

The Pathway to Glory

Proverbs 3:5-6

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Note: The text below was prepared for oral delivery rather than for publication in print. As such, be aware that sentence fragments are intentionally used and that this document has not been edited to correct the errors in grammar, sentence structure, etc.

I. Introduction: In Proverbs 3:5-6 we read, “***Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. ⁶In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.***” These 2 verses speak to us concerning the life and walk of God-given faith. The Bible teaches us that all those blessed with eternal salvation in Christ, those bound for heaven’s glory, are given the blood-bought gift of faith at some point in their respective lifetimes. And with this new revelation of faith, in belief of God’s Gospel of grace by the power of the Holy Spirit, they place their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for all of their salvation. And so having been born of the Spirit, they embark down a new path – a “Pathway to Glory” as I’ve so titled today’s message. And I’d like for us to consider this subject from 2 perspectives:

A. First, we know that there is a “path” or a “way” of salvation. That is what the Gospel of God’s grace sets forth – the one way by which sinners are eternally saved, as is set forth in the Bible. So God’s way of salvation could certainly be referred to as the one pathway to heaven’s glory. And by initial God-given faith, in belief of God’s Gospel (His one way of salvation), regenerated, born-again believers first trust in the LORD. And thereby they embark on a new path – a pathway to glory.

B. But this is just the beginning of their journey. It’s the beginning of a life everlasting. They’ve been given eternal life. Think on this: True believers have in them the immortal seed of eternal life – a life which cannot perish. So by God-given faith in the new birth, they begin a new journey – a new life of faith begins – an everlasting life, one that shall never end. And as they continue this leg of their journey here on earth, of these justified sinners the scripture declares that they, “...***the just*** <or justified – those declared righteous before God in Christ> ***shall live by faith***” (Rom. 1:17b). An old preacher described that life this way saying, “The life of faith is glory begun.” I like that. And though our faith is often weak and far from what it should be, by faith, the born again believer actually can experience in this life a taste of the unspeakable joy that awaits him or her in heaven’s glory.

And so having begun by faith, believers walk in this world – they continue by faith. And as they live out their lives, they each do so with very unique life experiences. My path through this world is not the same as yours. In that sense, our paths to glory are all different. Those who come to Christ for all their salvation, having begun by embracing the one pathway to heaven, all come with like-minded, God-given faith whereby they all see their certain title to heaven’s glory in Jesus Christ and Him alone. But then they proceed to live out the remainder of their respective lives here on earth in a variety of ways.

And these, our various life experiences, take many twists and turns before we depart this world. True believers travel different paths in that sense, while their remains the sense in which it can be said that they all are proceeding on the one pathway to glory – that is, they all, without exception, look solely to Christ for all their salvation. As Christ Himself said in John 14:6, “...*I am the way, <not “a” way but “the” singular way> the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*”

C. So we will be considering this morning what it means to trust in the Lord in acknowledgment of Him in:

1. ...His one way of salvation by initial God-given faith and
2. ...in the various circumstances (or pathways) that believers encounter as their walk of faith continues here on earth.

II. Acknowledging Him in Belief of the Gospel: So look again at Proverbs 3:5-6 where we read, “*Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. ⁶In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*”

A. Now if we are to claim this promise of scripture it’s essential that we accurately identify “the LORD” in whom we are to trust. Like some of you, I memorized these 2 verses years ago and I tried to claim this promise for myself at a time in my life when I had yet to even hear God’s Gospel. I had heard what others called and taught to be the gospel – but I had not heard the true Gospel of God’s grace whereby sinners come to know the Lord as He uniquely revealed in the Person and work of Christ – revealed to everyone He saves. Now I took comfort in this promise found here in Proverbs, thinking I was being directed by the Lord. But by God’s grace, I now know that it was as if I was reading someone else’s mail, because it was not THE Lord that I was trusting in. But in my mind I thought my trust was in the Lord as I leaned upon my own natural understanding – to a way of salvation that seemed right to me. My point is that obviously you cannot trust in something or in someone you do not know. So we’re going to spend much of our time this morning examining how God’s Word identifies the LORD in whom we are commanded to trust.

B. The word translated ‘LORD’ here is the Hebrew word Yahweh, which means Jehovah God. This refers to the self-existent, eternal, triune, covenant God as He is set forth in the Bible – one God subsisting in 3 Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Now we are instructed here to trust in Him. And this trusting is the essence of faith. All who are truly saved, come by God-given faith to first trust in the LORD.

