

song. It is then *duty* with you, and only on rigid principle, that you say, "I *must* do this or that;" but in the guided life of the child of God there is no "must"—it is all *trust*. There is perfect understanding, perfect freedom, and then perfect trust. "He that *trusteth* in the Lord mercy shall compass him about." Much mercy shall compass him about. Before, we had songs of deliverance compassing about. My brother, you live on *God's mercy* to-day and for ever. You are simple dependents on the mercy of God. And then there is perfect joyfulness—"Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, ye righteous, and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart." Such music shall compass about the guided child. Look back at the beginning of the Psalm; the Psalmist could not have been lower down. But see at the end, how he rises up from the lowest rung of the ladder to fulness of joy. See the three-fold joy of the guided Life. It is personal joy, "Be glad in the Lord;" it is righteous joy; it is shouting joy. Oh, what blessed joy there is in the guided Life!

There is, then, in the peace of the guided Life perfect understanding, perfect freedom, perfect confidence—for he "*trusteth* in the Lord"—and perfect joyfulness.

We have seen, then, the *place* of guidance, and the *peace* of guidance. Let us go further, and see,

III. The Process of Divine Guidance.

This is a very solemn matter. Let us take first the *exterior* process, and see what were the ancient way-marks. They were four—the rod, the cloud, the ark, and the Urim and Thummim. This was the four-fold guiding—the Rod of resurrection power;—the Cloud of God's perpetual Presence, which, when you see the cloud moving, gives you power to follow the cloud;—and the Ark, or the blessed truth, the written Word of God advancing before them, leading to certain deliverances, to sure abiding places;—and then the Urim and Thummim, or the lights and perfections of God.

In the New Testament there is a similar four-fold guiding.—Conscience; the Word of God; the Holy Spirit; and the outward Providences of God. Conscience was that guide which God gave to man at the beginning; that inner tribunal, or judge, which every man possesses; but it was jarred by the Fall, and, therefore, conscience has to be re-adjusted by the written Word, by the Law of the Courts of God. But then the Word may be wrested by man to his destruction, so God gave, thirdly, the Holy Spirit to guide, to interpret it. Even the Holy Word may

be wrested by man, so it must be *illuminated* by the Holy Spirit of God. We have, fourthly, the outward providential dealings of God.

We must have, then, the outward circumstances; the inner Voice; the written Word; the presiding Guiding Spirit. With these we cannot go wrong if we are abiding in Christ. You may put it in another way—in one word, and say, "I am guided by sanctified common sense." If you are in any difficulty, investigate the circumstances all round, read all that the written Word has to say upon them, pray, and then proceed. Pray and proceed; pray, and then act faith; pray, and go out as if you had prayed, as though you knew there was a prayer hearing and answering God. "Wherefore criest thou unto Me? speak unto the children of Israel that they *go forward*," God said to Moses. It is easier to keep lingering on our knees than to step out boldly on the Word—on the promises of God.

What think you of this way of guiding? It is certain, it is sure. God's guiding is not always to be had long before the time. God guarantees that His guiding shall be *in time*, but he does not guarantee that it shall be too soon, or very early. When Peter was shut up in prison, it was at the very last hour that God opened the prison doors, and he went out free. God is never too late. Remember that he keeps precise time. He will not open out His purposes too soon. "Mine hour is not yet come." Every hour is labelled; if it is not yet, it shall be soon.

Let us go further and see what is the *interior* process of guidance which God gives. What shall we do when we have some special need of guidance? 1. Map out the whole circumstances in the presence of God, simply, as far as you know them. 2. Bring your will while it is yet in a fluid condition, if I may so say, and place it before God, that He may form it and mould it, shape it and direct it, before it is solidified. Many Christians bring their will to God when it is half made up, and they say, "Lord, confirm my will;" but few deliberately bring their will to God in an unformed condition, that He may give it a mould, a form, a direction. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." "Work out . . . with fear and trembling." That is good for us; it is good for us to be entirely dependent on the direction of the Holy Spirit. Work out, then, that which God is working in you. Let His will be your will, His deed your