. That's my biggest problem. It's not the bits of the Bible. That are unclear. Or obscure to me. That cause me problems. It's the bit that are clear.

And absolutely plain. I just don't want to obey them. It's not that I like guidance. It's just that I like godliness. I think that's probably true.

[15 : 27] For most Christians. And yet we don't want to admit that. So we want to. Sound pious. And spiritual. We want to talk about. Seeking God's guidance. But really.

We're actually. Just acting like. Pagans. We're doing all the things. That the Bible. So clearly warns us against. The Bible is constantly.

Talking against people. Trying to discover the future. By astrology. Or by divinations. Or by omens. Or any of these sorts of things. And it's easy to put a pious cloak.

On exactly that attitude. To be saying. I'm looking for a special feeling. Or a special word. Or a special sign from God. About what the future. Is to be.

So we'll maybe. Very piously. Have a half night. Of prayer and fasting. Seeking that God. Would reveal his will. About some particular thing. I wonder if anybody's ever had.

[16 : 25] A half night of prayer and fasting. About applying God's will. In brotherly love. Or in living quietly. And working hard. To avoid welfare. Like 1 Thessalonians 4. Tells us it's God's will.

For our life. I wonder if anybody's had. A night of prayer about that. I've never heard of it. See according to Deuteronomy 29. Verse 29. And indeed the whole New Testament.

We are not. To be taken up. With trying to prize out of God. His secret will. But we are. To be devoted. To knowing.

And doing. His revealed will. The secret things. Belong to the Lord our God. But the things that are revealed. In the Bible.

Belong to us. And our children. So that we are to be devoted to them. And doing them. These scriptures. And the reason that we are so often.

[17 : 19] More interested in pursuing the former. While ignoring the latter. Is simply because. Well our hearts are sinful. Aren't they? It's because we are so often. Just taken up with ourselves.

We are taken up with earthly things. We are not taken up. With heavenly things. With the things that God wants us. To be taken up with. And Jesus says that. Doesn't he in Matthew chapter 6.

Our minds are full of worries. And anxieties. About what we will eat. What we will drink. Where we will live. Where we will work. What we will wear. And on and on and on. And on of these things. And these are the things.

He says that fill your prayers. Just like the pagans. Instead of. Trusting the heavenly father. Who knows our needs. Who knows that we need all these things.

Trusting him. And focusing our prayers. Instead. On his kingdom. And his righteousness. Seek these first. Says Jesus. And all the rest.

[18 : 16] Of course will be added to you. As you need it. So how do we do that then. In practice. How do we walk in the way of trust. And obedience. What does it mean.

To do all the words. Of this law. To actively live. Day by day. By the guiding word of revelation. That God has given us. Rather than. By seeking things that God.

Doesn't mean us to have. Well let me try and summarize it. Briefly under three headings. You could say very simply. That we do the words. Of God's revealed will.

As his commands. Are constantly shaping. Our consciences. In all circumstances. Now there's three C's. Let me express it.

Another way. Is what I call the three R's. The absolute basics. Of God's guidance. As we think about it. In practical terms. God leads us. And guides us. In all matters of life.

[19 : 10] By his revelation. To us. By his reformation. Within us. And by his regulation. All around us. God's preceptive.

Revelation to us. His precepts. His commands. His commands. In all the words. Of scripture. And in the personal. Reformation. That his spirit.

Works in us. Through application. Of his words. To our lives. And especially. To our consciences. So that. We will walk. In obedient trust.

Knowing. God's providential. Regulation. Surrounds us. In all our circumstances. Which we know. Are all. In his. Loving hands. So let's think about.

These things. First. God's preceptive. Revelation. To us. In scripture. The scriptures. Reveal. God's commands. To us. The revelation.

[20 : 06] Of God's spirit. Comes to us. Through his word. That the spirit. Breathes out. In all scripture. And the same spirit. Opens our minds. And hearts. So that we'll hear.

And understand. The external. Clarity. Of God's word. With a growing. Internal clarity. In our own hearts. That's what we spent. Most of this. Series.

Thinking about. These various aspects. Of God's preceptive. Revelation. In scripture. So let us be very brief. On this. Let us remember. One or two key things. Second Peter. Chapter one.

Has been a key study for us. And. Peter addresses. The issue of the source. And. The sufficiency. Of God's will. For his church. In the post-apostolic era.

