

Being Led by Our Heavenly Father

Mark Sappington
Given on August 6, 2020

Chains are a very useful and many times an invaluable tool for accomplishing a task. Chains vary widely in size. You can make chains by hooking together paper clips. That chain would be very small and very flimsy and would not be able to pull much. We have bigger chains that we put on our tires to drive in the snow (something we don't do here in Houston). We have even bigger chains that we use to pull trucks and cars. And then we have some of the biggest chains connected to huge anchors on warships such as battleships and aircraft carriers where the chains themselves are huge and weigh several tons.

There are numerous, and maybe even humorous, examples of everyday activities that, given the opposite condition of its use or function becomes useless or impossible. Activities like skiing up a mountain, or floating upstream in a river, or falling up the stairs, or coasting uphill. These are all examples of counterintuitive, if not impossible, actions.

And brethren, another counterintuitive and practically impossible action is pushing a chain.

Have you ever tried to push a chain? You didn't get too far, did you? What happens when you push a chain? The chain just folds in on itself and begins to bunch up into a tangled mess of chaos. Then you spend the next couple of hours trying to untangle the chain links from the huge mess.

However, when you pull a chain, the chain follows link by link in a single line and just follows you wherever you are walking. Chains work when they are pulled. Chains do not work and function well when they are pushed. This is true regardless of size and type. It is true if you make a chain of paper clips on your desk and it is true with huge chains attached to the anchor of an aircraft carrier. When released, the weight of the anchor pulls the chain as it descends deeper and deeper into the water, without getting tangled and bunching up.

Brethren, this same principle applies in our spiritual lives and in our Heavenly Father's relationship and interaction with us and in our relationship and interaction with Him.

In my sermon this afternoon entitled "Being Led by our Heavenly Father", I would like to explore the subject of being led by God Our Father and its application in our spiritual lives. I would like to explore this subject in four points.

The first point in being led by our Heavenly Father is:

1. Our Heavenly Father does not push us.

Brethren, this is a very important concept and truth. Being pushed has a negative connotation. Being pushed brings up images of a bully pushing a little boy or girl to the ground, or being forced to do something against our will. Back in the 1960's and 1970's, the illegal drug dealers were called "pushers".

I have not found an example where our Heavenly Father pushed people to do actions against their will. But there are many examples of where He inspired people, led people, encouraged people to take actions.

However, there is a being who pushes us and bunches us up into a tangle mess of chaos. This is his specialty, and he is very, very good at it. That being is Satan.

Satan and his demons push continually at the saints, God Our Father's elect and called out ones. Satan hates our Heavenly Father more than anyone or anything else. Satan hates all that is connected with God Our Father, including Jesus, the Holy Angels, and the saints, including us.

Satan is definitely not our friend. He wants our Heavenly Father's plan of salvation to fail. In Matthew 4 Satan tried desperately to get Jesus to sin, just once, so that Jesus would nullify the entire plan of salvation that Jesus and the Father had implemented. After tempting Jesus with hunger after He had fasted for 40 days (by tempting Him to turn the stones into bread) and with arrogance (by tempting Him to deliberately fall from the top of the temple to make His Father save Him), Satan tempted Jesus with one final test.

Matthew 4:8 *Again, the devil taketh him [Jesus] up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;*
9) *And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.*
10) *Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*
11) *Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.*
(KJV)

Satan pushed at Jesus in tempting Him with everything he had. But Jesus, filled without measure with His Father's Spirit, resisted the temptations and defeated Satan's attempts.

Satan was not successful in influencing Jesus to turn away from His Father. But Satan has not given up on his attempts to thwart God's plan of salvation. He wants to destroy the saints and undo the plan of salvation by disqualifying each and every one of them from entering our Father's Kingdom.

Again, Satan wants to destroy us and our salvation. The Apostle Peter warns us in 1 Peter 5 to be careful because Satan does indeed want to destroy us.

1 Peter 5:8 *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.*

9) *Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. (KJV)*

The Greek word for sober in verse 8 is “νήφω” (nepho) Strong’s #3525 which not only means to “abstain from wine”, but also “to be circumspect and to be free from illusion” and in extension “to be free from the intoxicating influences of sin”. Satan wants to destroy us, and we need to always be cognizant of that fact.

