He will Teach and Lead

**Isa 48:16**Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there *am* I: and now the Lord GOD, and his Spirit, hath sent me.

Isa 48:17 Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; **I *am* the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way *that* thou shouldest go.**

Isa 48:18 O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea:

**Isaiah 48:17-18**

Thus saith the Lord thy Redeemer

The “I am’s” of God and of man

How beautiful and impressive are the “I am’s” of God; so different from the proud and empty boastings clearly discernible in the “I am’s” of man.
We are never nearer to misleading others and deceiving ourselves, than when we utter sentences beginning with “I am.” For, after all, what are we in ourselves that is worth mentioning? When we yield to the constraint of the Bible and conscience, and come to know something of our own hearts, we shall not dare to speak aloud to those about us; but, like Job, our words will be for God, and into His ears we shall whisper, “I am vile.” Or, if beneath the influence of the blessed Spirit we come to realise that our nature is changed, then shall we temper our assertion with humility, and, like Paul, say, “By the grace of God, I am what I am.” Only on God’s lips has the declaration, “I am,” its full meaning. This is God’s great name. (W. J. Mayers.)

God is what He is for His people

This grand self-assertion of God will increase in its beauty and power for us when we remember that God is not some powerful monarch, isolating Himself from those around Him, withholding succour from the distressed, guidance from the perplexed, relief from the poor, and living only to gratify Himself. What God is He is for His people—as the sun is light for the earth, or the earth nourishment for the crops, or the crops food for the people. How comforting and helpful is the recollection of what God is! In God’s “I am” the sick man finds his medicine, the poor man his riches, the lonely man his company, the sinner his salvation, the wanderer his hope, the wounded heart its balm, the hungry soul its manna, the fearful one his cordial, the dying one his life, and every glorified one his all. We must go out of ourselves to get real blessing for ourselves; and to whom should we go but to Him, described as the “Lord, the Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel”? The heart must have a person to love, to lean on, to live for. No doctrine, no idea, no creed can take the place of the person. The language just quoted describes a character peculiar to the Person of Jesus Christ. He is the true Lord, the Redeemer, the Holy One, supreme in all creation, paramount in redemption, having the pre-eminence in holiness. As Lord He rules, as Redeemer He saves, as Holy One He inspires and guides. He claims to be our Lord and God, and in this high station deigns to address us. Nor would we be slow to recognise His claims, but would have our faith to be the echo of His love, while, with Thomas, each one of us says: “My Lord and my God.” It is indeed Divine love which speaks to us in the text, and makes known to us the good will and pleasure of the great “I Am.” (*W. J.Mayers.*)

God, our Teacher and Leader

“Learn of Me” and “Follow Me” are two most impressive commands of Jesus Christ.

I. THERE IS AN IMPORTANT RELATION BETWEEN THESE TWO OFFICES OF OUR DIVINE MASTER. Not every teacher is a leader, not every leader a true teacher. Theory and practice are often divorced. Words and works are not always wedded. But in our Lord there is perfection in both teaching and leading. Does Jesus teach us to “pray and not to faint”? He also leads in this, for He prayed. Does Jesus teach us to glorify God by our “good works”? He “went about doing good.” Does our Master teach us to love our enemies and pray for those who despitefully use us? How grandly axe we led by His dying prayer, “Father, forgive them.” Are we to “seek first the kingdom of God,” according to His teaching? So, indeed, did He, for it was His meat and drink to do His Father’s will. Would He have us patient under suffering, calm amid reproach, submissive under affliction, and alway resigned? So, indeed, was He. Let the Garden of Gethsemane bear witness.

Let Pilate’s hall testify. Let Calvary give answer. He truly “teaches us to profit, and leads us by the way we should go.” These are the two great forces which aid us in the formation of the Christian character and the development of the Christian life. The teaching of our Master is sometimes out of the book of affliction and sorrow. He teaches us our folly, and weakness, and sin; and then leads us into His wisdom, and strength, and holiness. He teaches us in the valley of the shadow that He may lead us to the golden height of Divine light and love. He teaches us by the furnace that He may lead us to the palace. He teaches us by the noon-day heat, and then leads us to the sheltering rock. In multitudes of ways does our Lord teach His people, but ever to the end that He may lead them in the way in which they should go. But for His instructions we should be poor followers. If He beckoned to us in silence we should hardly dare to take a step. But He is not silent, for as He goes before us we can hear His voice. The thought of His instruction encourages us, while His leadership emboldens us.

