

guidance are fully asserted and maintained in his last paragraph.

THE DIVINE GUIDANCE.

BY J. B. GAMBRELL, D.D.

One of the ever living, ever present, ever practical questions of life is, will God lead us through the mazes of this world, or are we left to our own wisdom to guide our feet in the best paths we can find? In some sense most Christians hold to the doctrine of the divine guidance. We pray for it, and more or less wish it and expect it; but it is in such a hazy way and with such little assurance, that we get no practical good out of the doctrine, even allowing that it is true. Holding on to a sort of relic of religious faith with varying moods, every now and then something happens to upset us completely. Here was a case in which there was much prayer for the divine guidance and yet everything went utterly wrong. Not very long since I heard a brother in a carefully prepared speech speak of a young sister who prayed for the divine guidance, was led to offer herself for the foreign field and then turned suddenly about and got married. His inference was that women are not to expect God's hand to lead them into a life work.

But to come nearer still, we have all had experiences which have sent our hearts and faith down into our shoes. We played and went about a thing with such hope, only to find that we were doomed to failure, as it looked to us, after we had done our best.

Then to make the case very bad for most of us, we meet so often the veriest cranks and heretics prating loudly of the divine leading and all with such assurance that our little faith, all that we could possibly claim, gets ashamed of itself, while we know for a fact that these very confident people are all wrong. There is little wonder that in the confusion and mist the average Christian gets very much mixed about the doctrine and altogether doubtful as to its limitations, if there be any solid truth in it at all.

In the limits of a newspaper article, it is not practical to attempt an exhaustive discussion of the doctrine. "The meek will be guide in judgment," and many other like passages seem to teach what has always, to a degree, been held by the devout. An excellent Bible study is this question. If one will go into it and read the references carefully and ponder the Scriptures devoutly, he will be amazed at the evidence furnished that God has not left us to find our work and our way by our own wit. The teaching is that when we really pray the divine wisdom supplements human wisdom, sometimes overrules it, and leads the prayer in a safe path, safe from the higher view of the good Spirit. And the doctrine takes in everyday affairs as well as great spiritual concerns. Let us pause and think a little. What a blessed doctrine is this! Reader take your Bible and study it out for yourself. It will do you far more good than to have me work it out for you.

The remainder of my space must be given to some remarks and cautions.

Those who profess to have been led to embrace doctrines contrary to the Bible are not to be believed. They may be, alas! one prove themselves to be hypocrites. Many of them lack the modesty of real faith. They may mistake feeling for divine leadings. It is quite possible to make a mistake. Anyway we can be sure that the Spirit does not say one thing in the Bible and another in the human heart.

To secure the divine leading we must divest ourselves of human perversity. Our will must bow in ready obedience to the divine will. Never till all human will has been subdued, our purposes purified and our hearts made willing to obey, does the Spirit take the lead of our minds. This comes to most of us in crises only after much sifting and many heart aches and much crying out for God.

The spirit in which we reach out and touch the divine hand is one of great self-abasement and consequent spiritual exaltation. We stand before the Lord and rejoice with trembling. The whole spirit and bearing of the trusting seeker after the heavenly guidance is far removed from that chippy, cheery manner so frequently met with in those who boast great things in this line.

The mind unsettled as to the proper thing, by reflection and prayer brought to poise as it waits for the determining influence of the Spirit, will be turned to the right conclusion and then will come to the heart the assurance, "This is the way, walk ye in it." The prayer may not be able to give a good human reason for his faith, but he will emerge from the region of doubt, and know that he is right. The conviction is inwrought, like real prayer, in the heart, and becomes regnant over the soul. This impression may be lost by unfaithfulness or in any of the ways by which the Holy Spirit may be grieved. Sometimes in our human weakness we sink below the sublime posture of the soul when it receives the deciding impression. Such seemed to have been the case with John the Baptist when in prison, and of Elijah before him. Next to the mountain is the valley always.

This leads me to my closing point. When we have sought in faithfulness the divine leading, felt the impulse of the Spirit and gone on in the fear of God and the fellowship of the Spirit, we would allow no apparent failure to shake our faith or destroy our peace. John went up to Jerusalem and preached by the Spirit—mighty preaching; but he lost his life. That was God's way. One moment in heaven would repay a thousand strokes of the headman's ax, and when he fell, it was like the fall of a mighty oak in the forest. He broke the power of evil in Jerusalem. His mission was successful, his work was done. No doubt in the light of eternity many of our greatest successes will appear failures, and what we wept over as failures will fill us with unspeakable delight because we will see how great was the success.

When we go out humbly trusting God to be