

Principles of Divine Sovereign

by T. Austin-Sparks

Divine guidance is the sovereignty of God in our lives, working through His purpose and vessel, the church, to bring us to the fullness of Christ.

Duration: 38:11

Scripture: Exodus 25:8-9, Exodus 40:34, Exodus 40:38, Matthew 6:33, Ephesians 1:7-8, Hebrews 11:16

Topics: "Sovereignty"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding and embracing God's purpose in our lives. He highlights the need to prioritize God's will over personal interests and considerations. The speaker encourages listeners to seek a deeper understanding of what God is trying to teach them in their current circumstances, as this is crucial for moving forward in their spiritual journey. He also reminds them of the importance of divine guidance in every aspect of life, using the example of Paul's journey to Rome despite facing numerous difficulties and setbacks.

Transcript

In the book of Exodus, chapter 40. Chapter 40, the book of Exodus. Verses 34 to 38.

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. Then 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 their journeys.

Let my heart this morning say a little about divine guidance. Divine guidance. A matter which I am quite sure interests us in a very real way.

On this matter, at any rate, one has not to try and create a basis for a world. It is amongst those matters which are always very much to the fore in the life of the children of God. Now in this matter of guidance, life has to be viewed as a whole.

That is the first thing about it, and a very important. The guidance of the nation of Israel through the wilderness is always viewed conclusively. There are such words as he led them on safely so that they

feared not.

He led them by a street path that they might go to a city of habitation. In the phases and the stages of the journey, very often that seemed not to be true. They feared not because he led them on safely by a street path.

In neither of those matters did it always seem to be true. But you see, this matter of their guidance, of their being led by him, is always viewed conclusively. The fact is that they got there at last.

And it is the end and the verdict which covers the whole course. And it is like that with divine guidance. We must recognize this and settle this that we've got to take life as a whole.

If we only take it at given times and in given situations, we shall be in confusion, in contradiction, perhaps with big questions as to this matter of guidance. A great deal of perplexity, uncertainty, doubt, and perhaps a feeling that we've just been left and there's no guidance at all in our lives. But we must take the long view.

And the end will prove that we were being guided even when we thought otherwise. The hand was upon us when it seemed that it was not so. And divine guidance has to be viewed from the standpoint of the whole.

Life in its entirety has to be brought into relation to the guidance of God. When we have got that clear, and you know the Word of God does bear that out very fully, we are able to take another step. And to see that this inclusiveness, comprehensiveness, and conclusiveness of divine guidance is related to two things.

Firstly, it is related to divine purpose. All the guidance of God is related to His 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.

And when His purpose is really governing, has come to become the sole interest and object of our lives, there is a sovereignty over everything. All things work together for good or for literally, God works good in all things to them that love Him and are be called according to His purpose. That's a very comprehensive all things.

And 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 dominates. That cannot be said of the all things which compose lives which are not so done. There all things do not work good.

The guidance of God is therefore inseparable from His purpose. This is perfectly clear in the case of Ishmael. The purpose of God was made known quite clearly and definitely to bring them into the land from the beginning.

That was made clear. It came out so definitely and positively when they were over Jordan and Joshua was actually about to lead them in. The Lord said so definitely to Joshua that he was to be strong, of good courage, because he was to bring the people into the land which the Lord had sworn to give them.

There is the purpose. The sworn object of God to bring into the land. That was His purpose.

We know that that is a historic 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, wealth, riches, mines, deep mines, pools, and so on. It was only a pale foreshadowing of what came in with Christ.

Oh, the depths of the riches, the unsearchable riches. Well, we know all about that. But this is just to reiterate that the purpose of God is the fullness of Christ and all divine guidance is bound up with that.

And then in the next place, divine guidance is bound up with and centered 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 two-fold figure of Christ and His church.

If you like, of Christ, dominant, and then in corporate expression. I need not argue that. I think we shall all agree that was so.

Christ and His church. Christ, its foundation. Christ, its character.

