

YOU WILL LAND WHERE YOU LEAN

or

"HAPPY LANDING!"

TEXT: Ecclesiastes 11:3b

THESIS: To show the danger of looking or leaning in the wrong direction.

INTRO.: A. Solomon, the wise man, states what appears to be patently obvious, i.e., that if a tree falls towards the south, that is the direction it will end up in. Of course there is more to it than that. He is teaching a principle. If a tree falls towards the south, it had to have been leaning towards the south. It is dangerous to try to get a tree to fall where it is not leaning.

ILLUS.: One of my assistants ignored this principle at the old parsonage. He even used ropes to try to pull the tree in the opposite direction from which it was leaning. When he cut the trunk the weight of the tree dropped the tree onto the roof of the parsonage!

B. Dr. Bob Jones, Sr. said: **"You show me a man's slant on life and I'll tell you where he is going to end up."** Historically he was one of the first to see where Billy Graham was headed because he saw where he was leaning. He warned Dr. John R. Rice about Graham and urged Dr. Rice to separate from him. He hadn't landed yet & Dr. Rice was trying to hold onto him as long as he could. Next Billy Graham said social drinking is O.K., the Pope is a great man of God, there is no fire in hell or golden streets in heaven and when former President Bush's mother was dying Graham told him not to worry about her. He said: *"Well, she'll be alright. Some folks are born Christians and others have to be converted."* In his invitations he says *"Some of you need to come and renew your confirmation or renew your catechism."* His counselors may be catholic, mormons or (backslidden) Baptists! **What happened? He landed where he leaned.**

I. POSITION:

A. Direction Determines Destination:

ILLUS.: If you want to head to Florida, you don't point your car towards Massachusetts! If you want to go to Washington's Crossing, you don't head towards Croydon! The reason you are a member of a fundamental Baptist church is because of your position, which must be based on Scripture. Beware leaning in the wrong direction or that is where you will land!

1. Some of you have the right position, but you are pointed in the wrong direction.
2. Your position is right, but your leanings are wrong.

- a. Very few men stand perfectly straight.
- b. Nearly all have biases and leanings.

ILLUS.: When driving a boat in the ocean you must rely on your compass and constantly make course corrections. The tide, wind and currents will constantly change your course. We must rely on the compass. We all need "course corrections" from time to time. Our emotions, our friendships, our flesh and the world constantly push us off course. Our compass is God's Word. This message is a "course correction" message.

B. Leanings Determine Landings:

1. Some of you have the right position, but have dangerous leanings.
2. Lean right, land right; lean left, land wrong!

ILLUS.: Fundamentalists beware! Leanings are dangerous. If you are a deer hunter and are looking for a tree to place your deer stand in, you had better not get a tree that leans. There are two things you need to look for: a straight tree and clear ground below. You don't want to fall, but if you do you don't want to fall on a jagged rock or an old tree stump, or into a lake! **Your leaning will determine your landing.** Billy Graham didn't get where he ended up by a leap, but by his leanings. You won't become a charismatic by jumping ship from the fundamentalist position, but by your leanings in their direction. You won't become a neo-evangelical by a leap from where you are, but by subtle leanings in your life. If you begin to lean towards the world, you will end up in the world. If you begin to lean to human reasoning, you will end up out of the will of God.

2 Kings 18:21 *Now, behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt, on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt unto all that trust on him.*

Proverbs 3:5

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

II. BALANCE:

A. Stability Follows Stance:

1. Loss of balance results in a fall.

ILLUS.: The Great Wallendas kept pushing the limits of balance until they fell from the high wire and loss of life and great injury resulted. They had the right position (for a high wire act), but they lost their balance. Christians think they can push the limits of balance in the Christian life too, and they are headed for a fall.

2. Keep your balance and you will keep your position.

ILLUS.: When you get known as the greatest in some area of your life you are probably deficient in several other areas. I may have one strength and 25 weaknesses. I should seek a balance. I need to "put on the whole armor of God..." not just one or two of the pieces or I leave myself exposed.

3. My position declares my present location, my leanings tell where I will be tomorrow; **"remember Lot's wife"** - her present location was one of safety, but her leanings were towards Sodom, and she fell.

B. Balance Requires Constant Adjustment:

1. Your position must be based on principle, not emotions, or you lose your balance.
2. Your position must be based on doctrine, not feelings, or you lose your balance.

ILLUS.: The reason why Billy Graham landed left, is because he leaned left! **He allowed his associations to change his position.** He failed to make adjustments as his ministry grew. He left his doctrinal moorings & was set adrift into theological shipwreck. I doubt if Billy Graham knew what he believed about anything at the end of his life. He had embraced Catholicism, Buddhism, Islam, and all the other false religions and equated them with Christianity. **He leaned to his own understanding instead of leaning on God's Word.**

III. LEANINGS:

A. Looking & Longing: Lot

ILLUS.: Lot looked, longed and leaned in the direction of Sodom and ended up living there and losing his testimony, reputation, standing with God and his family. Don't look or lean in a direction you don't want to go or shouldn't go. You will always drift in the direction you look. If you don't want to end up in a ditch, keep your eyes on the road!

B. Dreaming & Drifting: Demas

2 Timothy 4:10 For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.

ILLUS.: Imagination is a dangerous thing. You will never fall in love with something you don't see or dream about. If Demas got in trouble thinking about this world after working with the great Apostle Paul, maybe you aren't safe either!!!

C. Swerving & Swearing: Peter

ILLUS.: Peter was following Jesus that night of His trial, but he was leaning away from Him. That's when he ended up denying Him and cussing! (*I am appalled at believers when their conversation is salted with worldly curse words. It tells me that they are leaning in the wrong direction [via TV, friends, work associates, etc.]*) Someone who used to come to all the services, then starts missing some, is following Jesus, but leaning away from Him.

CONCL.: Leaning and landing seem far from each other, but the disaster is not in the leaning, but in the landing! If a missile is off an inch on the launching pad, it will be off by miles in space. If you are a hunter you know that if you are off an inch at 100 yds., you will be off 2" at 200 yds. and 3" at 300 yds., etc. The principle is simple **"YOU WILL LAND WHERE YOU LEAN!"** My prayer is that you will all have a **"HAPPY LANDING!"** But your landing is determined tomorrow by where you are leaning today! I didn't land where I am today after 42 years in the ministry by leaning in the direction of some other theological position or persuasion, but by making constant course corrections along the way, based on my compass, the Bible!