The Apostle Paul wants us also to forgive others, because harboring resentment and animosity to others is a crack in our defenses which Satan will exploit, and he will take advantage of that to the maximum.

2 Corinthians 2:9 *For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things.*

10) *To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also: for if I forgave anything, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ;*

11) *Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices. (KJV)*

Brethren, do we quickly forgive others of their offenses against us? Or do we harbor resentment and bitterness and even hatred toward others because of their actions? Satan will push at us with great force to use this resentment and bitterness to fester and to drive a wedge between us and our Father and between us and our fellow brothers and sisters in the faith.

Satan has done an incredible job in hiding our Heavenly Father in plain sight in the pages of the Bible. Satan does not want the wonderful truth of the identity of God Our Father to be disclosed and revealed to the world and to the Churches of God. How many times have we had conversations about the identity of God Our Father in the Bible with brethren in the Churches of God, and after showing many irrefutable verses and proofs from scripture, the immediate response is a denigrating phrase of “What difference does it make?”

We will read a portion of the well-known parable of the sower and the seed in Mark 4.

Mark 4:3 *Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow:*

4) *And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. (KJV)*

The disciples then asked Jesus to explain the parable. He did so, beginning in verse 14.

Mark 4:14 *The sower soweth the word*

15) *And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts. (KJV)*

So, Satan comes and snatches that understanding from people immediately upon hearing the truth about God Our Father, even in the Churches of God. He hates this truth and does not want it proclaimed.

Furthermore, brethren, Satan and his demons push people to hurt themselves. In Luke 9, we read about a little boy who was demon-possessed.

Luke 9:38 *And, behold, a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son: for he is mine only child*

39) *And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again, and bruising him hardly departeth from him.*

40) *And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not.*

41) *And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither.*

42) *And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father. (KJV)*

Satan continually pushed and battered the poor boy. The boy was saved from a life of self-mutilation and torment by the healing performed by Jesus.

Peter was preaching in Caesarea after he had had the vision of the sheet with the unclean animals and after he had met Cornelius, who wanted to be baptized. In his discourse, Peter preached the following:

Acts 10:37 *That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached;*

38) *How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. (KJV)*

In verse 38, the Greek word for *oppressed* is “καταδυναστεύω” (katadunasteuo) Strong’s 2616 which means to “overpower, to treat harshly, to tyrannize.” So, Jesus healed those who were being tyrannized by Satan and his demons. Just like a bully can push and terrorizes a schoolboy or girl, Satan pushes and terrorizes people who let him.

No one is immune to Satan’s influence and to Satan’s devices. Not even elders and leaders in the Church. In 1 Timothy 3, we will see some of the qualifications for an elder in the church.

1 Timothy 3:2 *A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;*

3) *Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;*

4) *One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;*

5) *(For if a man knows not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)*

6) *Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.*

7) *Moreover, he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.* (KJV)

Satan will push in any way he can and use any tool at his disposal to get the saints to fail. To get the saints to turn against the Father, to get the saints to sin and to snare others to sin. Satan pushes at everyone. No one is immune.

Satan pushes at all servants in the Church. The Apostle Paul lists several qualifications for being a servant of our Heavenly Father.

2 Timothy 2:24 *And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,*

25) *In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;*

26) *And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.* (KJV)

In verse 25, we read about those in the Church who oppose themselves who need to recover themselves out of the snare of Satan. Verse 26 also states that Satan takes them captive at his will.

If God Our Father allows it, Satan can even cast us into prison.

Revelation 2:10 *Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.* (KJV)

Satan pushed against King David and against Israel and pushed David to do something that Yehovah had specifically told David not to do.

1 Chronicles 21:1 *And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.*

2) *And David said to Joab and to the rulers of the people, Go, number Israel from Beersheba even to Dan; and bring the number of them to me, that I may know it.* (KJV)

Satan can only push us to the limits that our Heavenly Father puts on him. And God Our Father uses Satan's pushing to further the spiritual maturing process in us. Again, Satan pushes us; our Heavenly Father does not.

