



## Articles and Sermons :: Divine Guidance

**Divine Guidance - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/11/2 1:01**

Principles of Divine Guidance  
by T. Austin-Sparks

“Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of meeting, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward, throughout all their journeys: but if the cloud was not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and there was fire therein by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys” (Ex. 40:34-38).

Life Must be Viewed as a Whole

In this matter of guidance, life has to be viewed as a whole. That is the first thing about it, and a very important thing. The guidance of the nation of Israel through the wilderness is always viewed from the standpoint of the end, the goal. There are such words as: “He led them safely, so that they feared not” (Psa. 78:53); “He led them also by a straight way, that they might go to a city of habitation” (Psa. 107:7). In the phases and the stages of the journey very often that seemed not to be true. He led them on safely? by a straight path? In neither of those matters did it always seem to be true. But in this matter of their guidance, the end was always in view from the beginning. The fact is that they got there at last, and it is the end and the verdict which covers the whole course.

It is like that with Divine guidance. We must recognise this, and settle it, that we have got to take life as a whole. If we only take it at given times and in given situations, we shall be in confusion, contradiction, in a great deal of perplexity, uncertainty, doubt, perhaps with big questions, and a feeling that there is no guidance at all in our lives - that we have just been left. But we must take the long view, and the end will prove that we were being guided, even when we thought otherwise, that the Hand was upon us when it seemed that it was not so. Divine guidance has to be viewed from the standpoint of the whole. It is life in its entirety that has to be related to the guidance of God.

When we have got that clear - and the Word of God bears it out very fully - we are able to take another step, and to see that this inclusiveness and ‘conclusiveness’ of Divine guidance is related to two things.

**Re: Divine Guidance - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/11/2 6:56**

God’s Purpose of Fullness

Firstly, it is related to Divine purpose. His purpose is a very clearly defined thing, a very concrete and definite thing, a set and fixed object, and His guidance is completely bound up with His purpose. When His purpose is really governing, when it has become the sole interest and object of our lives, we find there is a sovereignty over everything. “To them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28). That is a very comprehensive “all things”. The statement is that not one of the “all things” is without some good being definitely put into it, and got out of it, by the sovereignty of God, when His purpose governs. That cannot be said of the ‘all things’ which compose lives which are not so governed. Their ‘all things’ do not work good. The guidance of God is therefore inseparable from His purpose.

This is perfectly clear in the case of Israel. The purpose of God was made known from the beginning very clearly and definitely: it was to bring them into the land. It came out most definitely and positively when they were over Jordan, and Joshua was actually about to lead them in. The Lord said to Joshua that he was to be strong and of good courage, because he was to bring the people into the land which the Lord had SWORN to give them (Josh. 1:6). That was His purpose. We know that that is an historical figure and type of what we have in the New Testament - the heavenly country and all the riches and fullness of Christ. That land of Canaan was a land flowing with milk and honey, a land of wealth, riches, mine, and so on. We know that it was only a pale foreshadowing of what came in with Christ. “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!” (Rom. 11:33). “The unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph. 3:8). The purpose of God is the fullness of Christ, and all Divine guidance is bound up with that.

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#### God's Vessel of Realisation

In the next place, Divine guidance is bound up with, and centred in, God's vessel. Here in the case of Israel it is set forth in the tabernacle. Immediately the Lord had accomplished the redemption of His people, He proceeded to reveal that great design which embodied His purpose - the tabernacle, His vessel. And again we know so well that the tabernacle was a twofold figure of Christ and His Church: if you like, Christ dominant, and then in corporate expression; Christ the foundation, Christ giving it its character, nature and meaning. That is the vessel of God's purpose. That was to govern - to be central or to precede, as the case might be - and all Divine guidance was related to that.

This is a point that perhaps has not been clearly recognised. This tabernacle was a far, far more important thing than we have realised. We like the pictorial aspect of it; we are very pleased with all this typology of the tabernacle; but it has been brought down to such an earthly level. Just reflect for a moment that for forty days and forty nights, in unceasing communion, God was revealing to Moses the details, the whole conception and construction of that tabernacle. Forty days and forty nights Moses was with the Lord in the mount, receiving the pattern; and then, when he had received that so meticulously and fully from the Lord, it required a definite coming in of the Holy Spirit to superintend the making of it in every part and detail. It needed men full of the Holy Ghost, with the Holy Spirit definitely in charge.

