

Nine Bible Verses That God Used to Shape My Life

Proverbs 16:1-9

It was August of 1972 and I had experienced only one month of the 21st year of my life. I was alone in my dorm room contemplating everything I had recently done. I said good-bye to my family. Until then, I was still living at home. I said good-bye to my friends. My first semester in this new college I had transferred to was paid for by the love offerings I had received from non-stop revival and youth meetings I was preaching. All of the invitations for future meetings had now ceased because of my decision to become an independent Baptist. I had no job. I had not yet met Barbara. That timely meeting came to pass within thirty days of the meditation over these nine verses in that dorm room on that monumental day. I heard an older preacher say, "Life's greatest decisions must be made before you're old enough and wise enough to make them." That understanding became lodged within the memory banks of my mind. I believe that still to be true.

Let me take you through these nine verses, keeping in mind what Jesus said in John 17:17: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." Therefore with "The Word of Truth" in my hand and a deep seated determination to follow my Lord and Savior, these truths became a clarion call for me to do exactly what Oswald Chambers wrote in his Christian classic, "Keep to the point...Shut out your worries and stand before God with one thing only in your heart: my utmost for His highest. Determine to be absolutely and entirely for Him and Him alone."

I. THE INDISPUTABLE GIFT OF VOLITION

Proverbs 16:1: "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD." The Hebrew word that is translated "preparations," refers to mental disposition.

The gift of volition is an attestation to the sovereignty of our Lord. God's will shall be done. Isaiah 46:9, 10: "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."

God's will shall be done, but our part in His will, according to the Word of God, includes our decisions. Deuteronomy 30:19: "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live." Our decisions are very important. Genesis 1:27: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." We agree that we are made "Imago Dei," i.e., "in the image of God." Our Lord does not create us as robots. Being in the image of God means we are granted "choice" from God.

II. THE IRREPRESSIBLE TRUTH OF TOTAL DEPRAVITY.

Proverbs 16:2: "All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits." Compare with Proverbs 16:4.

This truth is also voiced in Proverbs 16:25: "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Even after we are saved there is this temptation to say that our wrongdoing was not sinful or in a pious way declare that our sins were not as bad as some. Paul struggled with it this. Romans 7:19, 20: "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." It is only by our proximity with our Lord that we will remain honest before God and man. Jeremiah 17:9: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" The answer to that question is: only God!

III. THE INCALCUABLE BLESSING OF WORK

Proverbs 16:3: "Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established."

I Corinthians 15:58 tells us, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." Too often wait for God to make a special revelation of His plan for our lives with no activity for the Lord. Proverbs 18:9 warns, "He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster." Amos 6:1a says, "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion...." As we do the known will of God for our life in the present moment, the Lord will guide and establish our thoughts in the process.

IV. THE PERPETUAL DETESTATION OF PRIDE.

Proverbs 16:5: "Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished."

I Corinthians 15:10: "But by the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." Romans 3:27: "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith." Proverbs 16:18: "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." The surest way to living a low life is to cave into your pride. Proverbs 29:23: "A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit."

V. THE IRREFUTABLE WEAVE OF LOVE AND JUSTICE.

Proverbs 16:6: "By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil."

We have often said, "God hates the sin, but loves the sinner." This is most definitely a true statement. And here is the only reason that can be accomplished. I Peter 3:18: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." In mercy, "God so loved the world..." (John 3:16a). In truth, God judged my sin and your sin through His only begotten Son on the cross. On one hand, men depart from sin because there are fearful of the consequences. On the other hand, men depart from evil because they are in awe of God in a fearful reverence.

VI. INDESCRIBABLE PEACE FOR THOSE WHO PLEASE GOD.

Proverbs 16:7: "When a man's ways please the LORD, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."

Philippians 4:7: "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." John 14:27: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." When we fight our enemies, the outcome often becomes worse. When we become preoccupied with Christ, we leave the vengeance in God's hands and He blesses us with the gift of His peace.

VII. THE INEXHAUSTIBLE RICHES OF CHRIST.

Proverbs 16:8: "Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right."

The Lord promises in Matthew 6:33, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Psalm 37:16: "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked." The Lord made this warning in Matthew 13:22: "He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful." The weeds and thorns of this world have the power to choke out the great influence of God's word. Jesus said in Luke 16:11: "If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?"

VIII. THE UNCHANGEABLE PROMISE OF PROVIDENCE.

Proverbs 16:9: "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps."

I have often said that this verse has not only been a light in darkness to me, but it has also saved my sanity. This verse is saying, although we plan and even scheme to do the right things, go in the right direction and overall be the best Christian in every circumstance of life, there are times that we just blow it! But this verse tells us that even in our mistakes, God guides us still. Look up Jeremiah 9:23, 24. As we said earlier in this message, God gives us volition, i.e., the power of choice. How much better to pray for God's will over our own will. Allow me to tweak an old saying: "There is no limit to how far a person may go in God's will and Divine plans, if he or she surrenders his or her will to God and leaves the timing and results in His hands."

The Weaver by Grant Colfax Tullar:

My life is but a weaving,
between my Lord and me,
I cannot choose the colors,
He worketh steadily.

Ofttimes He weaveth sorrow,
and I in foolish pride,
Forget He sees the upper,
And I, the underside.

Not till the loom is silent

And the shuttles cease to fly,
Shall God unroll the canvas
And explain the reason why.

The dark threads are as needful
In the Weaver's skillful hand,
As the threads of gold and silver,
In the pattern He has planned."

-Pastor Pope-