**II.** Let us now spend a little while in THE CONTEMPLATION OF THOSE SWEET WORDS, “WHICH LEADETH THEE.” Here, indeed, is found soul-comfort and strength, such as we all need amid our feebleness and the bewilderment around. It will be well for us to read these words in the light of Scripture thoughts and incidents. How they remind us of God leading His people from the thraldom of Egypt. Only let faith’s eye be clear, and the leading pillar will ever be discerned. In the Song of Moses we have a beautiful figure to help us in understanding our Lord s leading. There the mention of the eagle’s care for her young in fluttering over them as they try to fly, and spreading her wings beneath them to give them confidence, and bearing them on her wings when they are weary, is followed by the declaration,—“So the Lord alone did lead them.” As we pass on we come to the beautiful poem of the shepherd-king, and we hear his sweet voice singing, “He leadeth me beside the still waters.” And then we find David’s son putting into the lips of wisdom the words, “I lead in the way of righteousness.” Let us take another example; now from the prophet Isaiah. There we find this precious promise of our God’s: “I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known. Is not this what He has done and still does for us? How strengthening, again, is the promise recorded by this same prophet: I will heal him; I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him; and how soothing the words written for us by Jeremiah: “With favours will I lead them; I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble.”

**III.** WHAT SPIRIT SHALL WE MANIFEST IN VIEW OF THIS PRECIOUS TRUTH? Let us take our place by the Psalmist, and with him in a spirit of humility, resignation, trustfulness, and hope, put up these petitions: Psa\_5:8; Psa\_25:5; Psa\_27:11; Psa\_31:3; Psa\_61:2; Psa\_139:24; Psa\_143:10. Thus shall we on earth have a true foretaste of the unspeakable rest and blessedness of that sinless place where “the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall lead them, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” (*W. J. Mayers.*)

**Profitable teaching and right leading**

**I.** GOD AS A REDEEMER. The redemption spoken of by Isaiah was temporal in the first place. But he ascends a much higher sphere than that circumscribed by any earthly demand.

**1.** The captivity of evil; the Babylon of sin. The whole human race is involved in misery as in guilt. The bondage of iniquity is the worst sort of captivity that beings capable of a better life can possibly suffer.

**2.** The mercy of the Redeemer at work in the city of bondage.

**(1)** The greater because of our helplessness and need.

**(2)** The greater because of our sinfulness and unbelief.

**(3)** Crowned by the maintenance of God’s righteousness with the recovery and perfection of our own. The Gospel is not simply a principle of forgiveness, it is that and something more: it is the power to become holy—the happiness and endlessness of a righteous and godly life.

**II.** GOD AS A TEACHER. The Gospel is too generally only regarded and valued as a something which adds to our enjoyment. Few Christians even understand the beneficence of discipline.

**1.** Look at the Gospel as a teacher. The new birth opens the eyes to a new world; it is followed by a new language. Here is the high school of heaven in which the Spirit of God is the principal Teacher.

**2.** Learning is never easy. There is no royal road to this learning, any more than to mere secular knowledge.

**(1)** The lessons are harder because we have to unlearn. Satan has had us in his school, where we were as apt to learn as he to teach.

**(2)** The lessons are harder because we are not diligent. The elements always seem most difficult, because they are so near. If a man always sticks at the elements he is ever in difficulties, yet never makes progress.

**(3)** The learning is harder because as yet we are not much better than invalids.

**3.** Yet all the teaching is profitable.

**(1)** As a correction. Our weakness makes us more humble, and less prone to self-reliance.

**(2)** As a spiritual development. All these things are made to work together for our highest good.

**III.** GOD AS A LEADER.

**1.** The way God would have us go is not always according to our inclination.

**(1)** The pleasantest way is not necessarily the best.

**(2)** The fact that we are called to walk in an unpleasant path, so far from proving God s desertion may indicate just the reverse. He may be nearer to us in the cloud than in the sunshine. The wilderness with Him in it is the way to Canaan: no other way, however pleasant, can be safe.

