

Book of Experience

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Study by W. D. Frazee—March 30,

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" Isaiah 55:8-9.

We believe it because it is the Word of God. One would think that everybody would be glad to exchange his thoughts for God's thoughts, and put aside one's own way and have God's way instead. Wouldn't you?

That is the hardest problem God has had with His people for six thousand years. To get us to think His thoughts instead of our own, and accept His way instead of our own.

As a prelude, I want to read a statement:

"The great storehouse of truth is the word of God—the written word, the book of nature, and the book of experience in God's dealing with human life. Here are the treasures from which Christ's workers are to draw" *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 125.

Let's look at those three books:

The first is the written word.

The second the book of nature.

The third is the book of experience in God's dealing with human life.

Notice that this third volume is included in the Word of God. God is speaking to us through the experiences of life. Happy is the people that know the joyful sound.

The longer I study life the more convinced I am that the great purpose God has in speaking to us through the Bible and nature is to help us recognize His voice as He speaks through the book of experience.

When Jesus was here on earth He gained knowledge as we may gain it. We are told:

"His education was gained directly from the Heaven-appointed sources; from useful work, from the study of the Scriptures and of nature, and from the experiences of life—God's lesson books, full of instruction to all who bring to them the willing hand, the seeing eye, and the understanding heart" *Education*, page 77.

Let's look into the book of experience, the book of providence as it is also called. Let's see if we can discern some of God's thoughts which are higher than our thoughts, and some of His ways which are better than our ways.

There is a paragraph in *Steps to Christ* which many of us have heard over and over again. But somehow in recent days this has meant more to me than ever before as God is helping me get it translated out of the book is written and into the book that is lived. Here is the statement:

"Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work. Let your prayer be, 'Take me, O Lord, as wholly Thine. I lay all my plans at Thy feet. Use me today in Thy service. Abide with me, and let all my work be wrought in Thee.' This is a daily matter. Each morning consecrate yourself to God for that day. Surrender all your plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate. Thus day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God, and thus your life will be molded more and more after the life of Christ" *Steps to Christ*, page 70.

That is the way to be happy. That's the program.

First we are to lay plans. Unless you lay plans you can't do what this says.

Sometimes someone may ask us about a certain subject, and we may have to honestly answer that we haven't made any plans about it. But to carry out what this says we must reach the point where we have some plans laid. So the first thing is to lay plans.

Some people think that living by the Spirit's leading is to make no plans at all. There are some references which, if they are misread might lead to that conclusion. But the Bible is clear that we need to lay plans. Notice how clearly Jesus puts it:

"For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it" Luke 14:28.

They ought to be good plans. They ought to be well laid plans. Here is a man who is going to build a tower. He is to first lay some plans. He is to take enough time to do it that he needs to sit down. Time is well spent that is used in careful planning; thinking matters through.

Someone says, "There is no use for me to lay plans because someone interferes with them anyway."

All the interference in the world is no excuse for failure to lay plans. Lay some. Ask God to help you. Think through your problems. Think of the work that God has called you to do.

Christ laid plans for His work. He laid no plans for Himself. He didn't do it selfishly. But we are told that He laid plans for His work.

And ministers and evangelists are counseled to do that today. Every teacher is told that when he stands before his class he should have well in mind what he hopes to accomplish during that period. That calls for laying plans.

Every good cook has to lay plans. Did you ever eat where there weren't any plans? You may have had a snack. You may have been able to browse a little. But good eating comes from good planning. Precisely.

So we might go on in the different areas of life. Jesus summed it all up when He said, If you are going to build a tower, sit down first and count the cost.

How are you going to count the cost? You have to know how many bricks it takes, how many two-by-four's it takes, and all the rest. That calls for a plan. You can't say, Well, I don't know just how big the tower is going to be. It might be twenty feet in diameter, or it might be forty feet before we get through. Lay plans. Sit down first and lay them.

The men of this world do that, but they don't know anything about this second point. Lay your plans at Jesus' feet. That is step number two. Lay your plans, and then lay your plans at His feet. Those plans you have figured out, and as far as you can see everything is the way it ought to be, take them and lay them at Jesus' feet.

Right after the ascension the disciples were engaged in prayer, preparing for Pentecost. Peter called their attention to something that needed to be taken care of. There was a vacancy. They made some plans. But the best light they could get was that there were two men equally fitted to fill that one place. Having brought their plans to that point, they prayed together and said:

"Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two Thou hast chosen, That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship" Acts 1:24.