C. Now years before I heard the true Gospel, I believed and sincerely felt that I was by faith trusting in the Lord. But faith is not a feeling. Hebrews 11:1a declares that “...*faith is the substance of things hoped for,...*” True faith believes God. And God speaks to us through His Word. So by faith we believe what God reveals in the Bible concerning Himself. “Thus saith the Lord” is enough for faith.

Faith presupposes an object. To have faith is to believe something. And of the faith that trusts in the Lord we read in Romans 10:17: “...*faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*”

III. The Everlasting Covenant of Grace: And so by the Word of God, through the preached Gospel, in faith believing sinners hear of (and are convinced of) the guilt of their sin that would bar them from heaven’s glory. But they also have revealed to them a pathway to glory – a way of salvation contrived from everlasting by the LORD (Father, Son, & Spirit) in what the scripture refers to as an everlasting covenant. It’s an everlasting covenant of grace.

A. God the Father: In God’s Word, we learn by faith that in order that all the perfections of the LORD might be beheld in their infinite and eternal glory, God the Father covenanted and determined to honor and dignify His law and justice, His faithfulness, and His holiness by insisting that the objects of His eternal love, chosen by Him from among fallen, sinful humanity, would appear at His bar of justice in the perfect righteousness of the law. But these chosen sinners would have no righteousness of their own for as we read in Romans 3, “...*There is none righteous, no not one;*” and that “...*all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*” How can such unrighteous, ungodly sinners then be saved – justified, found not guilty before God’s strict and holy justice?

B. God the Son: Oh, there’s more good news from the LORD, the triune God of the covenant. The Lord Jesus Christ, co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father, undertook to be their Savior. He agreed in that everlasting covenant to be the head and surety of His people – all those given to Him by God the Father in that covenant – those chosen unto eternal salvation in Christ – His sheep or His elect as they are called in God’s Word. By faith we believe God’s Word. God the Son covenanted to stand in their place, in their nature to take into union with His Deity humanity, body and soul, made like them in every way except without sin – “*made under the law...*” that He might “...*redeem them which were under the law, ...*” (Gal. 4:4b-5a).

1. As He walked on this earth, the incarnate Christ (the God-man, the one suitable Mediator between God and man) obeyed God’s law (all of the Father’s revealed will) with an infinitely precious perfection. And He did that as a Substitute for all whom He represented – those collectively referred to in the scripture as “the election of grace.” Christ also stood in their place to suffer for them – to bear the penalty due unto their sin. He shed His precious blood in payment for their sins. In Hebrews, His blood is called the “blood of the covenant.”
2. This precious Savior lived, and suffered and died, and rose again as the representative of (and Substitute for) His people. His perfect satisfaction to the law and justice of God – that’s righteousness – was established by His life of sinless perfection, even unto death, that would be their title to eternal life.

And the righteousness of his sufferings and death was to save them from all the sufferings justly due to their sins. Thereby, the law and justice of the Father would be glorified in pardoning them, and his faithfulness and holiness made honorable in saving them in this precise, one way whereby He might reveal Himself as He is – as He is to be worshipped – as truly just and still the justifier of these otherwise ungodly sinners. God’s chief design and purpose in all of this is His own glory!

C. God the Holy Spirit: But how then is this revealed or made known to these sinners for whom Christ died? After all, God’s Word declares that they come into this world as spiritually dead sinners, alienated from God. How will any of them come to trust in the LORD of this covenant? Well, in this everlasting covenant of grace, God the Holy Spirit, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Son, undertook the gracious office of quickening (or giving spiritual life) and convincing sinners in their consciences of how guilty they were, and of their desperate need for a Savior. And the Spirit further covenanted to so convince sinners that they might believe God’s Word where it declares how able He is to save all that come unto God through Christ, and convince them in their hearts to embrace Christ, and to believe unto righteousness. And He, the Holy Spirit, agreed to lead them in their walk of faith along their respective pathways to glory – to live upon his grace and strength.

1. The office assumed by the Holy Spirit in this eternal covenant is described by Christ in John 16 verses 13 and 14, where we’re taught that when the Spirit of truth is come – when God the Holy Spirit comes to those He saves and opens their eyes to the truth of God’s Gospel by the revelation of faith – when the Spirit of truth comes to a sinner, He will glorify Christ. As Christ said, “...*for he* <the Holy Spirit> *shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.*” That is, when the Spirit comes to convince a sinner of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, (as the Spirit’s work is described in the prior verses of John 16), He takes of the things of Christ, and glorifies Him by showing the sinner what fullness there is in Christ to save.
2. The Spirit points sinners to Christ because Christ is to have the preeminence in all things as is said of Him in Colossians 1, “... *he* <Christ> *is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.* ¹⁹*For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;*” (Col. 1:18-19). God the Holy Spirit leads each of God’s elect into all necessary truth in their judgments, both concerning their own sinfulness, guilt and helplessness, and also concerning the almighty power of God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ and His lawful authority to make use of His infinite power for their salvation. The Holy Spirit opens our understandings to comprehend this covenant of grace. And thereby He draws out our affections for Christ, and enables us with the heart to believe in Him unto righteousness.