There is something here of tremendous significance and account. It is a great, heavenly order of things, a vast, heavenly system, condensed into the framework and material of a symbolic representation, but all there implicit in principle. And when it was set up, all Divine guidance was bound up with it. When the cloud rested, they could not move; the people could not move without the tabernacle. These prefigured Christ and the Church - His Body. The tabernacle was the combination of the Lord and His people, and although, in the wilderness, the people were apart from and objective to the tabernacle, in type they were one. What, then, was taught was that God moves Churchwise, and His people are governed in their movements by God's movements in the Church. It is the Church - when it is as God would have it - which governs Divine movement. God always moves in relation to His Church. He may have to stay and wait because a pause is called for in relation to the spiritual life of the Church. It may be a deeper unifying or an adjustment. It may be to deepen faith and patience. It may be unto deeper direct fellowship with Himself, which can be weakened if there is too much 'keeping on the go'. Whatever may be the occasion, God is concerned for His Church, and a supreme lesson to be learned by His people is that their way to fullness (the Land) is a collective and corporate one.

These are very important things for progress, for guidance. You are exercised about the guidance for your life. Your guidance, if this is true, very largely, if not absolutely, rests upon these two things: God's purpose, the fullness of Christ, and God's means or vessel, His Church. It is a related matter. I know that difficulties arise, but I am only enunciating the principle.

See, then, how jealous God was for this tabernacle - jealous over every detail of it, and jealous over relationships to it. For He was not seeing a THING called a 'tabernacle', or the tent of meeting and all its paraphernalia. He was seeing His Son, He was seeing His Church. God always has in view, not things, but the eternal reality, that of which this is only a pattern.

Re: Divine Guidance - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/11/2 14:02

#### The Demand for Faith

Do take that to heart and think about it for it may answer some questions, or solve some problems. Now we note further that there was an element of mystery about this guidance, as there always is. God's wisdom and God's knowledge, in His ways with us, are not always revealed to us. The element of faith has always to be present. God's wisdom is a hidden wisdom, His full knowledge is a secret thing which He does not disclose to us. His 'whys' and His 'wherefores', what He is doing and why He is doing it, in this way or that, He does not explain. But there is always a meaning, as this history of Israel shows, in each stage of the Divine guidance. There is something lying within every phase of the Divine movements - or non-movements. This is not just something random, casual, inconsequential. With His purpose in view, God has a meaning in every phase and every stage of His ways with us. It is important for us to believe that, and always to look upon any particular phase or aspect of our life with God from this standpoint: What has God got in this? That is the thing that matters. Not, Let us get out of this as soon as we can, let us get past this, let us go on; but: What has this got to reveal? What has this got to teach? God has something there, and we have to discover it, because the cloud will not move until we have.

**Re: Divine Guidance - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/11/2 15:57**

It may be that some are in the stopping place of Divine guidance, and you are all restless and hot to get on to the next phase, the next stage. You are impatient. But are you quite, quite sure that you have got your hand upon the meaning of the phase that you are in at present? Are you quite sure, quite clear, that you can say, 'Well, I do not know, I did not know, why the Lord brought about such a situation, such an arrest, allowed such an experience: but I have believed that He had some meaning in it, and I have definitely had this understanding with Him that I do not want to miss what He has got at this present time because it is all a part of that cumulative value which, after all, is the fullness of Christ'?

For the fullness of Christ is not some place to which you and I are going. It is a spiritual life which is growing now. We have to eliminate these geographical factors from an earthly representation of heavenly things, and remember that here time and distance have no place at all. They only have a place - if they have a place at all - in this, that we can proceed years in a moment, we can move miles spiritually in a step. We have only got to grasp what God means in the sense that we are determined not to move until we know that we have got what God means by our present experience. If we can only grasp it, see it, come alive to it, we have moved on years and moved on a great distance. Time is only a factor while we are failing for some reason or other either in apprehension or obedience. For instance, Israel could have got through to the land in eleven days. It took forty years. Why? Not because the Lord had appointed forty years, but because the purpose of God was not strongly enough settled in their hearts to rule out personal interests and considerations. And so it was they who made the extra time and the extra miles, not the Lord.