The second point in being led by our Heavenly Father is:

2. Our Heavenly Father draws, leads and guides us.

Conversely to Satan and his demons who push us, our Heavenly Father draws us, leads us, and guides us. The Bible is full of verses showing how God Our Father, Yehovah, draws, leads, and guides His people.

Now we will read one of the most well-known verses of the Bible in the Churches of God, John 6:44.

John 6:44 *No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.* (KJV)

What is interesting is the choice of words that Jesus used. Historically, we basically rephrase Jesus' words to say "No man can come to Jesus except the Father calls him." But Jesus did not say that.

The Greek verb for "draw" in verse 44 is "ἑλκύω" (helkuo) Strong's #1670 which means to "to draw, to pull, to persuade, to draw in (focusing on the attraction power involved with the drawing).

So, Jesus is stating that our Heavenly Father draws us toward Him so that we in turn will be attracted to Him. It is the only way to be able to come to Jesus, His Son. It is the only way that the conversion process begins.

We sing the words in Psalm 25 in Hymn 87 – "Our God is Good and Upright.

Psalm 25:8 *Good and upright is the LORD: therefore, will he teach sinners in the way.*

9) The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.

10) *All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.* (KJV)

Verse 9 in the New International Version states:

He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way. (NIV)

Verse 9 in the New Living Translation states:

He leads the humble in doing right, teaching them his way. (NLT)

In Psalm 31 Yehovah, our Heavenly Father leads and guides us.

Psalm 31:1 *In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness.*

2) *Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me.*

3) *For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.*

4) *Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for thou art my strength."* (KJV)

The Hebrew verb for *guide* in verse 2 is “נָהַל” (nahal) Strong’s #5095, which means “to lead or guide to a watering place, bring to a place of rest”, just like a shepherd does for his sheep.

Psalms 48 has another example of Yehovah’s guidance to us as given by David to the sons of Korah.

Psalm 48:1 *Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. (KJV)*

Continuing in verse 14)

14) *For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.* (KJV)

In verse 14, David uses *guide* the Hebrew verb “נָהַג” (nahag) Strong’s # 5090, which is closely associated with the verb “נָהַל” (nahal) that we read in Psalm 31:03. This verb “נָהַג” (nahag) means to “lead on and to guide.

Psalms 73 is another psalm of David concerning guidance by Yehovah.

Psalm 73:23 *Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand.*

24) *Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.*

25) *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.*

26) *My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.*

27) *For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee.*

28) *But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works. (KJV)*

In verse 24, David uses *guide* the Hebrew verb “נָחַה” (nakhah) Strong’s # 5148, which also means to “lead on and to guide toward a certain direction”. David was happy and confident that Yehovah would guide him and David wanted to draw near to Yehovah.

In Isaiah 58 there is a prophecy about future national repentance of the nation of Israel, Isaiah states that Yehovah, our Heavenly Father, will guide them continually.

Isaiah 58:09 *Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity;*

10) And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday:

11) And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. (KJV)

So even in the future, with repentance, and with an attitude of obedience and willingness to follow our Heavenly Father, He will guide mankind.

The Old Testament is full of verses which discuss Yehovah guiding His people. It is enough for three or four sermons to cover all the scriptures. But we get the picture and the understanding from the verses we have covered so far, that our Heavenly Father guides us and leads us. He does not push us.

Well, brethren, what about the New Testament?

Please turn with me to John 16. On the last night of His physical life, Jesus was instructing His disciples concerning the Holy Spirit and that it would soon come to them. The Greek word for Spirit is “πνεῦμα” (pneuma) Strong’s #4151, which means spirit or breath or wind. Many English words which start with the letters “pn” in which the “p” is silent such as pneumatic, pneumonia, and pneumonic are derived from this Greek word. The Greek word “πνεῦμα” is actually neuter in Greek, not masculine. So, in the Greek language, a Greek-speaker would automatically refer to “πνεῦμα” or spirit as “it” and not “he”. But Trinitarians translated the Bible into English and changed the “it” to “he” in order to refer to the Holy Spirit as the third being in the Trinity.