Who are we going to turn to. When. There are no longer. Any living apostles. In the world. Well. Peter's answer is. Well. Not. To priests. Or bishops. Or popes.

[21 : 01] Or pastors. But to the words. Of the scriptures. That God has given us. In both the Old Testament. And the New Testament. He sums that up. So neatly. In second Peter three.

Verse two. The words. He says. Of the holy prophets. And the commandment. Of the Lord and Savior. Through your. Apostles. That is the words.

Of God. Given authority. To obey. And God. Given sufficiency. To trust. In the scriptures. In the Bibles. That God has given us. We have God's abiding.

Covenant word. To his people. A clear. A commanding. A coherent word. A comprehensive. And complete word. A powerful word. A trustworthy word. All these. These characteristics.

We've been thinking about. Another key text. Is second Timothy three. Verses 15 and 16. Where Paul's saying. The same thing. All scripture. He says. Is God breathed. And powerful.

[21 : 55] To lead. To salvation. In Jesus Christ. And to equip. The saints. For every good work. So that our whole way. Of thinking. Is revolutionized.

So that it's. Transformed. As Paul puts it. In Romans 12. By the renewing. Of our minds. Through the scriptures. So that we can test. And prove. In our experience.

The good. And well pleasing. And perfect. Will of God. As Paul puts it. That is. God's revelation. To us. Changes. Our thinking.

So that our thinking. Is less and less. Conformed. To this world. And more and more. In line. With the good. And well pleasing. And perfect. Will. Of God.

See. God's not interested. In a never ending. Process. Of guiding us. Just to make a series. Of. Of individual. Right decisions. One after another.

[22 : 50] After another. God wants to transform us. So that we're making. Godly decisions. All the time. So that becomes. More and more natural. To us. If that wasn't so. We'd never grow.

Would we? We live now. In the world of set nav. For getting. For our navigation. Don't we? You just punch in the address. And you listen to their voice. And you take the turns.

At every turn. And bang. It takes you to the right place. But the big problem. With that is. You need that voice. Every time. And if your set nav. Breaks down.

You get lost. If you don't have a set nav. If you just have. An old fashioned map. If you have to learn. By trying again. By getting lost. A few times. And by finding your way.

You learn. How to get there. Even if your technology. Breaks down. But many Christians. You see. They want to live by that kind of. Sat nav guidance. Google voice.

[23 : 44] Guidance. A special voice. Telling you. Every turn to take. Every single time. But that means. There's no growth. Doesn't it? That means. There's no development.

There's no godly transformation. You'll never learn. How to drive that way. All by yourself. I always go back to William Still's comment.

God does not want a heaven populated with infants. Now you see. The Bible is God's preceptive revelation.

It's our map. Yes. It does speak very specifically to us. In some situations. It'll give us a word of rebuke. A word of challenge. Just like a map. It'll show you where you've taken the wrong road.

Or got lost. But the more. You know the map. The more you use it. The more you apply it. To your navigation. The more you will know the right way. And when a crisis comes.

[24 : 41] You'll know how to go the right way. You don't have to wait for a voice to tell you. What do you really want in a crisis. When you're lost. Do you want somebody who says. I've no idea.

But I've got Google. Or do you want somebody who says. I know the way. I know it really well. Come with me. I'll take you. That's why we need our Bibles.

Not to dip into it. For directions in a crisis every time. But to teach us the way of the Lord. So that we know it. So that instinctively.

More and more. We will live it. Naturally. In a transformed life. Now that won't come. Will it? By just superficial or chance inquiry.

That's why Paul says to Timothy. Labor. To show yourselves. One who rightly handles. The word of truth. That's the way. To the transformed thinking.

[25 : 37] Of renewed minds. That know. The will of God. And that does the will of God. But notice. That is not just. An intellectual knowledge.

In fact. Although it does involve our mind. That is not primarily. The heart of this. Is not primarily. An intellectual exercise.

It is primarily. A spiritual one. God's word. Isn't just information for us. God's word. Is personal reformation. For. Our.

Personal. Spiritual. Transformation. That brings us to this second thing. And it's a vital thing. About how God guides us. His personal reformation.

In us. By his spirit. God's spirit. Reforms. Our conscience. Within us. As he applies.

