

THE PATH OF LIFE - PSALM 16:1-11

LIFE OF DAVID IN THE PSALMS #9

The year was 1780. Mr. Daly was the manager of a local theater. One Saturday night, Daly was having dinner with some of his friends. He was trying to convince his friends of the power of advertising. Daly's friends were skeptical countering that advertising is just a waste of time and money. Well, one thing lead to another and finally Mr. Daly offered a wager to his friends in an attempt to convince them of the power of advertising. Daly bet his friends that he could invent a totally meaningless word and make that word become a part of the English language in just one week using the power of advertising. Daly's friends just laughed at them. This would be the easiest money that they would ever make.

So they agreed and shook hands on it. Daly had one week to make up a word and then make that word a part of the English language.

The next morning, Daly's friends were somewhat surprised to see a strange word flashed all over town. It was on billboards. It was on posters. It was in the windows of stores. And, of course, it was on the marquee of Daly's theater. Within a couple of days, people were starting to ask questions about this word. What does it mean? Where did it come from? Amazingly, Daly did make that four letter word, that was totally invented by him, that didn't have any language derivation at all, that didn't even have a meaning, a part of our language through the power of advertising. In fact, we still use Daly's word today. It now has a meaning, of course. In fact, Webster gives Daly's word 3 major meanings. One of them is *a practical joke*. But students all throughout our land have come to

dread Daly's invention – the word *QUIZ*.

It is a fact of life that every person has many influences that help to mold and direct the course of his or her life. Advertisers count on this fact, of course. But there are many other influences that are far more powerful than mere advertising. Parents, teachers, friends, church leaders, community leaders, fellow workers, and many others have more influence on us than we even know. And one of the differences between people who are successful and people who flounder through life is found in the choice of influence that the person makes. Wise people choose good influences in life. Wise people choose good products over the poorer ones in advertising. Wise people choose good friends over destructive ones. While it is impossible to choose every influence, wise people do their best to choose the best influences that they can and learn valuable lessons from even the poor influences that are placed in their paths. Probably the strongest influence that I had in helping me to decide what kind of coach I was going to be when I coached the Varsity Soccer team at Cornerstone University for 3 years were 2 college basketball coaches that I had. The first was Wendell Kempton who coached my first year. Basketball wasn't really his primary sport - he had been a semi-professional baseball player. But he was a tremendous motivator. His love for his players was evident. He is now retired from being the executive director of a missions agency - the Association of Baptist for World Evangelism. And I will never forget the influence that he had on me. In my sophomore year, we had another coach come under whom I played for the rest of my college career. He really knew a great deal about basketball strategy, but he was a hot-head. He lost

his temper regularly in practice and during games. If a player made a mistake, he would yank him from the game and publicly humiliate him. I felt the sting of his venom as a player and watched many of my fellow players cringe when he came around. I learned many lessons from that coach and he has also had a great influence on my life. And I vowed that when I coached, I would never publicly berate a player, but I would rather take him off to the side after the game was over and talk to him about any mistakes he had made.

One of the most important decisions that we make in life involves the influences that we will generally surround ourselves with and how we will choose to respond to potentially negative influences in our lives.

We have now entered the phase of David's life when his outlook has become much more optimistic. Saul is now dead, killed in battle with the Philistines. David no longer has the threat of Saul hunting him down hanging over his head. And David has now been anointed King of Israel. He has subdued the Philistine threat and other surrounding nations are quickly falling as well. Life is suddenly looking very good. The future looks bright. And David's Psalms written during this period of his life reflect this more optimistic spirit. David writes in this Psalm, *Lord, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance.* These are the words of a man who is happy with life.

But David never forgot the influences in his life that had brought him to this place. He learned from Saul's negative example. He remembered the lessons that Doeg the Edomite and other opportunistic evildoers had taught him. And he most

of all remembered the important influences that Godly people had provided in his life - the prophet Samuel, his closest friend Jonathan, Abiathar the priest who was also a close associate, and many others. David glories in his fellow followers of God who are his delight in verse 3. *As for the saints who are in the land, they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight.* David recognized that it was God's path of life that he would have to take if he were to continue to live life successfully.

Psalm 16 reveals David's choice to follow God's path in life, to allow Godly influences to direct his life. In this Psalm, as David reflects back upon God's goodness to him bringing him to this place now in his life, he recognizes God's hand in meeting all of the basic needs that he has had in life. I want to look at 3 of these with you this morning. And I think that you will find as I have in my study throughout the week that the message that is contained in this Psalm is just as relevant today as it was 3,000 years ago when it was written. For every one of us still has some basic needs to be met if we are to have personal success in life.