D. Now I know I've spent a lot of time describing the LORD, the covenant God in whom we are to trust. And this is important for as we read in Psalm 25:14: ***"The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; <that is, have regard for who He is> and he will show them his covenant."*** The LORD is revealed in the Gospel of grace that sets forth the terms of the everlasting covenant – that sets forth a salvation fully accomplished for all those who are saved by Christ's obedience unto death on the cross. In covenant mercy, the Lord determined from all eternity that the demerit of all the sins of His sheep would be charged (or imputed) to Christ who would in time pay the just penalty due unto them. And likewise, He determined from all eternity that the merit of Christ's perfect obedience unto death rendered on their behalf, His righteousness, would be theirs – reckoned or imputed to their accounts. What good news! In Romans 4:6-7 where King David is being quoted, it describes ***"...the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, ⁷Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. ⁸Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."***

Now this is the LORD, the one true and living God, in whom we are commanded to trust, not leaning upon our own natural understanding (as we might imagine Him to be) but acknowledging Him, our covenant God, in all our ways. And so now we've covered how this trusting – this life of faith begins with our acknowledgement of God in His one way of salvation by grace in Christ. I hope you see that there is no legitimate claim that can be made to this promise in Proverbs until we've become acquainted with the Lord of the Bible – this sovereign God who saves a people solely according to His own purpose and will. Back when I assumed salvation was in part conditioned on that which proceeded from me (in my case it was my exercise of faith – later exposed to me to be faith in faith itself, (not faith in the Lord) – then at that time, I certainly wasn't acknowledging the Lord (the covenant God of this Bible).

At that time I unwittingly believed in a covenant of works in that I imagined that something proceeding from me, a sinner – a work of my hand – could make the real difference in my being favored and eternally blessed by God. That's not trusting in the Lord, the God of the everlasting covenant of grace. That's trusting in a counterfeit because the true and living God is uniquely revealed to those who are saved in the Gospel of grace that sets forth how all the conditions or requirements for the salvation of God's people were fully met in Christ, accomplished by His finished work of righteousness on their behalf on Calvary's cross. The scripture tells us that ***"...in him <in Christ> dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."*** (Col 2:9) Only in Christ, as He is set forth in the Gospel, is the LORD revealed – the triune Godhead in whom we are to trust. By faith we believe God by believing His Word which declares how He is both a just God and a Savior who eternally saves His sheep, all based upon the doing and dying of their Substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ.

IV. Other Thoughts on Proverbs 3:5

Well, let's briefly now consider more of verse 5. There we're told to "***Trust in the LORD with all thine heart;***" I once imagined that I, a sinner, could actually muster enough dependence on the figment of my imagination that I called "the Lord" such that it would equate with trusting the Lord with all my heart – as if I, a sinner, could trust Him with perfect faith I suppose. But that's not what is meant here.

- A. This trusting or believing with all our hearts is clarified for us in God's Word. In Romans 10, verses 9 and 10, we are told: "***That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*** <Now I use to like to stop right there and say, "See – all that is required to be saved is for you to believe." I suppose I thought that by believing the historical truth that God raised Christ from the dead, that I could be saved. Consider that even Satan and all his demons believe that. No as the passage continues, it describes for us what he meant by believing God raised Christ from the dead as it reads> ***For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.***" Consider that it was what Christ accomplished, righteousness, that demanded His resurrection. Sin demands death and righteousness demands life. The true believer, one trusting in the LORD has revealed to him the righteousness of God in Christ in the Gospel. As we often quote from Romans 1, the Gospel "***...is the power of God unto salvation...***" because "***...therein is the righteousness of God revealed.***" (Romans 1:16-17).
- B. Consider that the scripture is full of encouragements for believers to grow in faith – to grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord. We read of those who are strong in the faith and those who are weak in the faith. So we know that due to remaining sin, none can trust or believe perfectly in this life due to remaining sin. So again, what does this mean, to trust "with all thine heart?" In commenting on this phrase, John Gill wrote that it "*...denotes not so much the strength of faith as the sincerity of it; it signifies a faith unfeigned;*" - in other words a genuine faith. So I too believe that this phrase, "***with all thine heart***" is not to be understood as a reference to the intensity of our faith, but rather it communicates how we trust in God – that it is with the heart that we trust in the LORD. So our trust is with our whole heart, (our entire being – our minds, our affections, and wills). And if this trust is truly in the LORD then it has the saved sinner believing (trusting with all his heart) unto righteousness, as we just read from Romans 10.