[26 : 31] God's word. To our hearts. As God leads us. And guides us. Above all. By reshaping. And refocusing. Our heart. Now you need to understand.

That in the heart. In the Bible. The heart. Is not. Just the seat. Of our emotions. As we tend to think. Of the word heart. In the Bible. The heart. The heart. Is the very center.

Of our being. It's the. It's the seat. Of our whole affections. Our desires. Our loves. Our volition. Our conscience. And our will. It's the control center.

Of our whole being. It's the inner man. That Paul talks about. Where Christ. Dwells. By his spirit. God's spirit. God transforms us.

From the heart. Outwards. As he applies. His word. To our lives. And he wants. Our hearts. He wants our hearts. To yield to him. In loving obedience.

[27 : 28] More and more. And more. And that happens. As God's word. Shapes us. As God's word. Possesses us. More and more. That's why. Proverbs 3. Verse 5.

That's actually. So often misquoted. As regards. The Christian guidance. That's what it really means. Trust in the Lord. With all your heart. And lean not. To your own.

Understanding. He's not saying there. As some people seem to think. Don't think about it. Don't think about it. Just leave it to God. As though. As though God will suddenly. Zap an answer to you. What he's saying is.

Think about it. God's way. Meditate on God's words. Let God's words. Permeate your heart. Not just your own way. Of thinking. And that's the key.

To aligning yourself. With God's will. It's living in that. Love relationship. With the Lord Jesus Christ. So that we. We can be like the psalmist. So that we can say.

[28 : 22] I desire to do your will. Oh Lord. Your law. Is within my heart. They can think about that. In a number of ways. Because.

The heart is. The whole of the. The control center. Of our lives. So it involves. Yes. Developing godly minds. Not just gaining. Biblical knowledge.

Although that's obviously. Vital. But also. Learning godly wisdom. Biblical thinking. That's not primarily. An intellectual thing.

It's a spiritual quality. As his spirit. Shapes the attitudes. Of our hearts. It's a right. Fear of the Lord. That's the very beginning.

Of wisdom. In life. Says Proverbs. Not reading the biologist. To satisfy. Our intellectual. Curiosity. But reading the Bible.

[29 : 15] Out of a hunger. A thirst. For God himself. And his ways. So it involves. Godly minds. But it involves. Also developing. A godly conscience. Therefore. We've got a responsibility.

To think things through. To think through. The implications. Of the gospel. For all of our daily lives. To think about. What's right. Because it's in line.

With the gospel. And what's wrong. Because it's not in line. With the gospel. Now we'll all come. To mature. Thinking. And wisdom. At different rates.

And Paul tells us. We're not to force. Issues of conscience. On others. Who don't yet. See things so clearly. That's what he's saying. In Romans chapter 14. Each must be convinced.

In his own mind. But our consciences. Through our minds. Will be honed. By God's word. And as that happens.

[30 : 10] We will be increasingly. Guided. In God's ways. Thirdly then. There's also. God's reformation. Within us. And it means. Developing a godly.

Prayer life. And that doesn't mean. Oh. Well. Pray about it. Every time you have to. Make a decision. Oh. I'll pray about it. As though God was. Somehow going to. Suddenly zap.

An answer. Into your mind. No. No. No. That's not prayer. That's just magic. That's paganism. That's turning God. Into the genie. Of Aladdin's lamp. Nowhere.

In the whole. New Testament. Do you ever. Find. That kind of. Approach to prayer. Except actually. Where Jesus. Condemns it. In Matthew chapter 6. And calls it. Babbling of the pagans. Now what the New Testament.

Teaches us. The whole Bible. Teaches us. That we're to become. People of prayer. That is. We're to seek. To understand. God's word. In a spirit.

[31 : 04] Of prayer. Real prayer. For guidance. Would lead us. In prayers. Like the psalmist. A daily. I owe you.

Incline my heart. To your testimonies. And not. To selfish gains. Psalm 119. Verse 36. Open my eyes. To behold. The wondrous things.

In your law. Psalm 119. Verse 18. Unite my heart. To fear your name. Psalm 86. Verse 11.

See how very different. That is. From the sort of. Frantic prayers. For answers. In terms of. Special signs. Or words. Or spiritual leading. Oh I'll pray about this. Lord. Lord. I'm waiting for the answer. It's becoming.