*Life can be confusing - we all need to have direction, we all need to have help in making good decisions. God and godly influences help to give us direction in life.

*Life can be dangerous - we all need a measure of protection to have confidence and peace of heart. God and godly influences help to provide protection for us in life.

*Life can be lonely - we all are social creatures. We need to feel a sense of belonging. God and godly influences can provide fellowship for us in life.

*And all of these factors make following God the best pathway in life – in fact, following God is the pathway to life. Let's look at David's testimony concerning these needs that God met in his life.

1. Notice with me in the first place, how God provided direction for David in life. READ verses 7,8

⁷ I will praise the LORD, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me. ⁸ I have set the LORD always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

Life can be confusing. There are so many philosophies of life and so many who are trying to tell us what path to take. There are so many who are trying to influence our direction in life.

*Some are saying that financial security is the pathway to life. Own a piece of the rock and you will not be shaken. But then we see so many millionaires who are not happy people and read about others who actually take their lives in their misery and depression, and we realize that the pathway to life is not found with mere financial security.

*Others tell us that being healthy is the pathway to life. Take care of your body, keep in top physical condition, eat right, exercise everyday, don't smoke or drink or chew or go with girls that do - then you will find the pathway to life. But the longer we live, the more we find that no matter how much care is given to this earthly body, it still wears out. It still gets sick at times, the eyesight fails, arthritis invades the joints. This body was not designed to last forever. No, health is not the ultimate pathway to life.

*Still others tell us that relationships are the pathway to life. It's not what you accomplish but it is rather who you get to know that is important. So build strong and intimate family relationships and cultivate strong and intimate relationships with others for this is the pathway to life. But then our parents die, and a friend turns on us, and we find that relationships are not the pathway to life.

*Now, we would all admit that financial security and health and relationships are good in themselves. If they were bad, nobody would be able to promote them as possible pathways to life with any kind of credibility. Who would believe that a life of crime or self-mutilation or total isolation is the pathway to life? But the problem comes when people try to make financial security or health or relationships or any one of a number of other good things do more than they are capable of doing. When they put too great a burden on their shoulders, they crumble under the weight - because none of these is designed to be the pathway to life.

In the book of Ecclesiastes, King Solomon reflects on his struggles to find meaning and purpose in life. Solomon was a man who had every advantage that it was possible to have in life. He had unbelievable riches and wealth and financial security. He received every year over 320 million dollars just in gold tribute from surrounding nations. That doesn't include all the money that he made from trade or silver or precious gems or tax money. He was wealthy beyond imagination. He was man who had good health. He had every advantage to have doctors and physicians hover around him. He could eat the best of foods. There is no record that he ever had any serious illness. He died at a good, old age for his day.

Solomon had more relationships than any of us will ever have. He had 1,000 wives. He could be friends with anyone he wanted. Everyone wanted to be Solomon's friend. Kings and Queens traveled from all over the world just to get to know him. Yet Solomon found that none of these things could bring meaning to his life. He wrote, *So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. Eccl. 2:17*

Have you ever tried to chase the wind? I can't think of a more hopeless endeavor than trying to run after the wind. That was what life was for Solomon when he lost godly influence and direction in his life - even though he had everything else life could offer.

Solomon's conclusion in Ecclesiastes directed him back to the path of life. He concluded his book by writing: *Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandment, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or bad. Ecc. 12:13,14*

*We will never find the path to life until we listen to God's counsel and instruction. David learned that lesson, his son Solomon learned that lesson - and so must we.

2. Notice in the second place the protection that God provided for David in life. READ 16:1,9,10

1. Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge.

⁹ Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, ¹⁰ because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your

Holy One see decay.

David was a man who knew what physical danger was all about. He knew what it felt like to have to abandon his home and have all of his possessions ransacked by greedy thieves. This had happened to him several times in life. He knew what it felt like to try to go to sleep at night not knowing if he would wake up in the morning or not. He knew the terror of running for his life with skilled assassins right on his heels.

*Now David did his best to protect himself. But he also knew that ultimately his protection had to come from the Lord. So David learned to rest in God for his protection in life. David learned to trust in the promises of God.

*We live in a paranoid world today. I read one statistic this past week from the American Kennel Club that makes an insightful statement about the mental framework of our country today. In 1975, the most popular pure breed dog in our country was the poodle. There were 139,750 registered puddles in our nation. In that year, there were only 952 registered Rottweillers - a fierce breed often used as a guard dog. Today, the poodle population in our country has been cut in half. There are less than 60,000 registered poodles now. Do you know how many registered Rottweillers there are now? Well over 100,000 – way more than 100 times the number. Whereas in 1975 there were more than 139 times as many poodles as Rotweillers, today there about twice as many Rotweillers as there are poodles in our country.

