

FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY; The Wondrous Ways of the Lord

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“A man's heart deviseth his ways, but the LORD directeth his steps”, Proverbs 16:9.

We all do a bit of thinking. The Bible tells us that our thoughts which we think and the plans which we make, all proceed from our hearts. He who knew what is in the heart of man and needeth not that anyone inform him said that out of the heart proceed evil reasonings, murders, adulteries, fornication, thefts, false witness, blasphemies, Matt. 15:9. And, in another place, Christ tells us that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh and that a good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things and an evil man out of the evil treasure of the heart bringeth forth evil things, Matt. 12:35.

Every man does a bit of planning. And some of these plans are decidedly wicked. They are *God-less*. God is not taken into consideration at all. The fool saith in his heart: there is no God. The man or men addressed in James 4:13 is a good case in point. They say that today or tomorrow they shall go to such a city and continue there a year and buy and sell and get gain. But the Lord may blow in it and dispel all these plans by taking them away in death. And the rich farmer of whom Jesus speaks in the well-known parable says, “This will I do: I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat drink and be merry.” Luke 12:18, 19.

The book of Proverbs says “a man's heart deviseth his way”. Man thinks, meditates, reckons and computes! We make plans. In our youth we plan for our vocation and calling in life. We attend the college and school of our choice, seek a help-meet for life; we sow and reap, buy and sell, preach and teach,—in all this man's heart deviseth his way.

However, there is not one thought that we think which is not in the hand and in the control of the LORD. The Lord directeth his steps. He does this whether he realizes our plans for us or whether he frustrates them in His unsearchable and impenetrable wisdom. Let it not be forgotten that in all of our “devising” we never circumvent or overrule the directing hand and power of God whereby He determines our footsteps.

This happened in our life in a very striking manner during the past two weeks.

We planned to return from Michigan to Texas by way of Pella, Iowa. Fact is that we had made arrangements with the brethren there to that effect. But the LORD directed our footsteps differently in His inscrutable and just wisdom and providence.

Permit me to tell you just a bit about this, youthful reader.

We arrived safely with our kith and kin in Michigan on the last day of December, on Tuesday evening. By Sunday afternoon I was interested to know about the services being held in our absence, about the well-being of the brethren and sisters in Houston and also to tell them of our own safe arrival and how we had fared. As far as I was concerned, I could call at least five different homes. I dialed the number of Dr. Theo L. Holland. He picked up the phone on the first ring. He was noticeably pleased to receive our call, but he was perplexed. I had never called him before from Michigan. Had we been told of the illness of Mrs. Holland, his wife? Did I know that she had suffered a severe cerebral hemorrhage? I had not. I inquired after her condition and requested whether there was anything that we could do for them. He replied: you can remember us in your prayers. When I had asked a few more questions concerning others I

assured him of our thoughts and prayers and he hung up the receiver overcome by feeling. I returned to the living room of our home and told them of the serious nature of Mrs. Holland. Now just the week before she had taken an active part in the Christmas program; she read some Scripture passages concerning the promise of the Savior to come from the Old Testament Scriptures!

I thought at that time of the word of Proverbs which say “Boast not thyself of tomorrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth” Proverbs 27:1.

But this is not the end. We were to experience that “man proposes, but God disposes”. En route to Pella, Iowa from Jenison, Michigan, we stopped at the home of Rev. and Mrs. G. Vanden Berg in Oak Lawn, Illinois. Before we arrived at the home of the latter, Mrs. Lubbers opined that she thought it would be best if we simply visit for a little while and press on toward Iowa and eat our lunch en route which she had prepared for that purpose. However, I succumbed to the invitation to have supper with the Vanden Berg family and so our visit was extended a bit longer. While we were discussing the pro and con of the pastoral relationship which a missionary pastor should and inevitably does sustain to the sheep which he gathers by the preaching, the telephone rang. Imagine our surprise to hear it said “It is for you, Rev. Lubbers; a personal call from Houston, Texas.” It was Mrs. R. Q. Holland calling, informing us that it was their urgent appeal that we come to Texas at once. She stated: “Please come immediately to Houston. We need you here. Dad and Mother urgently request your presence.”

We called Iowa and explained the nature and apparent urgency of the call and were told by Mrs. Vander Molen: “You just proceed to Houston, domine; we will get along; besides, there is a big storm and much snow on the way. So just keep going south, but don’t drive too fast.”

We did not wait to telephone back to Houston. Later that night at half past the hour of midnight, after we had driven 300 miles after supper, we telephoned them from some 30 miles south of St. Louis, Mo., that we were en route to Texas. Saturday we traveled 550 miles to Jefferson, Texas. We drove in 250 miles of rain through Arkansas and had to stop that evening at 7:30 due to impenetrable fog. On Sunday morning we were up and going before daylight, drove 250 miles and were in time for the service at 11:00 AM. We called to our children in Michigan and they were surprised to hear that we were in Bellaire, Texas and not in Pella, Iowa.

Truly man’s heart deviseth his way, but the LORD directeth his path. Our path led to the bedside of the stricken sister, which bedside became her death-bed. We might speak with her; she was overjoyed that we had come. She told us that all was well whatever the LORD had in store for her. She underwent the surgery which the neurosurgeons advised; we were assured that she went through a successful surgery, all looked promising and that nothing had gone wrong. Yet, she suddenly worsened and her life ebbed away.

On Saturday, January 28, we conducted the funeral service. It was another “first” for me as Home Missionary. About 250 people were present. Many doctors, teachers and professional people and others were there. I chose I John 3:1-3 for the message. The Lord in His wisdom had sent me to preach before many people. Yes, the heart of man deviseth his path, but the LORD directeth his steps.

It was a balmy Saturday afternoon. It was 73 in the shade. We wended our way homeward that afternoon with mingled feelings. I thought of the compassion which the Lord had on the multitude who were without a shepherd. Truly, I had preached the word which is as a two-edged sword. I had comforted the people of the LORD, who says: comfort ye, comfort ye, my people.

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