A person of prayer. And above all. The personal reformation. That God's word. Must work in us. Means developing. Godly. Obedience. So that we present.

[32 : 02] Our bodies. As a living sacrifice. That is obedience. In bodily reality. Not just obedience. In theory. I find it much easier. To obey God. In theory.

Than in practice. Don't you? So often. It's not knowing. God's will. At all. That's the problem. It's doing. What we know. Perfectly well.

Is God's will. And not doing. What we know. Perfectly well. Is not God's will. So you see. In all of these ways. God's preceptive. Revelation. To us. In scripture.

Must be working. Personal reformation. In us. As the Holy Spirit. Shapes our minds. And our hearts. That's got to be happening. If we're ever going to be.

People who are truly. Guided by God. In our lives. The revelation. Of God's commands. Must work. The reformation. In our conscience. And we can't expect.

[32 : 57] God to guide us. Can we? If we're not becoming. Guidable people. It's the heart. That is the chief organ. Of moral.

And ethical. Knowledge of God. It's a right heart. Alone. That's capable of knowing. How to think rightly. How to do rightly. How to decide rightly. In accordance with.

The revealed will of God. In any particular situation. And if your heart. Isn't right with the Lord. And actually. With the Lord's people.

As well. God. And you can't expect. Your thinking. Your decision making. To be anything. Other than off track. With the Lord. That's just basic. Biblical truth.

But if you delight. Yourself in the Lord. Says the psalmist. He will give you. The desires. Of your heart. And he must do. Because your desires. Will have become. God's desires. And those are the desires.

[33 : 52] That he grants. Now finally. We've also got to recognize. That. We're also led. By God's providential. Regulation.

Around us. By his sovereignty. God's sovereignty. Regulates. All of our circumstances. Around about us. And we can trust God. We can trust.

That his. Invisible. But intimate. Providential care. Is quietly shaping. Everything around our lives. All the time. Our times. Are in his hands.

We say. And God does know. God does care. He knows and cares. What will happen tomorrow. And next week. And next month. And that means. That we can walk forward.

And trust. Content to let God. Be God. And not seeking to be. The all-knowing God. Ourselves. We walk by faith. Not by sight.

[34 : 48] We're content to know. That God does know. Our needs. He does know our way. And to trust. That if we do seek first. His righteousness. Then he will.

Add all the things. To our lives. That we truly need. We can trust. God's providential regulation. Around us. And that means.

That we can press on. Without being crippled. By uncertainty. Without being desperate. To have some sort of. Special confirmation. Some green light. Before we can ever make. Any decision. Or do anything.

Many Christians. Are paralyzed. At times. Because they don't have. A nearly high enough. View. Of God's. Providential ordering.

Of their lives. They don't realize. Just how powerful. God is. I think I've told you before. The story. Dick Lucas. Tells of. A Christian.

[35 : 41] A keen Christian. But who was. Utterly crippled. Because they were. Absolutely sure. They wanted to go. And serve. And serve. The Lord abroad. But they just. Could not work out. Which country. It was that God.

Wanted him to go to. And he lived in. Paroxysms. Of indecision. Because he could never decide. And then one day. Went off down to the local shop. To get his local paper. And he'd be praying on the way. Lord please lead me.

Please lead me. Where I have to go. Went into the shop. To buy his paper. And right at the front door. They went in. It was just before Christmas. The shopkeeper. Had built up. A great big display. Of chocolates. And they were all boxes. Of chocolate Brazil nuts.

And he immediately said. Oh praise the Lord. He ran back. To tell his pastor. And said. God has told me where to go. It's Brazil. I've got to serve. And he told him the story. To which his pastor.

Just wryly said. Wasn't it a very good thing. It wasn't a big display. At Mars bars. You see. That's not how God wants us.

[36 : 37] To look for guidance. And we can trust. God's providential care. All around us. God is weaving. And shaping. Our circumstances.

And so we can think. Much much more clearly. Than in that kind of a way. And in his providential care. God has given us. At least three things.

To help us. In very practical ways. In guidance. And in everyday. Decision making. Three C's. That we really ought to pay attention to. Every time we're trying to make.

At wise decisions. The first is the church. We're not alone. And we're not to be loners. In applying the Bible. To our lives. God's word comes to us.

