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And He led them forth by the right way that They might go to a city of habitation.

Psalm 107 v 7

Dear friends, what a wonderful Psalm we have here. It is very descriptive of God's providence over various characters here mentioned. The text especially sets forth the equity of divine providence, the Lord's leading, teaching, guidance, and directing, and blessed end of it all. We observe that it is a special and peculiar people that the Psalmist is here speaking of in the exhortations as we observe them to "Give thanks unto the Lord." The outcome of the Lord's interposition and intervention on behalf of His people. We notice particularly he mentions in the second verse, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy." Of course, to really enter into the spirit and life of the blessed words is to have the witness that we do by efficacious grace belong to the redeemed. Not irrespective of the knowledge of that bestowed, all who belong to the redeemed are particularly led by God, and by his Holy Spirit, Dear friends, the leadings in divine providence often precede the commencement of the work of grace in one's soul as there are many things the Lord has ordained and decreed to take place as links in the chain of divine providence in order to lead and teach them spiritually. So therefore, we have a message here that is combined, providence and grace. The Psalm is one of praise and thanksgiving preeminently unto the Lord, His name and His works are beautifully set forth. Beloved friends, what a mercy if we are favoured to be led by the Lord. We are either led by Him, or led by the devil, or led by the carnal dictates of our heart. It is a very discriminating remark, but very true.

Now may we be helped to meditate a little concerning the Lord's leading. He leads in a way that is pleasing in His sight, one which will bring honour and glory to His name. But often it is a leading that is adverse to our nature; it is not one that we should choose, but a way that is chosen for us. What a mercy it is that flesh, and the things pertaining to it, are subdued by the power of sovereign grace. Probably some of my dear friends here this evening hope they can trace the Lord's leadings a little in divine providence prior to your call by grace and after. I know there is a condition that does prevail often where one cannot see anything, everything seems to be covered over, everything so indistinct. But there are times when this darkness and this indistinctness is removed, when it is blessedly sweet to have a little gracious light and understanding that we are being led by the Lord. Yes, by His Spirit.

Now it says "He led them forth." So therefore, the implication is, they must come forth from somewhere, and are being led to a destination, which is indicated in verse eleven, a city of habitation. Indescribable is this mercy, it is indeed.

Now to come to a point in connection with it, there is a time appointed when one is translated out of the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son. This translation is effected by the Holy Spirit when grace enters one's soul. Now prior to this – I do not want

to pass over this, may you look into the way the Lord has led you in providence. You may have made your plans, and may have thought you would go in a certain direction, follow a certain course in life in your calling etc. Some of you may have been favoured to go in that way, but others have their way crossed, the Lord broke their schemes of earthly delight in order that eventually they should find their all in Him. Now that it is a very difficult path to walk in when the Lord crosses your schemes, and you will begin to learn a little of what you are as a poor sinner. Of course, you will not realise it until the Lord opens your eyes and shews you what you are in the sight of God. You may be like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, you would kick and plunge. That is nature, and you may be determined to have your own way, but the Lord in His mercy overrules it all. But now as you grow older and hope you have received a little of the Lord's leading in these matters, two things have taken place; you have been thoroughly ashamed of yourself before Him, and you have said – and meant what you said, "Lord, it was a right way, though crucifying and mortifying to my flesh." When the Lord begins to lead He never, never leaves that person. What a mercy that is, He does not leave His people half way, nor three quarters of the way, He takes them right through. Now do you hope the Lord beginning to lead you, or has led you? We have one scripture which exhorts us to "Remember all the way the Lord thy God hath led thee these forty years in the Wilderness." And the effect, "To humble thee, to prove thee, to know what was in thy heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments or no." And, my friends, if it is the right way, it will be the way of prayer. It will. And, it will be from the person's heart they will begin to pray. That is a mark and evidence of divine life in the soul, is prayer. I do not mean just a form of word. No, but living prayer, that will be the way more or less that will be maintained in your life and experience, prayer. You will as you are helped pray your way along step by step.

The older you get the more needful and necessary to you personally is prayer. But let us look at the other side, what an aversion there is in our hearts to pray; why? We have an independent spirit. We would live independent of God. We are too proud until the Lord brings us down, when He humbles us at His feet. Now it is the right way, it will be a way of dependence upon God for His leading and guiding, directing and teaching. Beloved friends, it is a great mercy to have a teachable spirit. It is. "Teach me truth" said one, "And give me love." They are well taught who are taught of God. Many lessons have to be taught us, many lessons have to be learned. But I feel I can state this before you, no doubt many of you will acquiesce with me that this is true, we are very dull scholars. You see this teaching is different to that which is natural. Yes, and the lessons we have to learn are learned over and over and over again. They are. And you may be exercised before God in respect to this, "Ever learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth." But you will, poor soul, you will presently.

