

Can You Count On Yourself?

Proverbs 28:26

Charlie Brackett

In this humanistic age in which we live, man has been elevated to the highest levels of esteem. On every hand we hear the philosophy preached that as long as it doesn't harm someone else "each one is a law unto himself" or "do what seems right to you." Such a philosophy is not out of step with the American way of life. We are free people. We govern ourselves. No one has a right to dictate the way we think or what we do with our lives as long as it doesn't infringe on the rights of others. We are taught to treasure our own self-worth above all else. While our freedom to think and do as we alone chose is precious and we don't want to lose it, in such an environment we can easily become intoxicated on self.

Solomon warned in Proverbs 28:26 of trusting too much in one's self. Listen. "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, But he who walks wisely will be delivered." Why not trust in one's own heart? One reason is no one of us knows everything. Jeremiah 10:23 tells us, "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." We don't know what's best, not even for ourselves. Remember the story of Job. His friends argued that his problems came upon him because of sin in his life. Job was perplexed by it all; he didn't understand. Only God knew the big picture. He alone knew what was happening to Job and what the outcome would be if Job remained faithful. Our view of life is a lot like our view of a movie, which we started watching in the middle. Not knowing what happened before and what is to come, we struggle with the best course now.

Another reason not to trust in one's own view is self-deceit. Oh, I know. We all like to think we are not deluded, that we are completely honest with ourselves. A long time ago, one of the ancients by the name of Demosthenes said, "Nothing is easier than self-deceit. For what each man wishes, that he also believes to be true." I'm afraid that has been my experience.

It is easy to rationalize the things I wish to be so. It takes constant vigilance to keep from falling into the trap of self-delusion. Solomon says, "He who walks wisely will be delivered." Part of that wisdom is to seek the counsel of others. Valuing others is part of the spirit taught by Christ. Philippians 2:3 advises, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each one of you regard one another as more important than himself." But as we seek to walk wisely, above all else, let us seek the wisdom which James speaks of in James 4:13ff, the wisdom which comes down from above, found in God's book.