As his church. Corporately. And it's in congregation. With other believers. That we will grow. And mature. And learn how to think. And learn how to pray. And learn how to make.

[37 : 33] Wise decisions. So for example. If you want to learn. How to pray. And how to grow in prayer. Well that's going to happen. As you join in.

With other Christians. In the church. In prayer. And especially. As you join in. With all the Christians. Of the church. In church prayer gatherings. That's part of God's. Providential ordering of things.

To help you. And to guide you. If you ignore. That kind of thing. Well you're depriving yourself. Aren't you? Of God's guidance. You need the church.

To teach you how to pray. And to help you pray. Same thing. And you're thinking about. Spheres of service. It's the church. That recognizes God's call. God's gifting on somebody's lives.

Not just the individual. Themselves. Never. Never. Of course. We might have a strong. Inner desire. Of ourselves. Maybe to be a. A pastor. Or to serve in this.

[38 : 27] Sphere of life. Or another. Whatever it might be. But it's part of God's. Providential regulation. Around us. That the church. Has a primary responsibility.

To recognize these things. To act on these things. And that's a source of wisdom. That you ignore at your peril. It's foolhardy to do that. Of course.

We never elevate. That kind of wisdom. Above the clear teaching. Of scripture. Church is always. To be under God's word. Church is not to be. Reforming God's word. According to its whims. It's the other way around.

That's why. A church. That is a wise church. Will be a church. Under biblical authority. Nevertheless. The church. And its corporate guidance. Is part of God's. Providential regulation.

Around our lives. To help guide us. In all things. As are. Of course. Secondly. Our circumstances. Sometimes God does. Open.

[39 : 22] A door of opportunity. At other times. He firmly closes one. That can sometimes. Be our guidance. In a very specific situation. Paul had times. Didn't he? When he wanted to go. Some place. Like Rome.

But was prevented. For a host of reasons. God shut the door. And sometimes. Your heart's desire. May be prevented. By circumstances.

And that's God's. Firm guidance. And. We mustn't become bitter. When that's the case. We must trust. God's providential. Regulation. Around us.

He is not mistaken. In what he allows. And what he prevents. And often. Then another door opens up. And we. We take it. And so on.

Now again. We're never to put. Our circumstances. Above. The clear. Word of scripture. If I find myself. Alone. In a. In a.

[40 : 17] Lonely place. With a beautiful woman. Late at night. Who's not my wife. I'd be a fool. Wouldn't I. To conclude. Oh God's providential. Regulation. Has put us here. Must be that he wants us. To have an affair.

Of course not. I have God's. Clearly revealed word. Do not commit adultery. But nevertheless. In many places. We can see.

Can't we. Our circumstances. Our part. Of God's. Providential hand. Upon our lives. And that last point. Actually leads us. Very neatly. To the third thing. Which is common sense.

We're only Christian. Common sense. We're more common. I often say. To a new Christian. Perhaps if they're. Troubled by guidance. And trying to work things like. I say. Well. How did you decide things.

Before you became a Christian. And I'll say. Well. I used to think it through. And talk it through. With others. And make the best decision. That I could. And I said. Well. God doesn't want you.

[41 : 11] To jettison your intelligence. And all your common sense. And go in for some sort of. Bizarre voodoo guidance. Now that you've become a Christian. Quite the opposite. He wants it. He wants to sanctify. He wants to sanctify.

Your mind. And your heart. And your common sense. He wants biblical wisdom. To make your decisions. Even better. Than they ever were before. Now some decisions.

Are very clear. Aren't they? We have a clear. Biblical word. It's a matter of obedience. Do not steal. But many other things. Are matters of.

Wisdom. And sober judgment. We could call it. Couldn't we? Sanctified. Common sense. If you're assessing. Your own particular gifts. And abilities.

For Christian service. Well. You mustn't be divorced. From reality. You've got to have. Common sense. Haven't you? It's no good. It's no good. It's no good. It's no good. Asking to go and teach. Children in a Sunday school.

[42 : 06] If you know fine well. You cannot have. Any control over children. Not a very sensible thing. Is it? Be a very strange thing. If you thought that God.

Was calling you. To be the organist. In the church. If you've never played. The organ in your life. And if you can't. Even play the piano. Yes. I once had somebody. Coming in. Telling me. Here. Where God has called me.

