

Road signs– Sunday July 28th 2013.

***“Teach me Your way, O Lord,
And lead me in a level path
Because of my foes” (Psalm 27:11).***

Beloved in the Lord,

On this day, exactly 50 years ago, by the grace of Almighty God, I was born into this world. Even though I have no recollection of that day, apparently it was a rough start as I was premature, and very small. I was named after the doctor who saved my life. Dr Stewart Colvin McKenzie.

Today 50 years on I can say with the words of Amilie Juliene von Schwarzburg – Rudolstadt which I loosely translate from a Hymn:

“I have come thus far by the grace of God, who has protected me day and night with the faithfulness of a loving Father. He has protected me thus far, has granted me peace and joy, and helped me along the way.”

To God and Him alone be all the glory, honour and praise. He has always been faithful and always will be, even when I have not. His Word has been and continues to be the immutable truth. His mercies are new every morning and great is His faithfulness.

Today as I reflect upon my life’s journey thus far, I would like to share with you some of the road signs that have helped me along the way. I do this not to exalt myself in anyway, but to testify to God’s mercy and truth and faithfulness, in the hope that it will be a blessing to you. It is one thing to share the testimony of someone else, and yet another to share from one’s own life, which I do today.

In Psalm 22:9-10 we read:

***“Yet You are He who brought me forth from the womb;
You made me trust when upon my mother’s breasts.
¹⁰ Upon You I was cast from birth;
You have been my God from my mother’s womb.”***

These words resound so powerfully and truthfully in my heart. It was my mother’s faithfulness, and her love for Jesus and His Holy Word, that laid a sure foundation for my life. She taught me to pray, she taught me to love Jesus, to love God’s Word and to obey Him. She taught me the importance of worship. We never missed a Sunday in Church, barring illness. She taught me to pray: “Take Thou my hand and lead me O’er life’s rough way. With Heavenly manna feed me, from day to day; Without Thy grace and favour, I go astray. Take Thou my Hand O saviour, Lead Thou my way.”

She always told me that if I pray this everyday and trust in Jesus I will be ok. If not I will get into trouble. Oh, how true these words have been and still are today. Thank God for a believing mother.

This Hymn has been my daily prayer and is one of the road signs that I have tried to observe throughout my life. I try to take heed of this sign and pray this prayer as I begin each new day.

Road signs are very important, as they help us to navigate the roads in a safe manner. It is never a good idea to ignore road signs or to disobey them.

Another very powerful road sign that I have kept before my eyes since childhood has been Psalm 23. This Psalm has been my go to Psalm as long as I can remember. This Psalm has brought me comfort, it has strengthened me, it has reminded me, it has motivated me through the changing seasons of life. It has been with me on the mountaintops as well as the valleys. I have turned to this Psalm over and over again in different and difficult times and it has always brought me peace. I am firmly convinced that you cannot overdo the hearing of and reading of God's Word. The Word of God is alive, it is living and powerful.

Let's look at this beautiful Psalm and allow it to speak to us a fresh:

"The Lord is my shepherd,

I shall not want.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures;

He leads me beside quiet waters.

³ He restores my soul;

He guides me in the paths of righteousness

For His name's sake.

⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I fear no evil, for You are with me;

Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

You have anointed my head with oil;

My cup overflows.

⁶ Surely goodness and loving-kindness will follow me all the days of my life,

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

I do not need to add anything because it is so eloquently stated by David.

The opening verse says it all. The Lord is *my* Shepherd, I shall not want. This speaks of a personal relationship with The Lord. *My Shepherd*. My personal Shepherd. At the age of 16 I willingly and knowingly handed over control of my life to Jesus, asking Him to take complete control. I have never regretted that decision. He has led me and continues to lead me, He

has moulded me and continues to mould me. He set me free from the curse of sin, brought me out of darkness and into His glorious light. For this may His name be glorified and praised forevermore. He is truly my Shepherd and my heartfelt prayer and desire for you is that this would also be your confession. He loves each and every one of us. He shed His precious blood on the cross to purchase our salvation. He died that we might be part of His flock and freed from the ugly wolf Satan.

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

This Gospel truth has been and always will be at the centre of my theology and preaching.

The next road sign that significantly changed the direction of my life at an early age, and convinced me to heed God’s call into ministry is the words of Jesus: ***“For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? (Mark 8:36)***

These words need to be read in conjunction with Matthew 6:33 ***“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”***

I stand before you today as a living testimony to this truth. I left home in NZ to come to Australia aged 17. I had very little money, one suitcase of clothes, having no idea where I was going to live, how I was going to live and finance my studies. I truly believed that if I obeyed God and followed His call, He would provide for me. I believed that if I sought first His kingdom, that He would take care of me. He has. Praise God. He has been faithful. His Word is true. My cup overflows with His blessings. Never has God forsaken me- He has led, guided, provided and protected as well as blessed me abundantly. Praise God.

No one’s life is a perpetual rose garden and mine is no exception. There have been a fair share of difficult days and seasons. During times of trial and testing my favourite road sign has been Isaiah 41:10

***“Do not fear, for I am with you;
Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you, surely I will help you,
Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.’***

So powerfully and beautifully God says *“Do not fear”*. I am with you. If God is with me and for me as Paul says, who can be against me.

Even in the thickest fog, the rainiest of days, the darkest of nights, this road sign has been illuminated by the Holy Spirit, and it has given me comfort and hope and peace.

My prayer is that it would be the same for you. That each and every one of you would learn to trust and rely upon God’s promises, upon His Holy Word.

Another very helpful road sign, especially in the last few years that reminds me to stay on track and not drive into a ditch is found in Paul's letter to the Galatians:

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me (Galatians 2:20).

This is one of the most powerful road signs in my life that remind me that I am not here to do my own thing, but to live out God's will for my life. My duty is not to follow my own dreams and desires, but to allow Christ to live through me. This is what Jesus meant when He taught us to pray: "Your will be done, Your Kingdom come." We need to allow Christ to live in and through us.

A road sign that directly relates to my ministry to you is one that I look at very often in order to stay on track. This is found in Galatians 1:10

"For am I now seeking the favour of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ."

Every Christian needs to heed this road sign, especially today. Every minister needs to take this to heart. So many ministers and churches have run into the ditch of compromise away from the truth because they have ignored this sign.

Today's foundation text clearly states: ***"Teach me Your way, O Lord, And lead me in a level path.***

This is a prayer that God will always answer positively if we pray it from our heart and are willing to be led by Him.

I have shared with you today some of the road signs that have been my help along the way thus far. I share them with you in the hope that my testimony encourages you to believe, to trust and to love Jesus Christ. To Him be all glory, now and forever.

Amen

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.