- V. The Walk of Faith: Now look with me again at verse 6 where we read, "***In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.***" Notice that the word "ways" is plural, as is the word "paths." So this clearly includes more than the acknowledgment of the Lord in the one way of salvation through which our various pathways to glory begin. As such, I want to spend the remainder of our time discussing the walk of faith that a believer experiences throughout his or her remaining time on earth, after having been given faith to believe God's Gospel.

I'm speaking of the pathway on to glory for a regenerated, born again believer who has already been blessed to believe on Christ from the heart unto righteousness.

- A. To 'acknowledge Him in all our ways' simply means to think on Him, the one true God, in all of our circumstances. We are to acknowledge and proceed through this life with an understanding and an awareness that our Sovereign God remains in control – knowing that in His infinite wisdom – not leaning upon our own understanding (or lack of understanding) of “the why” of our circumstances – but knowing that in His infinite wisdom, and in engaging all that He is as almighty God, He has determined to bring about every circumstance we experience in our lives – and that for our eternal good!
- B. David wrote in 2 Samuel 23:5b: “...*he* <the LORD> *hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire,...*” David knew of His being blessed in that everlasting covenant because of God-given faith – because He now trusted in the LORD with all His heart, believing unto righteousness. How do I know that? Because David declares it is all his salvation. I pray you can honestly say the same.
- C. In reference to this covenant which is ordered in all things and sure, God declares in Psalm 89:34, “***My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.***” Our covenant God is telling us that He has determined and ordered all things, not leaving one single thing out, not even the least circumstance of our respective lives. You believers, just think of the various details of divine providence that God ordered and brought about to put you under the sound of His Gospel. God has settled and determined all that shall happen by His infinite, unerring wisdom. And He will fulfill all that He has purposed by His almighty power.
- D. God tells us in His Word of Himself and how He, the true and living God in whom we are to trust, declares the end from the beginning and says, “...***My counsel*** <His all-wise purpose> ***shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.***” (Isa. 46:10). This ordering of the circumstances of our lives includes even the most minute details. Christ said as much in Matthew chapter 10 where He tells us that a sparrow doesn't fall from the sky except by His divine decree. He tells us, every hair on our head is numbered (Mt 10:29-30). How safe and secure are true believers in their dependence upon our sovereign, covenant God!
- E. When a believer first comes to Christ, staking their entire eternal destiny on Him and His righteousness, think of the certain assurance in seeing that their salvation is fixed by the immutable counsel (His all wise purpose) and the sacred, unbreakable oath of our triune, covenant God. You can read more about that on your own in Hebrews 8. But listen, the same teacher, God the Holy Spirit, who enables believers to see the certainty of their salvation in Christ, leads them onward, leading them to continue with their trust placed in the Lord, ever looking to Jesus as the author and finisher of the faith (Heb. 12:2).

F. Recall I read earlier from Col 2:9 the declaration that Christ is the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Well in the previous chapter in Colossians 1:19 we read, ***“For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;”*** And then in John 1:16, John the Baptist, referring to Christ said, ***“And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.”*** This is an infinite ocean. There’s no grace to be found anywhere else for Christ has it all in Himself. But what abundant grace do we find in ever looking to Jesus as the author and finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2).

Now believers, if truly you’ve staked your entire, eternal destiny on the promises of a covenant God to save you in the Son, for the glory of the Father, by the power of the Spirit, should we not trust Him in, acknowledge and think on Him in all our ways as we progress down this pathway to glory? Remember, faith believes God’s Word. In I John 1:4 it reads, ***“And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.”*** Now make no mistake, I’m preaching to myself right now as much as anyone. And I pray for more faith – that God would grow my faith so that I might experience a bit more of the unspeakable joy of heaven while here on earth. There is joy to be had in believing.

VI. Closing: Our text today indicates that if we trust in the Lord ...if in all our ways (in every circumstance, we acknowledge or think on Him – the Lord, our covenant God), that He then will direct our paths. And yet we’ve established that whether we are acknowledging Him or not, our paths through this life are already ordered and set. He determined and set in motion all that was necessary to draw us unto Himself in regeneration and conversion before we ever knew Him as He is revealed in His way of salvation.