Christ giving it its nature and its meaning. It taking from Him everything. That is the vessel of God's purpose.

That was to precede. That was to be central. That was to govern.

And all divine guidance was related to that. This is a point that perhaps has not been clearly recognized. This tabernacle is a far, far more important thing than we have recognized.

We like the pictorial aspect of it. Very pleased in 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 and constitution of that tabernacle. Forty days and forty nights Moses was with the Lord in the mountain getting this thing.

A pattern, we are told, only a pattern. A representation of something. And then when he had from the Lord received that so meticulously, carefully and fully it required a definite coming in of the Holy Spirit to superintend the making of it in every part and detail.

The whole structure and the whole material. Men full of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Spirit definitely in charge of this thing.

Something here of tremendous significance and account. It is a great heavenly order of things. A vast heavenly order of things condensed into the framework and material of a symbolic representation.

But all that vast heavenly order and system is there implicit in principle. And when it was set up all divine guidance was bound up with it. Cloud rested.

They could not move. The people could not move without it. The tabernacle.

Christ and his church in figure. It governed all their movements and all their time. The girls and just as much the stoppings and the stay.

You see, the church when it is as God would have it governs movement. Determines progress. God sometimes has to wait for his church before he can move.

There were those stayings and waitings of the cloud because things were not right amongst the people. Adjustments had got to be made. Wrongs had got to be righted.

Evil had got to be put away. There is no movement in the church. There is no guidance to any further step or stage or measure until this body is right.

That could be profitably enlarged upon but it is a very important thing to see how God finds out his guidance with the state of his people with his church. And how our relationship to the church is an important factor in the guidance of our own life. Not one individual in all the thousands of Israel was an independent unit in this matter and could go without the others.

Every individual as such had to wait for all the rest for their guidance. Their guidance was a related matter. That's the point.

Their guidance was a corporate matter. The cloud rested upon the tabernacle and the people were bound up with that inseparable from that. It was one thing.

These are very important things, dear friends, 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, are related things.

I know as I speak that difficulties arise but I can only enunciate the principles at this time, leaving details for another time. See then how jealous God was for this tabernacle. Jealous over every detail of it and jealous over relationships to it because he was not seeing a thing called a tabernacle or a tent of meeting and all its paraphernalia.

He was seeing his son. He was seeing his church. God always has that in you.

Not things, but the eternal reality. That of which this is only a pattern. Now then, having said that, you must take that to heart and think about it.

We may answer some questions, solve some problems. We know further then. There was always an element of mystery about this guidance as there always is.

An element of mystery in this that God's wisdom and God's knowledge in his ways with us, in his guidance of us are not always revealed to us. The element of faith is always present or has always to be present and God's wisdom is a hidden wisdom. His full knowledge is a secret thing he does not disclose to us.

His why, his wherefore, 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 always a meaning in each stage of the divine guidance. There is a meaning at every stage.

There is something there lying within every phase of the divine movement or the divine non-movement. There is something in this. This is not just a random thing, a casual thing, an inconsequential thing.

With his purpose in view, God has a meaning in every phase and every stage of his ways with us. And it is important for us to believe that and always look upon any particular phase or stage or aspect of our life with God from that standpoint. What has God got in this? This is the thing that matters.

Not let's get out of this as soon as we can, let's get past this, let's go on. See? No. What has this got to reveal? What has this got to teach? There is something there that God has and we have to discover it because the cloud will not move until we have.

Maybe that some of you 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. Are you quite sure, are you quite sure that you have got your hand upon the meaning of this phase that you are in and that you have been in? Are you quite sure? Are you quite clear that you can say well, I don't know, I didn't 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 don't want to miss what he's got at this present time because it's 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 are going, it's some spiritual life which is growing now. We've got to eliminate these geographical factors, you see, 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 any place at all in this.

That we can proceed years in a moment. We can take, to use literal terms, miles spiritually in a step. You've only got to grasp what God means in this way that you are determined not to move until you do know that you have got what God means by your present experience.