**2.** The knowledge that it is His way should be enough.

**(1)** As a reason. For there can be nothing irrational in following Him who is the source and crown of wisdom.

**(2)** As an incentive. For the voice of His approval should sound both distinctly and pleasantly to our ears. (*J. Parrish, B. A.*)

**Life an education**

**1*.*** Our life is an education; not a mere probation, or trial of what we are to be and to do, but a training of our lives and characters into as great likeness as is possible to the perfect life and character of God, revealed to us in Christ. It is a great truth, helping us to see many things in their true light; above all, helping us to understand the meaning of our life, and its relation to the will of God. The human father is too often but a deceiving type through which to try to understand the Divine Father. Still, even those who have had least to thank their earthly parents for should be able to rise to the idea, however imperfect, of a wise, righteous, unselfish fatherhood, and to picture to themselves a man who should show these qualities in his relation to his children. And thinking of such an one, could you think of him as content that they should simply go their own way, seek their own pleasure, indulge their own whims, let loose their own tempers and desires, and own no authority, and recognise no purpose in life, and believe in no will higher, more experienced, more just than their own? All that is truest and most useful in the discipline and training which an earthly father, who knows his relation to his family and is faithful to it, bestows on his children, is based on something that is eternal in the heavens, that exists as the true rule of fatherhood in the mind of God the Father. Is it not involved in the very idea that God is our Father that there should be in His mind a design for each of us? And is it not inseparable from such a design that there should be much in it that is not naturally easy and pleasant? The pain has been inevitable because the true end of life has been kept in view, above all temporary and petty objects that lie in the way to that end. The end could not be reached by one ignorant, untrained, undisciplined, unaccustomed to obey or to learn. In the training for the higher life it is not all plain and smooth. Least of all is it so at the beginning. This is the meaning of the “strait gate” and the “narrow way” that “lead to life.” They are strait and narrow, because they lead to life, because they lead us on to a definite purpose of God for us that is not laid down at random, not shaped by chance, but is the result of love and foresight, and must, like all things that are high and good, be worked out not carelessly and easily, but with patience and thought and toil.

**2.** If we believe in this Divine purpose of our life, if we believe that the object of it is to train us into more perfect union with our Father, to educate us to fill our place as His children in His family, surely it will be our wisdom to try to learn what it is and to fulfil it. How are we to do this? Not through self-will; of that we may be sure.

**3.** There are two great errors into which those who are failing of God’s plan may have fallen, or be falling. There is the error of being self-confident, impatient of all authority, advice, control, even of such control (a parent’s, for instance) as is one of God’s own ordinances, one of the abiding bonds of human life, which cannot be broken without the family or the society in which it is broken suffering loss, and at last dissolution. And there is the error of yielding absolutely to some authority (other than a natural authority) to which you submit your own reason and conscience, and for which you resign your own responsibility. We should beware of either of these errors. And lest we fall into them, we should use our reason and our conscience diligently in striving to find out the will of God for us; and if ever it seems hard to find, then there is the refuge of work and of prayer to resort to, until the dawn of light and peace.

**4.** It is a great thing to trust God; to have faith in Him and in His goodwill and loving purpose for us, really to believe that we are children in His family, and scholars in His school Such faith is the root of strength, hope, patience and courage in human life. (*R. H. Story, D. D.*)

The soul’s Guide

(for the New Year):—

1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GUIDE. He is Jehovah—the Lord our strength; the Cause of all existence, and the Fountain and Source of life. Thus He is “mighty to save,” and able to conduct His servants through every danger, and deliver them from every foe. He is thy Redeemer, loving thee with an everlasting love. A companion to rescue thee from danger, to take a loving interest in all thy cares and sorrows: One who has “chosen thee in the furnace of affliction,” that He may make thee “all glorious within,” and imprint on thee His own likeness. He is “the Holy One of Israel,” faithful and true, rich, tender, and unfailing in His promises.

**II.** THE METHODS OF GUIDANCE. “Teacheth thee to profit leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.” The methods are various and sometimes peculiar, but always full of wisdom. Nothing is ever wanting on the part of the Teacher: if it is necessary for the pupil’s progress, he will have to submit to the discipline of restraint, and to bear the yoke of adversity.

**1.** God leads us sometimes by unknown paths, by ways we cannot understand. Joseph, Jacob, Daniel, Elijah. The ways of providence need careful watching to see their fitness and beauty.

**2.** By gentleness. David could say, “Thy gentleness hath made me great,”—the Divine condescension had stooped to his frailties and errors. “I willguide thee with Mine eye.” Not with bit and bridle, nor with the “hook in thy nose,” as Sennacherib.