John 16:13 *Howbeit when he [it], the Spirit of truth, is come, he [it] will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.* (KJV)

So, Jesus instructed His disciples that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth. In Romans 8, the Apostle Paul gave a definition of who the Sons of our Heavenly Father are.

Romans 8:12 *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.*

13) For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

14) For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. (KJV)

Again, the people whom our Heavenly Father has chosen to work with in this lifetime are led by His Spirit. They are not pushed.

Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit without measure all His life on earth.

Luke 4:1 *And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,*

2) Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered. (KJV)

So, Jesus, being full of the Holy Spirit, was led by the Holy Spirit to do certain things and to go to certain places.

A great example of our Heavenly Father leading His people is with the children of Israel as they came out of Egypt.

Exodus 13:17 *And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt.*

18) *But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt. (KJV)*

Continuing in verse 21)

21) *And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night:*

22) *He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people. (KJV)*

So, Yehovah led the Israelites from the front. He did not push the Israelites from the rear. He led His people and they followed.

In Numbers 9, we read how Yehovah led the Israelites during the 40 years in the wilderness.

Numbers 9:15 *And on the day that the tabernacle was reared up the cloud covered the tabernacle, namely, the tent of the testimony: and at even there was upon the tabernacle as it were the appearance of fire, until the morning.*

16) *So it was always: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night.*

17) *And when the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, then after that the children of Israel journeyed: and in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents.*

18) *At the commandment of the LORD the children of Israel journeyed, and at the commandment of the LORD they pitched: as long as the cloud abode upon the tabernacle they rested in their tents.*

19) *And when the cloud tarried long upon the tabernacle many days, then the children of Israel kept the charge of the LORD, and journeyed not.*

20) *And so it was, when the cloud was a few days upon the tabernacle; according to the commandment of the LORD they abode in their tents, and according to the commandment of the LORD they journeyed.*

21) *And so it was, when the cloud abode from even unto the morning, and that the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they journeyed: whether it was by day or by night that the cloud was taken up, they journeyed.*

22) Or whether it was two days, or a month, or a year, that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents, and journeyed not: but when it was taken up, they journeyed. (KJV)

So, brethren, whenever the pillar of cloud or fire moved, the Israelites packed up their belongings and followed it, and whenever the pillar of cloud or fire stopped, the Israelites stopped and camped. That was their life for 40 years.

David wrote about this phenomenon hundreds of years later.

Psalm 78:14 *In the daytime also he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire. (KJV)*

Have you ever thought what would have happened if the pillar of cloud or fire moved, and the Israelites did not follow it? In the wilderness? What would have happened if the Israelites just stayed where they were and let the pillar disappear past the horizon? No more manna. No more water. Instead of drawing close to Yehovah and continuing to follow Him, they would have put a larger and larger distance between themselves and their God. Fortunately for Ancient Israel, that did not happen.

Brethren, our Heavenly Father continually draws, leads, and guides us. But we must be willing to follow His lead.

The third point in being led by our Heavenly Father is:

3. As Shepherds, God Our Father and Jesus Christ lead us as their sheep.

Sheep need and desire a shepherd. Sheep are loyal to the shepherd who guards them, protects them, and cares for them. Sheep recognize the voice of their shepherd. Other voices that are unfamiliar to them can frighten them.

In his book *Animals of the Bible*, John Worcester writes that “The shepherds of the East give a name to each member of their flocks, which the sheep soon learn, and to which they instantly respond. In the dry season many shepherds with their flocks meet at regular times around the wells. The flocks mingle at the troughs, drinking. But when all are satisfied, the shepherds move off in different directions, calling their sheep, which immediately follow, everyone its own shepherd, with scarcely the possibility of a mistake.

John Worcester further writes:

It is not uncommon in our country for single lambs to receive names and be petted, when they become models of trustful obedience toward their master, but remain timid towards a stranger. It is a peculiarity of sheep that while they are so easily led by one whom they know, they are driven with difficulty. They huddle together as if frightened, and the more they are pressed, the more frightened they seem. But if the leaders start forward, the flock follows.