You only have to grasp it, see it, come alive to it and you have moved on years and moved on a great distance. Time is only a factor while we are dealing either in apprehension for some reason or other or in obedience. You see the point? Israel could have got through to the land in nine days and it took forty years.

Why? Not because the Lord had appointed forty years. They got because the purpose of God was not strongly enough settled in their hearts as all dominating as to rule out personal interests and considerations. And so they made the time, not the Lord.

They made the miles, not the Lord. I hope you've grasped that. But let's concentrate there on this one point, dear friends.

Let us 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've got it in our hands. What's the Lord been after in all this? That's vital to the next phase and all subsequent phases.

You've got it? You're quite sure about it? Well, there's something hidden to be discovered and to be laid hold of in every phase and stage of the way. 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 the working of divine sovereignty, all that never eliminates the factor of discipline for the simple reason that God is not acting mechanically.

It is not a machine put together and wound up and started going just by itself, by its own momentum. Always in God's purpose and His methods with us there is the element of responsibility. God never made

a machine.

He made man. Man. And man is responsibility.

Responsibility. We are responsible creatures. Therefore, discipline has its place because no mechanical reaching His end by God but along the line of our choice.

Will, of course, is the point, the focal point of everything. Will. Will.

Will. That was the trouble with us. Well, that's the trouble with us all.

It's the will. There will always be the bafflement of the human mind very largely, but the way through is a will that is absolutely set upon God's end, whatever that may cost. And then, although there will always be this element of mystery and perplexity, discipline and instruction, growing intelligence and responsibility, there will always remain a large margin for divine sovereignty.

Think again of Paul and his journey to Rome. You know what he says, don't you, at the beginning of his letter to the Romans, long before he went to them. The opening of his letter to them told them of his love and his unceasing prayer for them.

And then he tells them that he would have them know that he would have come to them again and yet again he would have come to them, but he was hindered. Here is a man with his heart set upon the interest of the Lord in his church as represented in Rome. He's 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, who purposes to go and then is hindered and purposes again and is hindered, seeks to move in their direction and apparently is frustrated.

For it is on a strength of purpose and desire for God is here. The mystery, the mystery of hindrances, frustrations and delays. And then at last, long last, how did he get to Rome? Very, very differently from what he 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 shouldn't get there. On the other hand, God's mysterious way.

We don't know what would have happened if Paul had just gone to Rome in the way in which he'd gone elsewhere to other places, paid a visit, but God had some infinitely greater thoughts in Paul's at last reaching Rome than Paul had ever thought. The mystery of God's ways. Well, the shipwreck, the shipwreck, the way in which he did get there, but the historian just summed it all up in one clause.

And so we came to Rome. The verdict took a long run. Mystery between the conception and inception and the realization.

The mystery of satanic interference. The mystery of difficulties. The mysteries of reverses and of shipwreck.

Everything else but the verdict. And so we came to Rome. We came to Rome.

Divine guidance has to cover everything. Paul had settled down on any one of these incidents. Divine guidance has to cover everything.

Paul had settled down on any one of these incidents. He was in very great difficulty indeed with the Lord. He got there.

He got there at last. You and I, dear friends, are so governed, dominated, mastered by God's end, the fullness of Christ and wedded to Christ himself and will allow the Lord to do it in his own way and will seek to get hold of the meaning and value of every part of the way. The end is sure.

The end is secure. The end will be... And so we came. Sometimes it looked as though we would never get there.

Shipwreck, yes, shipwreck in many ways looked very, very much as though we would never get there. But the fact is we're there but we must see the principles of divine guidance. First is God's purpose of fullness.

The second is God's vessel of realization. The Church is the fullness of him and it is relatedness that is a law of fullness. There will always be enough mystery about God's ways to demand faith which is another law of guidance.

But sovereignty is over all for such and no matter what the delays, frustrations, hindrances or threats at last we shall say right over all those times and experiences when we thought so otherwise. In present situation Jesus led me all the way.

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