**3.** This guidance is continual. The Guide never relaxes His vigilant care. He will “never leave thee,”—“even unto death” He is by thy side. Thus guided we are always safe, right, and happy.

**III.** THE RESULTS OF ACCEPTING THIS GUIDANCE (verse 18). “If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land.” God’s promises are always to character.

**1.** Peace—that quiet, restful condition of soul which is the heritage of those from whom all painful emotions and all disturbing influences are removed.

**2.** Righteousness—as the foundation on which character is built, and the element of which it consists. “Righteousness . . . as the waves of the sea—so wide in its influence as to cover all the interests of life; so deep as to go down to the deepest places of the heart, and permeate the whole life with its power and beauty. And the peace and righteousness united make life fruitful—so that it abounds in goodness, and the soul at all times and in all places is enabled to fulfil life’s highest duty. (*J. Edwards.*)

It might have been

These words would be sad from the lips of man, but coming from God they are inexpressibly touching and solemn. They are the cry of a wounded heart. They tell not of the wrath of justice, but of the sorrows of love This may be regarded as implying—

I. GRIEF FOR LOST HOPES. Once there was hope and fair promise. God’s beautiful ideal might be realised. But that is all gone. God only knows what has been lost. He is, so to speak, alone with His sorrow.

**II.** JUDGMENT FOR NEGLECTED OPPORTUNITIES. God is speaking here in the character of “the Redeemer—the Holy One of Israel.” He recalls what He had done, and what might and ought to have been the happy results. But the precious opportunities had been abused.

**1.** Gracious instruction. “I am the Lord which teacheth thee to profit.”

**2.** Infallible guidance. “Which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.”

**3.** Holy blessedness. Then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.” But the time is past. The glorious vision has faded away for ever. Neglected opportunities bring sure and terrible retribution.

**III.** EXONERATION FOR NEEDLESS RUIN. Reason, conscience, and the Holy Scriptures combine in testifying that man’s ruin is not of chance or fate, far less of God, but exclusively of himself. (*W. Forsyth, M. A.*)

**I am the Lord thy God, which teacheth thee to profit.**—

The benefit of afflictions

I. AFFLICTIONS MAY BE MADE PROFITABLE TO THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

**1.** They may be greatly instrumental in turning off their attention from the world.

**2.** They may turn off their affections as well as their attention from the captivating objects of the world.

**3.** They may be of much greater benefit to them by raising their affections to God, the source of all good.

**II.** GOD IS ABLE TO MAKE AFFLICTIONS PROFITABLE TO HIS CHILDREN.

**1.** He is able to bring Himself into the view of His afflicted children.

**2.** He can place their affections as well as attention upon Himself.

**III.** THIS IS A MATTER OF CONSOLATION TO THEM. Improvement—

**1.** Since God makes use of afflictions to keep His children near to Him, it appears that they are extremely prone to forsake Him.

**2.** It appears from the manner in which God instructs and benefits His afflicted children, that they may derive the greatest advantage from their severest sufferings.

**3.** If God chastises His children for good, then those who are suffered to live in uninterrupted prosperity have reason to fear that they do not belong to the household of faith.

**4.** If God can make afflictions profitable to His children, then we may justly conclude that He can make them profitable to others.

**5.** It appears that every person may know whether he belongs to His family or not. Afflictions are peculiar trials of the heart, and give men the best opportunity to determine what is in reality the supreme object of their affections.

**6.** The afflicted ought to be of a teachable spirit under Divine convictions. (*N. Emmons, D. D.*)

True profit

It is not only the commercial world which has to make its calculations of profit and loss. All life is made up of profit and loss. If there is not profit, there is loss; if there is not loss, there is profit.

1. I understand the text to mean, not that God teaches us in a profitable way, but that He instructs us how to get the profit in all things; that He gives that faculty, the power to take the good and refuse the evil.

**2.** Consider how God does “teach to profit.”

**(1)** The first thing which God will probably teach, and which we must receive, is a general confidence that there is profit, however imperceptible it may be at the time to us, in the thing which He is sending to us.

**(2)** This faith given, the next thing that God puts into our hearts is to seek that good; eternal profit, profit both to ourselves and to Him, in that He is glorified in His own work. We are to look for that profit, not on the surface, but in certain deeper, hidden meanings and intentions which lie underneath. Into those deeper meanings God will lead and admit you. But not without three things: a reverent acceptance of His teaching, hard work, and a good life. (*J. Vaughan, M. A*.)