Sheep have the natural disposition to follow their shepherd. Sheep are led from the front. Sheep are not driven from the rear. Cattle on the other hand are driven from the rear and

from the sides. That is why they are called cattle drives. When driving cattle, the cowboys on horseback will scare the cattle into moving by yelling, by whistling, and by shooting guns off in the air. The cattle will then move away from the noise and the cowboys because they are scared or startled. The cattle are pushed by the cowboys, much the same way that Satan and his demons push us.

This is just the exact opposite with sheep and their shepherd.

Just as sheep need and desire a shepherd, we as Christians need and desire a shepherd to lead us, to guide us and to protect us.

John 10:1 *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that enters not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.*

2) *But he that enters in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.*

3) *To him the porter opens; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out.*

4) *And when he puts forth his own sheep, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.*

5) *And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. (KJV)*

And Jesus Christ is our good Shepherd. Let's continue to read in John 10.

John 10:11 *I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep.*

12) *But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and flees: and the wolf catches them, and scatters the sheep.*

13) *The hireling flees, because he is an hireling, and cares not for the sheep.*

14) *I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.,*

15) *As the Father knows me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. (KJV)*

Jesus Christ is our Shepherd. He is the Good Shepherd, and He was willing to die for His sheep. Jesus was not a hireling who did not care for His sheep. Let's continue in John 10.

John 10:25 *Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.*

26) *But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.*

27) *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: (KJV)*

So, Jesus is our Shepherd. But our Heavenly Father is our shepherd also. Please turn with me to a very well-known scripture in Psalm 23.

Psalm 23:1 *The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.*

2) *He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. (KJV)*

So, Yehovah, God Our Father, is our Shepherd and He leads us also.

We can read about Yehovah, our Heavenly Father and Him being the Shepherd of Israel.

Psalm 80:1 *Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth.*

2) *Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come and save us. (KJV)*

We know that Yehovah, God Our Father, dwelled between cherubim in the Holy of Holies. Again, verse 1 shows that our Heavenly Father was the Shepherd of Israel who led them like a flock of sheep.

In 1 Peter 5 we read about the Chief Shepherd.

1 Peter 5:1 *The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:*

2) *Feed the flock of God [ο θεος – ho theos – the God – God Our Father] which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;*

3) *Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.*

4) *And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. (KJV)*

Verse 2 explains verse 4. The flock is the flock of “the God” who was Yehovah to the Jews and the Christians of the First Century. “The God” is God Our Father. Therefore, the Chief Shepherd of that flock is our Heavenly Father, who along with His Son, Jesus the Anointed One, the Good Shepherd, lead us as Their sheep.

The fourth point in being led by our Heavenly Father is:

4. You determine your relationship with Your Heavenly Father.

No one else but you will determine your relationship with Your Heavenly Father and with Jesus the Anointed One. No one else determines your salvation but you.

Philippians 2:12 *Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*

13) *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. (KJV)*

The Greek verb for “work out” is “κατεργάζομαι” (katergazomai) Strong’s #2716, which means “to effect by labor, to achieve, to work out, to bring about, to do that from which something results.” So we are to labor and to work out to bring about our own salvation. Our salvation is a personal and individual work which we work out and bring about with our personal and individual relationship with God our Father and Jesus Christ. Brethren, we cannot earn our salvation. Salvation is a gift from our Heavenly Father. But we must do our part, and we must respond to our Father’s will and do our Father’s will.

Our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ earnestly desire for us to succeed. Their whole plan is based on us and mankind succeeding.

When Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, His disciples fell asleep while they were waiting with Him.

Matthew 26:40 *And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?*

41) Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. (KJV)

So, the Spirit is always willing but the flesh is weak. God Our Father is always there, drawing us, leading us, and guiding us toward Him and toward His Son and toward perfection.

This is exactly why we determine our relationship with our Heavenly Father. You can push someone against their will. You cannot lead and guide someone against their will. The fact is that for one to lead another, the one being led has to be willing to follow.