What a mercy it is that we are led in the right way to come under the truth, to sit under the sound of the truth, to have a circumcised ear given to us to hear the truth, and love given to us to love the truth, and to cleave to the truth. It is an unspeakable mercy, indeed so, and to

have a teachable spirit. Now my friends, it is not wrong to confess before God your ignorance. No. If you really are under divine teaching you will confess your ignorance before Him. "Lord, I do not want understand the truth. I would love to be led by the spirit into it, could it please thee to reveal and to convey the truth to my poor soul." You see, these are some of the exercises of your soul. In addition, of course the right way is where Christ is to be found. Yes, the Spirit of the Lord is the divine leader. The Psalmist often rehearsed the Lord's wonderful leadings with His ancient race. You will find in the Psalms so often spoken concerning the Lord bringing the people out of Egypt. Dear friends, He brings His people out of the world. He does not find all His people in the profane world, He finds them in the professing world sometimes. Where do you hope He found you? That is the point. Do you hope you have been called by grace? If you are not called by grace you are still in the ruins of the fall. I speak lovingly, but it is true. Some hardly know the place where the Lord begun because it was so small.

The Holy Spirit is the author often of a work which is gentle, friends. Do not think I am watering the truth down, because I am not, there is a variation in the operations of the Holy Spirit. Some beginnings are likened to the breezes which are very soft, they often prove to be very genuine. This is the point. It is an unspeakable favour to be a genuine character, to have a real work of grace in our heart, and maintained.

They are led forth. Not only in divine providence does He lead His people forth, but He leads them forth spiritually. Where does He bring them? He brings them under conviction of sin; He brings them under His law. I want to speak this in a kindly way, I believe we who minister in holy things need to preach the law in a loving way, not harshly. When you are in Moses school, you will realise that he was a hard master. Yet the amazing thing is this, what we read in Scripture concerning him, he was one of the meekest men on the face of the earth, apart from Christ. But if you come into his school you will find he deals hardly with you. Why? Because of the impossibility of his demands. What does it constitute? My friends, it is God's commands. And what does He command? Many things, but primarily the decalogue, the ten commandments. Here is where a person begins to realise the knowledge of sin. It is not what you and I think, it is not what people tell us, it is not what we read, it is what comes home to our heart by a measure of divine power. And I believe when the spirit of the law enters he shews us our sins, sins of omission, sins of commission, how many, how extensive, how manifold they are. This is the right way, it is a way that is often decried in the day in which we live. I do hope the Lord will still preserve a little remnant that will be attached, that will adhere to these right principles. We cannot enter into the gospel before we have in some measure passed under the law. This is the right way. The lord will not leave his people under the condemning sentence of the law. You might know something of this teaching more deeply as you get older. There is a Scripture that may be fulfilled in your experience, you may enter in by the south gate, and you would then go out of the north. You may have entered by the north gate and go out by the south. It will lead to the city of habitation, to the place we read of in Ezekiel's prophecy, chapter 46 v 9.

“And He led them forth by the right way.” The Lord brings us down to be humbled, and killed of all hope of obtaining salvation by the works of the law. I speak kindly. I do not mince matters, it is the right way. Now when the lord has brought us down to nothing at His feet as poor, guilty, ruined sinners, brought to confession, he gives true repentance. There is a repentance that needs to be repented of which springs from a natural fear from a knowledge that you may have to suffer for your sins, which produces remorse, therefore it produces an alteration in your life, I do believe that some people are very confused on these points. They get confused with these two things, that is regeneration and outward reformation only. Now reformation will follow regeneration, but my dear friends, we must not put reformation in the place of regeneration. No. In natural reformation there is a change of life, there is a looking into your past life, into some of those sinful habits you were addicted to, you realise there must be a separation, therefore you may break off these habits, and things pertaining to them. And you may have only remorse of conscience in regards to these things. The motive you see the Lord knows, He sees the motives and intents of the heart. In regeneration you begin to realise solemnly that you need a repentance that God alone can give, which is acceptable in his sight. Before this is given you may weep over your sin and folly, yet not have any hatred to sin at this stage. No, the sin is not obnoxious to you, you still love it, and still go after it; yet you feel in your own self that this is wrong. In time you are separated from many things, including reading ungodly literature, yes, and many secret things that it would not be discreet to speak of publicly. Now, my dear friends, it is Christ alone that can rightly do the thing. He is, dear friends, revealed as the Way, the Truth, and the Life. When this foundation is laid in your heart, it being the Spirit’s work, there is a gracious illumination of the heart and mind which is able to apprehend the truth in measure concerning Christ, and He becomes in the view of this person the only adequate Person that has made reconciliation before the Father, there is this perception that he is the mediator. And this perception is correct because really one cannot approach intrinsic purity without a mediator. This is being led by the right way. Now you are brought to be a believer. Yes, living faith is given to you here which is of a saving nature and character. The apostle explains this very concisely. I wish I could be able in such a concise way to preach it. But you see, when we are under the law we are shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Then when this faith comes you are no longer under a schoolmaster, you may not have had deliverance, but a hope is raised up, a good hope. And, my dear friends, how indescribably necessary it is to have a good hope which is based entirely on the finished work of Christ, and the adequacy of it. He becomes the mediator, and you receive with the gracious illuminations which He gives, that He stands between, as the poet sweetly sings