"Show clearly which of these two Thou hast chosen"
Acts 1:24, Weymouth translation.

Did they make some plans? Yes. What did they do with them? Laid them at the feet of the Lord. They said, Lord, we have made some plans, but we need some help. Show clearly what Your thoughts are.

Again and again in the history of the church God has taken the plans of men, when He has been allowed to, and made some changes in them. Sometimes He

sets them aside altogether. Sometimes He uses them as they are presented. Sometimes He makes modifications and corrections and improvements.

That leads us to the third point. Having made our plans and laid them at the Master's feet, we are to be ready to lay them aside or carry them out as His providence shall indicate.

Right there comes the human problem. To take a plan you have worked day and night on for weeks, lay it down at Jesus' feet, and find that He lays it aside is hard on human hearts. And we will either question God or our experience.

When God takes our plans and lays them aside, it doesn't necessarily mean that there is anything wrong with our experience. It doesn't mean that we have been wasting our time in laying plans.

David got to thinking one day, Here I am in a beautiful home, and the ark of God is just in a tent. The more he thought about it the more he began to lay some plans. What was his plan? To build a house for God. Well, anybody would know that was a good plan, wouldn't they? Sure.

But David had learned to enquire of God. As he thought of his plan he went to the prophet, Nathan, and told him all about it.

The prophet told David, Go and do all that is in thine heart, for the Lord is with thee.

Nathan thought it was a good plan too. I am sure David went home very happy. He said, God is moving in this thing. There is the ok. David had laid his plans. He had laid them at Jesus' feet.

Now watch. In the night season the prophet is instructed. The Lord told Nathan, Go tell my servant, David, he shall not build Me a house.

What? Go tell David that he can't build You a house?

That's right. He must not build a house. Tell him I will give him a son, and his son will build the house.

Nathan did what God told him to do. What did David do? Thank God, David bowed his head. He said, All right Lord. If my plan must be set aside so that your plan is carried out, that's all right.

Then what did he do? He got busy helping to work out that new plan. He gathered material, and the Holy Spirit of inspiration came upon him as he worked out the blueprint for that wonderful temple. Before he died he turned it over to Solomon. He gathered all the chiefs of Israel together and they had a wonderful time.

What a shame it is to allow disappointment and discouragement and things of that kind to come into our experience because God sets aside our plans. We read in

our opening text, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways."

And I am sure that the temple that was finally built was something far more wonderful than David had any idea of.

Are you willing to lay plans carefully, thoughtfully, and then lay those plans down at Jesus' feet? Then be happy when the Lord says sorry, those plans will have to be tailored quite a bit before we can use them. He may even put them into the wastebasket. It has been done.

Paul was a man who was led of the Spirit. That didn't mean he always knew a week ahead where he was going to be and what he was going to do.

"Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not" Acts 16:6-7.

Paul was a great planner. On this particular trip he suggested to Barnabas a certain plan. Barnabas didn't see light in it, so Paul took Silas and went ahead with the plan. But after they got over into Galacia they were forbidden by the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia.

That must have seemed strange to go to a region and then have the door closed. Now some people think the thing to do is beat the door down. Kick it open. But Paul had learned to respect the providence of God. So he said, All right, the Lord isn't opening the way here, so we will go on to Mysia and Bithynia. But the Spirit suffered them not. Twice in one trip.

They made plans and laid them at the Master's feet, and the Master said, No. Did Paul get discouraged and say, Well, I might as well go home? No. He kept on laying plans and laying them at Jesus' feet, and finally at Troas he had a vision.

"And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them" Acts 16:9-10.

If Paul had been so bull-headed and stubborn that he would have insisted on carrying out his plans about Galacia and Bithynia he would never have been down there at Troas to get that vision.

It humiliates some people to admit they have been mistaken. Did you ever have that feeling? Well, you ought to get used to it, and get over being humiliated about it. The servant of the Lord has often said, "God and heaven alone are infallible." And to admit that we are sometimes mistaken about our plans is simply to

admit that God knows more than we do. That shouldn't be hard to admit. In fact, our opening text says that His thoughts are how much different from our thoughts? As high as the heaven is above the earth. And His ways are better than our ways.

Oh, friends, I thank God for the lessons He is teaching in the school of experience. He is teaching us to lay plans at His feet for correction. And we must not break out in tears when the paper comes back with red pencil marks all over it.

After all, if you are in a class where every day the teacher says, That's excellent, you probably need a new teacher, or a new textbook. We need to be face to face with problems that challenge us to do our best, and that reveal to us certain weaknesses that show them up so our minds are put to the stretch in thinking what to do next.