But let us come back to our main point. We have to make sure that we are learning what God is trying to teach us now, because there will be no movement until we do. The cloud will not lift and go on until we have grasped it. What has the Lord been after in all this? That is vital to the next phase and all subsequent phases. Have we got it? Are we quite sure about it? There is something hidden to be discovered and to be laid hold of in every phase and stage of the way.

**Re: Divine Guidance - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/11/3 3:06**

#### Discipline

And all that is discipline. You see, the fact that God has a great purpose settled and fixed and clearly defined, and that we are called according thereto, and that there is a working of Divine sovereignty - all that never eliminates the factor of discipline, for the simple reason that God is not acting mechanically. This is not a machine just put together and wound up and started going by itself, by its own momentum. In God's purpose and in His methods with us, there is always the element of responsibility. God never made a machine, He made man, and man has responsibility. We are responsible creatures, and therefore discipline has its place. God will not reach His end mechanically, but only along the line of our choice. Will, of course, is the focal point of everything. Will, will, will - that was the trouble with Israel; that is the trouble with us all. The human mind will always be baffled, very largely, but the way through is a will that is absolutely set upon God's end, whatever that may cost.

**Re: Divine Guidance - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/11/3 13:07**

#### Divine Sovereignty Over All

And then, with all this element of mystery and perplexity, discipline and instruction, growing intelligence unto responsibility, there will always remain a large margin for Divine sovereignty. Think again of Paul and his journey to Rome. You remember what he says at the beginning of his letter to the Romans, long before he went to them. The opening of his letter told them of his love and his unceasing prayer for them, and then he says that he wants them to know that he would have come to them again and again, but that he was hindered. Here is a man with his heart set upon the interests of the Lord in His Church as represented at Rome. He is a man whose life is wholly and utterly abandoned to Christ and to the Church, who is longing to be able to minister Christ to them in greater fullness. And he purposes to go, and then is hindered; and purposes again and is hindered; seeks to move in their direction, and apparently is frustrated once more.

The point is, what a strength of purpose and desire for God is here - and what a mystery of hindrances, frustrations and delays! And then, at last, at long last, how did he get to Rome? Very, very differently from what he had intended, purposed and thought! He had never calculated with that last voyage and all that was in it. It seemed, on the one hand, that all hell was determined that he should not get there. On the other hand, we see God's mysterious ways. We do not know

what would have happened if Paul had gone to Rome in the way in which he had gone elsewhere, if he had just paid a visit, as he had to other places; but God had some infinitely greater thought in his reaching Rome than Paul ever thought. This is the mystery of God's ways.

We know the story of the imprisonment, the voyage, the shipwreck - the way in which he did get there. But the historian just sums it all up in one clause: "and so we came to Rome" (Acts 28:14). - "We came to Rome." Divine guidance has to cover everything. If Paul had settled on any one of these incidents, he would have been in very great difficulty indeed with the Lord. But he got there at last. If you and I are so governed, dominated, mastered, by God's end - the fullness of Christ - and wedded to Christ Himself; if we will allow the Lord to do things in His own way, and will seek to get hold of the meaning and value of every part of the way, then the end is sure, the end is secured. The end will be - "and so we came..." Sometimes it may have looked as though we should never get there. We may have known shipwreck, in many ways. It looked very much as though we would never arrive, but the fact is, we are here!

We must see the principles of Divine guidance. The first is God's purpose of fullness; the second is God's vessel of realisation, the Church. The Church is the fullness of Him, and a law of fullness is relatedness. Thirdly, there will always be enough mystery about God's ways to demand faith, which is another law of guidance. But, fourthly, sovereignty is over all; and no matter what the delays, frustrations, hindrances or threats, at the last we shall write over all those times and experiences and situations when we thought it was so otherwise -  
'Jesus led me all the way.'