TITLE: THE STRAIGHT PATH

TEXT: Proverbs 3:5-6 & 14:12

INTRODUCTION: We have just entered another New Year. Many will see the New Year as a time for new beginnings, a place to start over.

 For us as Christians it can be a reminder of how we were given a new beginning the day we accepted Christ.

 This morning I would like to talk about what it means to become the new creation that God has for us to be in Christ Jesus.

 OK, I have accepted Christ into my life... I am determined to become the new creation that God has for me to be... I have my sights set on heaven...

 How do I get from here, from salvation, safely to my end destination of Heaven?

 If our salvation is point A, the beginning for us, and Heaven, our eternal destination being point B.. How do we get from point A to point B?

 The answer to that question is really quite simple.

 God has laid out a path for us that goes from point A, our salvation, to Point B, Eternity with Him, and all that we need to do is walk on the path that God has laid out for us between these two points.

 Sound simple enough? How many have found that there are times when it is not quite that easy?

 The path that God has laid out for us to walk upon that will lead us safely to our destination is a straight path! The problem is, that, even though the path is straight, there are a lot of intersections along the way. A lot of exits that we can get off on and a lot of alternate routes that we may be tempted to take.

 Has anyone here this morning ever found that they have gotten off the proverbial path and found themselves traveling on another road? A road that you find does not lead to the destination that you started out for?

But, often a road that instead leads to destruction, to heartache, to pain or sorrow?

 Example: Jail ministry—a man once shared how he accepted Christ when we was 8 years old but got off the path that God had set him on...and it lead down a road of drug abuse and a lot of personal pain...a road that was leading him straight to destruction...

 Even though the path that God has provided for us to walk upon is a straight path, God new the difficulty we might have in staying on it, so He also provided us with a detailed map that tells us how to stay on the right path...He has given us His Inspired Word as a road map and His Holy Spirit as a GPS!

 Within His Word God has given us instructions on how we can stay on the path that will lead us directly into His glorious Kingdom!

 I want to share a verse of Scripture with you this morning that I shared with this young man in jail as he was seeking to straighten his life out and get back on the path that God had laid for him as a Christian to walk upon...

**Prov 3:5 (NIV) Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;**

**6 in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.**

**(NKJV And He shall direct your paths. )**

 Here we see three things, if we heed them, that will ensure that we will stay on the path that God set us upon the day that we were saved**..**

First....We are to...

**Trust in the LORD with all our heart .**

Just what does it mean to trust in the Lord?

Webster defines trust as: belief in another’s honesty, reliability, ability, ect.

 **0982 batach {baw-takh'}**

**1a1) to trust, trust in**

**1a2) to have confidence, be confident**

**1a4) to be secure**

We are to trust in the Lord, have confidence in Him, be secure in Him...

Example: Baby & parents...an infant doesn't worry about food, being changed, where the next meal is coming from, how the bills are going to be paid but it

simply trust in his parents to provide for them..

 We are to have this kind of trust in the Lord!

 We are to trust Him with all of our hearts! That means with all of our being....both in the physical and in the spiritual....

 We are to trust in Him, Be confident in Him, be secure in Him, and rest in His ability to take care of us!

 (Chorus we sing - cast all your cares on him for He careth for you--He is my peace-)

 Secondly, we are to **lean not upon our own understanding!**

Leaning upon our own understanding is a polar opposite to trusting in God with all our heart!

 We can do one or the other but not both at the same time!

 Leaning on our own understanding is simply self sufficiency, self confidence, being confident in ones self! God, I can do it better myself!

 The problem with leaning upon our own understanding is that our understanding is often flawed just like the rest of our being! Even our understanding is subject to our sinful nature.

 How did this young man that had accepted Christ at the age of 8 end up in jail on drug charges over Christmas? By trusting in the Lord with all of his heart? NO! By leaning upon his own understanding!

 How do we end up is some of the messes that we end up in? By trusting in the Lord with all of our heart?

NO! It is what can happen when we put God in the back seat and lean upon our own understanding.

**Prov 14:12 (NIV) There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.**

 To this young man the high of the drug seemed right to him at the time.

 When I was a young man, the high of alcohol seemed right to me as I was leaning upon my own understanding of things, but the end of these things all lead to death, to destruction!

 I was Chaplain for the Bridge, the chemical dependency unit here in Madison County several years ago... My role was primarily in the 5 step...(explain)

 In treatment the 4th step of AA is when the person in treatment has to take a personal inventory of their life. They have to writes out their personal story, digging deep to get all the “stuff” in their life to the surface.

 The 5th step is verbally sharing that with one other person. Sometimes I was chosen to be that other person to listen to them.