In considering this, I recalled how we once hired a high level manager for our business that didn’t work out. He was more than willing to assume the leadership role for which we hired him. He had the proper education and experience and he certainly seemed to possess the traits of a strong leader. Yet this gentleman failed in this role and we eventually parted ways. And in hindsight, I came to this obvious conclusion, “No matter how qualified, a person is not a leader if no one will follow him.” And I have similar thoughts here – that when God is said to be directing our paths, it is when we are proceeding under His direction, mindful of Him.

And we get our direction from God’s Word. We need to be in the Word, just as we are today. Remember faith believes God’s Word and that’s what we’re talking about – the walk and life of faith. As the Psalmist wrote: ***“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”*** (Psa. 119:105). So the Lord we trust in and acknowledge or think upon better be the LORD, the covenant God of this Bible. As we close, consider this from God’s Word:

1. In Isa. 54:10, God says, “*For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.*” By faith we believe that.
2. In Jer. 32:40-41, God says, “*And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.* ⁴¹*Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good,*” Do you hear that? God delights (rejoices) in doing me good. Faith believes that.
3. In Romans 8:28, we are assured that “*...that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*” By faith we believe this.
4. A few verses down from there beginning in verse 31, Paul, writing to fellow believers continues saying, “*What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? ³²He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* Faith believes that.
5. In I Peter 5:6-7, we’re told, “*Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.*” Faith believes that.
6. Then lastly, in Hebrews 13:5b, we’re reminded that “*he <God> hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*” Faith believes that.

Now by faith, believing God’s Word, these passages can serve us well, particularly as we go through the trials and difficulties of this life. This life is full of trouble and difficulties and will be until we die because sin has brought disorder upon the whole creation. There is a great deal of misery in this world. There is pain, sickness, death, disappointments, financial losses, difficulties and problems with families or friends – you name it. There is always something lurking around the corner for as Job put it in Job 14:1, “*Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.*”

That’s not to say that we can’t enjoy some of the things of this life as we all do at times. I personally have been blessed most of my life with pretty smooth sailing and there’s a lot I’ve enjoyed. But we all eventually face difficulties and troubles – some more difficult and trying than others. And most assuredly if we live long enough, our health will decline. One day our health will be so bad we’ll die. As the saying goes, “This life is not a bed of roses.”

But from God's word we read how all of these circumstances have been ordered and foreordained by our Sovereign God – and all of that (the good things and the bad) are working together for the eternal good of all these eternally blessed objects of God's everlasting love – those who at some point God graciously brings to trust in Him. Having determined every circumstance of their lives, He promises that He'll never leave them nor forsake them in their journey down their respective pathways to glory. And fellow believers, God's Word tells us that Christ is ever interceding for us. And we just read where God is rejoicing to do us good. It's His delight!

Believers, think of that. This means that when we're burdened down with the most difficult of circumstances, God is rejoicing in them. And having purposed them by His infinite wisdom, He rejoices in His knowledge of what we likely can't discern – how even the difficult circumstances that we would never choose for ourselves are in fact for our eternal good and benefit. As I said, I'm preaching to myself right now but I am convinced that by faith, in believing God, we can rejoice in the confidence of knowing it is Him, the LORD, who has determined our pathway to glory. There is joy in so believing.

So my prayer is, "God, increase my faith that my joy may be full – that I may be more and more mindful of the truth that You Lord, in Your infinite wisdom have determined my pathway – all the way to glory. And may I, by faith, so trust that it is for my good, my benefit, simply because You say so – that I may rejoice in knowing that You in Your infinite, eternal love for me, engage every attribute of Your infinite being – Your power, Your wisdom – all that You are to insure my well being." In acknowledgement of You, Lord, in all my ways and circumstances, direct my paths through belief of Your Word, resting in the truth of Romans 8:32: That You, that spared not Your own Son, but delivered him up for me, how shall You not with Him also freely give me all things?

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. ⁶In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” – The Pathway to Glory

Footnote from the author: While this sermon was prepared and delivered by me, I often utilize the commentaries, study helps, and teachings of others to supplement my own prayerful study of the scriptures. Since this document was not originally prepared for publication in print, please excuse and recognize that it was unfeasible to properly identify and credit all of the various original sources used to develop the content herein. Ultimately, it is my sincere and foremost objective to accurately present the gospel of God's grace found in the only infallible source, God's word itself – the Bible.