"Our plans are not always God's plans. He may see that it is best for us and His cause to refuse our very best intentions, as He did in the case of David. But of one thing we may be assured, He will bless and use in the advancement of His cause those who sincerely devote themselves and all they have to His glory" *Ministry of Healing*, page 473.

Isn't that nice? So if we don't it the first time, let's try again. And if that doesn't get His endorsement, let's go at it the third time.

"If He sees it best not to grant their desires, He will counterbalance the refusal by giving them tokens of His love, and entrusting them to another service" *Ibid*.

After you have a plan all fixed up and bring it to God, maybe He will say, I am sorry that it doesn't fit in to My overall plan. But since you are here, there is a plan I would like to have you carry out.

It would be worth running in to Him with our plan so He could suggest a better plan. What do you say?

That doesn't mean we are to quit making plans. We have already studied that. David didn't quit making plans because God turned down some of them. He kept on making them.

I fear that there is too much influence in our lives of the worldly idea that the way to succeed is to make a plan and then carry it through no matter what. The success stories of the world are of that character. And it is a wonderful thing to have push. It is a wonderful thing to have perseverance. We will need every ounce of it. But when we have made our plans we are to lay them at Jesus' feet, and then be prepared to lay them aside or carry them out as His providence shall indicate.

Somebody says, "Brother Frazee, what is that providence? How do you know whether to go ahead with the plan or not?"

That is the great lesson of life—learning to read the signals of God's providence. Learning when a great Red Sea in front of you means stop long enough to have prayer and then go ahead. Learning when it is foolish to go out into the desert without bread or water and learning when it is following the cloud in which is hidden the Son of God. And nobody in this world can tell you in advance how you are to know just where the providence of God is leading. That is for you to work out in the laboratory of your life. That is for you to study. That is for you to spend time in prayer saying, Lord, help me? Which is the open door and which is the closed door? Where is the pillar of cloud leading?

As dear Elder Luther Warren used to say, "If you will play fair with God, God will teach you how to do it."

If you will tell the Lord there is just one thing you want, and it is to do His will, and keep seeking to lay plans and lay them at His feet, and watch the signal of His providence, it is up to God who is keeping this school to get you through and graduate you by commencement day. It is up to Him.

I am so glad He is going to do it. Not one student in His school is going to fail if they will listen to the teacher.

"Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ"
Philippians 1:6.

To learn that lesson means we must come to the place where we are willing to have our plans dashed to atoms, willing to wait in uncertainty at times.

"The season of distress and anguish before us will require a faith that can endure weariness, delay, and hunger—a faith that will not faint though severely tried" *Great Controversy*, page 621.

To wait in uncertainty is the lesson of faith. It develops patience. And we know that the remnant will be a patient people.

There are those who would make good soldiers if they could just be going all the time. But John the Baptist had to learn to wait, and wait where? In prison.

Will any of us have to learn that? Oh, yes.

There are those who can be very happy in a program like this, provided they have the opportunity of full use of their planning ability.

We have some very fertile minds among us. And if they can plan and carry out those plans they are happy. But if the hand of God or their brethren is laid upon them in a negative manner, it is hard to take.

John the Baptist had to learn that lesson. Paul had to learn it. We will all have to learn it before we get through.

Some little verses I heard some time ago came to my mind. Catch the thought:

"I am not eager, anxious, bold,
All that is past;
I am ready not to go,
At last, at last"

Sometimes it takes a lot of courage to go somewhere on God's errands. Sometimes the supreme test of faith and trust and surrender is when God apparently has nothing for us to do at the moment, and we are waiting like a bellboy on the bench not knowing what the next assignment is.

But in one way or another God keeps working with us, bringing us around, until like clay we are soft and pliable and ready to be molded.

We are going to lay plans, lay them at Jesus' feet, and understand that means we are prepared to lay them aside or carry them out as His providence shall indicate. And we are going to be sweet about it. Let's get past the place of thinking we are martyrs when we do something like that.

When God takes our poor little plans and permits us to trade them for His infinite plans, we are the richest people in the world. If you and I will learn this lesson, God is going to do some things with rapidity that will surprise us. We will go quickly from one step to another, and God will get His work done.

The God who could have led His people from Egypt to Canaan in two years had plenty of time to teach them at Sinai because they turned back and limited the Holy one of Israel. We have limited Him also. Oh, let us make up our minds that often our plans may fail so that His plans will succeed.

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