

Proverbs 16:9

Wisdom for Living: It Gives us Direction

September 7 & 8, 2014

9 In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps.

A woman was driving through the mountains west of Denver when she ran into a snowstorm. She was completely lost and then peered ahead and saw a snowplow. She decided to follow it and kept as close to the machine as she could while it removed snow from the road. At times the blowing snow almost cut off her view, but her faithful guide kept on leading the way. After some time, the plow stopped, and its driver got out and walked over to her car. "Lady, where are you going?" he asked. "I'm on my way to Denver," she replied. "Well, you'll never get there following me!" "Why not?" came the reply. "I'm plowing a parking lot."

We might chuckle at this story, but there is terror in feeling lost. There is something scary about not having any direction in our lives. I would imagine that everyone here this morning has asked the question of God: *What do you want me to do Lord? Where are you leading me Lord?* This morning, in our text, Solomon tries to give us some guidance in our lives as we see that God's wisdom gives us direction.

Our lives are filled with all kinds of choices. Some of those choices are big ones. We choose who we will marry. We choose the career that we may have. We choose what city we are to live in. Many of the choices that we make each day are little ones. We choose the food we eat, the clothes to wear, the store where we buy groceries, etc. After we make those choices, we don't think about them anymore.

So, the question is: *"How do you make good choices?"* There are several different ways that people answer that question. The first is fatalism. Fatalism is the idea that you have a fate and nothing you do will stop it from happening. If God has a plan for your life, he will do. So, why bother making plans? The opposite answer is the idea that you have to make everything happen in your life. Your future hasn't been written yet. Your future will be whatever you determine it to be. I think most people are probably somewhere in the middle. It is there in the middle where things get more foggy in our lives.

It is easy to see why having no plans is not a smart idea. For example, you would have to be crazy to go to war without a plan. Imagine having all the troops together when someone asks: *"Ok, Sir, what's the plan?"* *"I don't know yet. We'll just wing it."* Armies have plans and strategies, and all kinds of smart people who figure all those things out. Having no plan would not make any sense.

Solomon speaks about having plans this morning in our text: **"In his heart a man plans his course."** Plans are a good thing. Plans are made throughout the pages of Scripture. After Adam and Eve fell into sin in the Garden of Eden, God made plans to rescue this world from sin. King David planned to build God a magnificent temple. Solomon carried out those plans. The Disciples made plans to carry the message of Jesus to a world that needed to hear what he had done for it. Plans are a good thing.

Yet, what happens when the plan fails. What happens we take our eyes off of the one who **"determines our steps?"** Then it suddenly becomes my fault if the plan failed. What did I do wrong? What did you do wrong? Now the pressure is on us to figure out WE did. It becomes hard to see then that it is the Lord who **"determines our steps."** Yet, plans can go to the other extreme as well. Plans can be focused on what a person's heart desires. **"In his heart..."** You have the passion for the plan and nothing will stop you in carrying out that plan.

It is so easy to lose the relationship that Solomon is speaking about here between making the plans and determining the steps. That is where it often becomes foggy in our lives. It is so easy to take God out of the planning and the guiding process in our lives. Yet, it is God who enables both of these things to happen. He gives us the gifts and ability to plan. But he has the final call. He can redirect our lives and plans anytime he wants and in any direction that he wants to. He promises that it will work out for our good. We can't do that. He can.

To illustrate this, let me tell you the story of the chipmunk in our house this week. Somehow, a chipmunk got in the house. Don't know how. Don't even know when. I had just walked back to school after lunch when my wife called me and said we had a chipmunk in the family room downstairs. For over the next hours, we chased the chipmunk. We had the patio door wide open. We tried un-successively, to get it to just run out the door. It got into the basement. We couldn't catch it. Now it was time to setup traps to get it. The traps were set. The door was closed. We thought it would just be a matter of time to catch it. Well, didn't work quite that way. Somehow it got out into the house again. We finally got it into the family room again. This time we had created a much better barrier to direct it to the open patio door. That didn't work either. It would run right past the open door. It would not go out. Back and forth around the room we went. All it had to do was follow this path that we had made out. It would not do it. So, it finally met its fate at the end of the broom.

Sometimes, I wonder if we are like that chipmunk. We run around all over in our lives. We just won't let him lead us in the direction that he wants us to go. I don't think we even do it intentionally. We get scared. We get lost. We think too highly about ourselves. We make the plans, and we don't let God determine the steps.

It is hard to do. We trust a God who can move mountains, raise people from the dead, heal the sick, give sight to the blind, perform miracles and even raise his own Son from the dead. But we don't always trust him to determine our steps in the smallest events and activities in our lives every day.

We can't do this on our own. We need God's help to do this. Let's trust him. Let us hold onto the wisdom that Solomon shares with us today: **"In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps."** Amen.