 I would hear horrendous stories of personal lives that had all but been destroyed by obsessive or abusive behavior.....

 I have had the privilege of doing several 5th steps with men in treatment and you know what? I never had one person say, Boy, am I thankful for my drug abuse or my alcohol abuse! Man, am I glad I did what I did! I am glad that I leaned upon my own understanding at the time instead of trusting in God with all my heart!

 I have never heard one inmate at the jail, when the bottom has fallen out of their world and they have hit rock bottom say, I am glad that I leaned upon my own understanding and did whatever it was that put them there!

Why?

**Prov 14:12 (NIV) There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.**

We are to lean, not upon our own understanding, because we can't trust it! We all have a fallen nature!

 And our understanding is just as flawed as the rest of our being!

 When we lean upon our own understanding is when we find ourselves getting off of the path that God has set before us as Christians onto an alternate path and that path will ultimately lead us toward destruction...

 We can't trust in our own understanding because our own understanding is not trustworthy! God is!

**Prov 3:5 (NIV) Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;**

And then thirdly....

**6 in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.**

Do you want to walk on the strait path that God has set before us?

 **Then In all our ways acknowledge him!**

**03045 yada` {yaw-dah'}**

**1a1a) to know, learn to know**

**1a1b) to perceive, find out and discern**

**1a1d) distinguish**

**1a1e) to know by experience**

 We need to know God, acknowledge Him, and be aquatinted with Him in all our ways!

 We become aquatinted with God as we read His Word, as we spend time with Him in prayer and in praise! We acknowledge Him as we seek to develop a relationship with him!

 Relationship requires effort! It requires spending quality time with someone.

Example: Husband and wife—A couple that never spends time together but each does their own thing will not grow together but they will grow apart!

 This is the same way that we develop a relationship with God---We need to spend quality time with Him!

 It is only as we acknowledge God in this way, as we acknowledge Him in all our ways, that we will be able to trust Him with all of our heart and lean upon Him instead of leaning upon ourselves…

 Old Green Bay packers head coach Mike Holmgren gives this testimony..

 He shares a heartbreaking moment in his life, when he was cut from the New York Jets as backup quarterback to Joe Namath. He shares now that that hurt but that adversity in his life directed him to a bigger plan.

 *"I had committed my life to Jesus Christ when I was 11, but in my pursuit to make a name for myself in football, I left God next to my dust-covered Bible.*

 *But after getting cut from the Jets, I pulled out my Bible and found comfort in a verse I had memorized in Sunday school:* ***'Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths' (Proverbs 3:5-6).***

 *Right then and there "I asked Jesus Christ to take control again of my life.*

 *My priorities now in life are faith, family, and football--in that order."*

 The secret here is that Christ will take control only after we first give Him control...

 In order for us to give Him control we must first come to the place where we trust Him..

And before we can come to the place of trusting Him we must first come to know Him! And to know Him we must spend time and build relationship with Him!

The Department of Transportation several years ago had set aside $200 million for research and testing of an Automated Highway System. This system would purportedly relieve traffic woes with "super cruise control" in heavily congested cities.

 Special magnets embedded in the asphalt every four feet would transfer signals between vehicle and the main computer system on the vehicle. Steering, acceleration, and braking would be controlled by sensors, computer navigation systems, and cameras along the side of the road. Control would be returned to drivers at their specified exit.

 Researchers and government officials claim they have the technological capability to address any potential problem. But one challenge they have yet to address.

 Mike Doble, Buick's technology manager at the time said: *"The only thing we can't do yet is get people comfortable enough to trust the system. It's not a technology issue, it's an issue of trust.*

 Would you let go of the wheel and drive, closely spaced, at high speeds, through San Diego with your trust placed in the hands of a computer system?"

 Trust is always the question.

 Folks, we have a God that we can trust! He has been proven faithful! We can place our lives in His hands! We can place the wheel in His hands and then rest in the assurance that He has everything under control, that He will keep us on the right path and get us safely to our destination as we just sit back and let Him do the driving!

 The problem is, all too often, we have placed God in the back seat when where He needs to be is in the driver’s seat!

 Before we ever allow Him to be in the driver’s seat we must first come to a place of trust...

 **To Trust in the Lord with all our hearts and lean not on our own understanding, in all our ways acknowledge Him and he will make our paths straight!**

 What is the path that you are traveling on today?

 Are you traveling on a path of self-sufficiency and self-indulgence and not sure where that path will lead you?

 Or have you placed the wheel of your life in God’s hands and have the assurance that the road that you are on is a road that will get you safely to your end destination?

 We have entered a new year, a time for resolution, a time of new beginnings--- Is it your resolve in this New Year to....

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**and he will make your paths straight.**