There is a host of reasons why we don’t follow Christ and follow our Father. There is always an excuse that we can put in the way. Jesus addressed this in talking with new disciples in Luke 9. And there is a cost associated with following Jesus and God Our Father.

Luke 9:23 *And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. (KJV)*

continuing in verse 27)

27) And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. (KJV)

continuing in verse 58

58) And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

59) And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

60) Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.

61) *And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.*

62) *And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. (KJV)*

Again, if the Father draws us toward Him, and we fight Him and refuse to go toward Him, it would be just like the Israelites if they refused to pack up their tents and belongings and move when the pillar of cloud moved.

Are we drawing closer to our Heavenly Father with each passing day? The Apostle James talks about a reciprocal relationship with God Our Father.

James 4:7 *Submit yourselves therefore to God [ο θεος – ho theos – the God – God Our Father]. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

8) *Draw nigh to God [ο θεος – ho theos – the God – God Our Father], and he will draw nigh to you. (KJV)*

Brethren, are we drawing near to our God Most High? How is our relationship with our Heavenly Father? How deep is it? How close is it? How much time do we spend with Him? How much time do we talk with Him? How much time do we meditate on issues with Him?

How is our prayer life? Do we pray? What do we pray about each day? Is the bulk of our prayers basically a list of “gimme’s”? “Gimme this and gimmie that.” Even when the “gimmes” are for others and for their healing and help. Not that praying for others and for their healing and help during their trials is not a good and important aspect of our prayers. It very much is. But do our prayers go beyond that?

Do we talk with our Heavenly Father about His creation and its beauty? About our being able to see the beautiful colors that He has created in the physical universe around us? About how honored we are to be called in this lifetime? About how wonderful it will be at our resurrection when we will be spirit beings and when we will see Jesus for the first time and the angels for the first time? And when we will see our Heavenly Father for the first time in all His splendor and glory? Do we talk with our Father about being with Him forever in the future, learning from Him, speaking with Him, honoring and worshiping Him? Do we talk to Him about our desires, our hopes, our aspirations, our dreams, and our ambitions? Is our prayer life with the Father the same as it was 10 years ago? Have we grown?

Brethren, what kind of relationship do we have with our Father? What does a mature relationship with our Heavenly Father look like? Our physical families give us a clue. When a father has a son or a mother has a daughter, in the early years, the relationship is very elementary. However, later in life, when the son or daughter is in their late 20’s, the relationship matures to where the father and son or mother and daughter become more and more like friends. The father is always still the father and the mother is always the mother, but the relationship is very different than when the son or daughter was 6 years old. The relationship matures. The same should be true with our Heavenly Father.

The Apostle James describes a patriarch who had a mature relationship with our Heavenly Father.

James 2:23 *And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. (KJV)*

Can we say that about us? Has our relationship with our Heavenly Father reached a level to where we could be called a Friend of God Most High?

So, brethren, we determine our individual and personal relationship with our Heavenly Father.

In today's sermon, we have explored the subject of being led by God Our Father in our personal daily lives. And we have explored that subject through four points, which are:

- 1. Our Heavenly Father does not push us.** Just like pushing a chain, pushing does not ultimately work. Satan is the one who pushes.
- 2. Our Heavenly Father draws, leads, and guides us.** Just like pulling a chain, God Our Father draws us to Him and leads us toward the Kingdom. But we have the duty and the responsibility to follow Him.
- 3. As shepherds, God Our Father & Jesus Christ lead us as their sheep.** God Our Father and Jesus Christ gently lead us from the front like a shepherd guiding his sheep. They do not drive us like cattle from behind by scaring us and moving us against our will.
- 4. You determine your relationship with Your Heavenly Father.** We must work out our own salvation on a personal and individual level and basis. We must be busy deepening our relationship with God Our Father each and every day. Deepening that relationship must be THE priority in our lives. Nothing is more important than that.

Brethren, I end this sermon with a personal question that only you can answer. The question is:

As demonstrated by your deeds and actions, by your words and speech, by your private inner thoughts, by your attitudes, by your love of others, and by your love for the Most High God, are you being led by our Heavenly Father?