To be the organist. In your church. And I asked him. And he said. He'd never played the organ. I assumed. Therefore. He was a good pianist. And he'd be wanting to learn the organ. He said. I've never played the piano either. Common sense friends.

Is part of God's guidance. As you think about your futures. You think about your career. What you want to do. Think about. Things that give you energy.

Think about things that. Turn you on. Things that excite you. Not things that drain you. Things that kill you. If there's an area of opportunity. That you're thinking about.

[43 : 02] Think about what's possible. There's no point in planning a strategy for mission. Is there. Either for your own life. Or for the church. That humanly speaking. Is clearly and utterly impossible.

You don't find the apostles doing that. Paul laid plans. Paul went on paths. That he thought looked possible. Look wise. Sometimes God shut the door.

And moved them elsewhere. But that's how he went about it. I want to get to the cities. Because from there. The gospel will spread out. He didn't start his mission in Timbuktu. Now of course God may surprise.

And God may make us change course. But we're not to be paralyzed. That's the point. Waiting and waiting and waiting. For a special door to open. We're to plan. Sensibly. Wisely. With common sense.

We're to go and get on with it. And see. What God allows to transpire. Well there's a lot more we can say.

[43 : 58] Let me finish just with two final things. The first is a comfort. God is good. You don't need to fear. You can trust God. God doesn't confuse you.

He doesn't send bolts from the blue. To unsettle you. And confuse you. That's the hallmark of the devil. Not the Lord. Now he may challenge you. In matters of obedience.

He may say clearly. That's wrong. But God will be clear. And God will show you. The way of repentance. When he puts a finger on something wrong. In your life. And God is not vindictive.

Some Christians seem to worry terribly. What if God makes me marry. Somebody I don't find attractive. And I can't stand. He's not going to do that. God won't call you. Into a life.

Of service. Doing something. That you can't ever possibly do properly. He's not vindictive. And nor can a wrong decision. That you feel you've made.

[44 : 55] Curse you with God. And put you into God's second best forever. Some people are terribly worried about that. Believe me. If you're seeking to love God.

And follow him. And are obedient to his word. That is impossible. So launch out with God. You're free. You're liberated. You can trust him.

He's good. He's not vindictive. But finally there is a warning. Because. There is a sense. In which. Crucial decisions.

Can. Change the course of your life. For good or for ill. Will. But friends. These crucial matters. Are not matters of guidance.

But matters of clear obedience. And it's always the hardest thing. Isn't it? It's not discovering God's will. It's doing God's will. And we can't ever.

[45 : 52] When we know God's clear will. We can't presume upon him. And go against. His revealed word. And just say. Oh it'll be alright. I'll repent later on.

No. Trust and obey. Is always. The message. That is always God's will. For our lives. God's precept of revelation.

Is playing to us. So live it. Says the Lord. And it's at work in us. To personally reform us. Making his desires. Our desires.

So let it. Says the Lord to us. And his providential regulation. His sovereign care. Is all around us. So we can.

Rejoice. Always. And pray without ceasing. And give thanks in all circumstances. Knowing. That this is. The will of God. For us.

[46 : 49] In Christ Jesus. God's. Always. Practical revelation. Is in our hands. In these books. Day after day.

It's his guiding word. And we're to trust it. And obey it. All the days. Of our lives. That's the way of blessing. That's the way of fruitfulness.

That's the way. Of walking. Surely and certainly. In his will. Let's pray. Our heavenly father. We thank you.

That you have given us. In your word. A mine. Of riches. To treasure. All the days. Of our lives. We pray. Lord. You would help us. To treasure your word.

For what it truly is. Not a. Closed book. Not a mysterious book. Not a magic book. To be opened. And scoured.

[47 : 43] At times of crisis. Or emergency. Or decision making. As if it was some kind of tarot card. Or voodoo. But to see it. Lord. As. What you have given it.

To be. The word of life. That we should live. Day by day. Not only by bread. Not only by the things. That you give us. In your providential care.

But by every word. That comes from your mouth. To help us. Lord. To be a people. With an appetite. For that word. Together. To treasure it.

To love it. To read. Mark. Learn. Inwardly digest it. That in our own personal lives. And in our life together. As a fellowship.

You would lead us. Every day. By the light. Of your. Glorious. Truth. And so we ask. For Jesus sake. Amen.