Today, security is one of the fastest growing businesses in our nation. Many homes have alarm systems. Many stores have security systems.

Now it is certainly the path of wisdom to take necessary precautions to protect oneself personally and one's property. We live in a fallen world that houses many dishonest people. I have often thought that one of the joys of heaven will be the fact that there won't be any locks on any doors. We won't have to carry any keys with us - won't that be great? But today, we need locks and keys. We lock the doors to our church after everyone leaves. I remember the days when my dad was pastoring and I was just a young lad when the church doors were always open so anyone could come in anytime of day or night and meditate or pray. It is a sad necessity of life today that this wouldn't be a practical reality.

But if we are relying on locks and alarms and security systems to provide peace of mind for us, we are going to be sadly disappointed.

I remember the time when this lesson became a reality in my life. I had decided to work at an inner city Salvation Army Day Camp in Philadelphia for the summer after I graduated from college. I felt that I needed this kind of cross-cultural experience in my life. So I lived in the damp basement of this inner city Salvation Army for a whole summer. One thing that I can remember doing when life got boring was turning on the lights at night and seeing how many cockroaches I could stomp on as they were scurrying to the drains.

One day, I locked my keys in my car. I was visibly upset with myself as I was preparing to call a locksmith when one of the young men that was a regular at the gym noticed me. *What's the problem*, he asked? I told him. *Well, what kind of car do you have? I have a 1963 Plymouth Sport Fury*, I answered. *That's no sweat*, he replied. I remember walking with him out to the car, and in less time

than it would have taken for me to reach into my pocket, pull out my keys and unlock the door, if I would have had my keys, that 11 or 12 year old had that door open. From that day on I have never put much confidence in locks. I use locks because they are certainly a deterrent, but I don't put all my faith in them.

Putting our trust in the Lord for protection does not mean that we will never be robbed. God might allow one of his children to be robbed for some reason known only to him. But we won't be robbed unless God allows it to happen for some reason. This confidence brings a peace of heart and mind that no amount of money or no alarm or security system can give.

David had experienced situations in life where his back was to the wall and he had to trust in the Lord. He had been in the back of a cave that Saul had chosen to relieve himself in. His enemy had been just a few feet from him as he was trapped in the back of that cave with no way to escape. Saul had even decided to lie down and sleep for a while in the coolness of that cave - David had to suffer the prolonged agony of waiting, not knowing if he would be detected. Read about it in the first half of 1 Samuel 24. David ended up sneaking up on the sleeping Saul and cutting off a corner of his robe.

But David learned a valuable lesson at this time - the lesson that in the final analysis - only God can protect our lives. God is the giver of life; God is the sustainer of life; and God is the protector of our lives. If we are walking in God's will down the pathway of life, we can have the confidence that no harm will befall us outside of the will of God himself - and that kind of assurance brings peace to our hearts and minds.

*I wish we had time to develop the prophetic significance of verse 10 - for this statement while true of David goes far beyond the scope of David's life finding its ultimate fulfillment in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, this verse is quoted in Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost as referring to Christ. And what comfort this prophesy must have brought to our Savior as he was making that lonely journey to the cross as he realized that he could place his life in the hands of God the Father for protection. For while it was God's will to allow evildoers to take the physical life of His Messiah so that the ultimate payment for sin could be made, God would never allow the grave to hold him - for he would protect his one and only son from the decay of death.

3. And finally, notice with me the fellowship that David found in his relationship with the Lord. READ 16:11

¹¹ You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

What a testimony! It reminds me of that great statement that concludes Psalm 23 - another of the great testimonies of David. *Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*

Here we find a similar sentiment.

*You have made known to me the path of life - God had given his direction and counsel to David. God had anointed him to be king and had now put him into that position

*You will fill me with joy in your presence - David had grown in his

relationship with the Lord so that he had experienced fellowship with God, and this gave to him great confidence as he anticipated even greater fellowship with God yet in this life and in the life hereafter.

*with eternal pleasures at your right hand - David had the confidence that this life was just the beginning of an eternal relationship with God. And this gave to him great confidence and optimism as he looked towards the future.

*The best life is lived as one follows God's path of life.

*Yes, it is true that life can be confusing at times - but God gives to his children counsel and direction so that they can know the course of his path to life and walk it with confidence.

*It is true that life can often be dangerous - but God gives to his children protection so that they can walk his path to life with peace of heart.

*It is true that life can sometimes be lonely - but God gives to his children His own presence and fellowship both now and with the promise for eternity to follow so that they do not have to walk his path of life alone.

Are you walking down God's pathway to life this morning?