“But since my Saviour stands between
In garments dyed in blood;
‘Tis He, instead of me is seen,
When I approach to God”

I shall never forget when that verse was made life and power to my soul, it was like a new light, and there was life communicated with that light, there was a hope. Now it may not be so distinct as that. Let me explain what I mean. You may perceive the truth concerning Christ by the Spirit, and it may be like a guiding star, like the wise men saw, they perceived the star in the east, then they followed it till it came and stood over where the young child was. You know the star was a direction as leading to Christ, but this star was not Christ, the star indicated where He was. They followed in the direction of the star, and when they got to the place, here was Christ. Now He led them forth by the right way. Now you come under the dispensation of the gospel, and how sweet were the truths of the gospel. And how sweet it is now at times, not only in the invitations thereof, but in the hearing and receiving of the doctrine of grace pertaining to the gospel. Of course, they will lead us to the fountain head, which is Christ. Then there is necessity and the blessedness of the work of the third person in the blessed Trinity, which is the Holy Ghost. Now some of you dear friends, I believe have been raised up to a hope, and you are building your hope for heaven upon the finished work of Christ. You realise you are lost and ruined in the fall, there is no other way, Christ is the way. "He led them forth by the right way."

Now there will be something particular at times in reference to His crucifixion "Christ and Him crucified." This was the theme the apostle Paul loved to preach. He loved to give Christ the pre-eminence, and this soul loves to hear of Him, and concerning the completeness of His work. You know, dear friends, if the work of Christ is attractive to your case, and suitable to your case. It is because poverty-stricken souls, the insolvent, the beggar needs Christ and all that He has to give. Now this will raise up in your soul those living desires and breathings after Him. It is the right way. It is. What an unspeakable mercy to have that true hunger and thirst after Christ. Now this hunger is appeased from time to time, and then there is an assuaging of the thirst. There are crumbs that fall from the master's table, and there is an assuaging sometimes from the water of life. There is an assuaging from the fulness of Christ. It is the right way, a very pleasant way, and a very sweet way. It is known especially when you can feel a little realisation of His mercy reaching your heart, an unworthy sinner. This will soften you, this will humble you, this will make you esteem Christ, He will become precious to you; precious in the want of Him first. O I do like to find a soul that is after Christ. Yes, because there is everything in Him, my friends, that we stand in need of for time and eternity. The Lord is leading you right if you are after Christ. It is the right way. There are some paths pertaining to Christ that are very sweet, very blessed, very pleasant. Let us look at Psalm 23 "The Lord is my Shepherd:" Ah, when you can feel it, realise it, that the Lord is leading you, guiding you, you say, "I shall not want." There is a confidence here in His grace, in His fulness, in His blessedness, in His favour, "I shall not want." Providence and grace, all is included, faith is able to appropriate it. Here is the position, "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, and beside the still waters." Ah, the green pastures of the gospel, the still waters of peace, when you feel a little of it in your soul. "He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." And the other verse included. Well now I must be brief.

The next thing is, the wilderness is a right way – the wilderness. Not only does this world become a wilderness to you naturally, but you will find in yourself a waste howling wilderness. That is realised more when the presence of Christ and His blessings recede, you come into the wilderness. You know this is the right way. It is the way that is laid down in the word of God, so it must needs be right. Now consider a moment the name of the Lord Jesus, the beauty, the blessedness of it, and the unction of the Holy One that was manifest in His baptism when John perceived He was the Son of God who taketh away the sins of the World. The Spirit rested on Christ as a dove, and the Father approved, “This is My beloved Son.” This dove like spirit, the meekness was His. Did He stay there, my friends? Does a child of grace stay here in their experience? No, they are led by the Spirit into the wilderness. What for? Christ was led to be tempted of the devil. The time set forth in Holy Writ was forty days and forty nights. Now that would not be correct to state that just forty days and forty nights we have to negotiate the wilderness. It is a waste howling wilderness where there are bolders. That is why you will need shoes of iron and brass, why you need the promise also, “As thy days, so shall thy strength be.” Yes. This is the right way. You may be in this way, some of you, it is a dark way. Yes, but it is the right way. You are tempted, you are tried, bitterly assailed; you are in conflict, it is the right way. Now, my friends, not only is it a way of dependence upon God, but you walk by faith and not by sight. That is it. You will find that very difficult, and in some of these ways you will find it is a way of such affliction and tribulation. It is the right way. It is the way the Lord has ordained for you to walk in. And, my friends, it will work out right because these things will work together for your spiritual good and profit. But some of you might say, “I cannot understand this, I cannot receive this, this crooked thing, this mortifying thing which is so painful. It is working together for good, some spiritual good and profit. Yes, poor soul, it is indeed. And this is the way wherein at times you will just have a little insight into the sufferings of a dear Redeemer. Yes, it is the right way, “He led them forth by the right way that they might go to a city of habitation.” That they might go. They will go, they must go, why? Because they are not only redeemed, but they have been predestinated, they have been chosen, they have been elected unto salvation by the Father, they have been adopted into the family of God; they are His dear people, they were given to Christ. They are His by deed of gifts, by deed of purchase. They are the Holy Ghost’s because He has quickened them, regenerated them by His grace. He is leading them, teaching them, guiding them, protecting them. Yes, and He is beginning to sanctify them- sanctify them. And that does not mean to make holy in the flesh. God forbid, but the work of sanctification will be begun in us, you know, prior to entering into the city of habitation through the imputation of Christ’s justifying righteousness.

“He led them forth by the right way.” Poor heart, that might be in this way of trial, affliction, and sorrow, it is the right way. You have one in the Person of Christ who not only knows and realises, but will sympathise with you, and will bestow upon you all needed help and blessing at the time appointed. I know He will. I know He does. You will find sometimes the way you have to walk will be such that it will be so dark and benighted with you, so painful, so cutting, you will come right down, you feel you cannot go on any longer. Then

the Lord will appear, grant you help, blessing, and favour in your soul. Now it does not please the Lord that the children shall always enjoy the presence of their Friend. It is lovely to feel it, to realise it, it is, but it is a way wherein you prove the days of darkness are many. But, my poor soul, you will go in it step by step by prayer and supplication, by humble dependence, by faith; looking, leaning upon the arm of Jehovah. You will come up presently out of this wilderness.

Often you feel it is a wilderness within, do you not? I do, it is a wilderness. Oh, "my heart is like a desert vast." The world begins to fade in your view, you do not see so much in it as you did, you have been crucified to the world, and the world to you. I do not altogether mean the outside world. You have to leave that. We prove this, though we would be thankful for the Lord's goodness, it is a vain place, vanity of vanity, compared with the things of Christ, with the things of God and godliness. Why, how sweet it is to have a little nearness to the Lord, not only by prayer and supplication, but a felt sense of His presence. Make the most of it when you get it, "Why do you exhort us to make the most of it?" Why, it is because you will not be favoured to have it much in this life, the best is to come. Whether you believe it or not, the best is to come if you are a child of grace. You will go in His might, not in your own, and you will go step by step, leaning and depending on the Lord. Now may I just allude to this, you know by faith sometimes you perceive through the cross the crown. Sometimes you might have a little hope, the Holy Spirit leading you into that which the poet says, though very seldom it is your experience,

Yes, I shall soon be landed
On yonder shores of bliss,
There, with my powers expanded,
Shall dwell where Jesus is."

You have a hope that goes beyond the grave. And that is sweet, that is. And, my dear friends, that will give you the grace of patience, submission to His will in relation to the things you are enabled to walk in, believing, hoping, soon the tempest will be over. Yes,

"Soon the tempest will be over,
To our destined port we sail;
Jesus, our eternal lover
Says His word shall never fail."

My dear friends, "He led them forth by the right way that they might go to a city of habitation." I would say this to you. Cheer up, because you are coming to this city of habitation, nearer each day you live, each hour that you draw this fleeting breath you are coming nearer to your habitation. It is inhabited by the Trinity in Unity, inhabited by the angelic hosts, inhabited by the spirits of just men made perfect, the "City of habitation," my friends, it is the greatest city that has ever been known, and the most blessed city, this is the holy habitation. No more sin, perfect holiness and peace there. It is a city of habitation where every one is cemented together in love.

Well, we leave it here, my friends, as regards the text. May we be helped to plod on the few remaining steps of the journey. O to have this city of habitation in view, then break out eternally in praise and thanksgiving o the Lord for His wonderful works to the children of men. You may sing a little in this time state when the Lord appears, but in that heavenly place where the Lord Jesus is the song will be this, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Thy name be glory." Amen