GUIDANCE FROM WITHIN.
Rev. A. J. Gordon, D.D., of Boston,
who is lecturing for a few days at Mr.
Moody’s Bible Institute in Chicago,
Preached on Sunday, July 16th, in the
Immanuel Baptist Church, taking as his
Text:
For he dwelleth with you and shall be in you.

He said in substance: Hitherto the Spirit had moved men from without; henceforth He was to impel them from within. It is a great word of the new covenant: “He shall be in you,” and from two clauses which stand in immediate connection with it I draw the lessons of the morning.

“He shall guide you into all truth.” It is a beautiful saying of one of our poets when, speaking of our birth, he says: “Every soul leaves port under sealed orders: we cannot know whither we are going or what we are to do till the time comes for breaking the seal.” But there is something more beautiful than this. Every regenerated soul sets out on its voyage with an invisible Captain on board, who know the nature of our sealed orders from the outset, and who will shape our entire voyage accordingly if we will only let Him.

The Principal Difficulty.

Only here comes the difficulty. We insist on taking command ourselves and directing our course according to our own wisdom. Hence the coast is lined with memorials of such as have “erred from the truth and made shipwreck of the faith.” Guiding or guided? Here is the question. Whether we shall make our own plans and choose our own way, and then as the Holy Spirit to prosper us therein; or whether we shall yield ourselves utterly to the Spirit to shape and guide our life according to the divine pattern. Yet God does not force us into His way, or constrain us into His truth by violent impulsion. What is the one indispensable condition of safely navigating a ship? It is that the needle of the compass shall be perfectly free to yield to the magnetic current. If the iron vessel should perchance present such attraction as to sway the needle somewhat from its full surrender to the pole, immediate danger would thereby accrue — danger of missing the channel and of running upon rocks. It is exactly so with the Christian. Only as his will is surrendered to God’s will, can he be sure of realizing the true plan and purpose of his life.

“If any man is willing to do his will,” says Jesus, “He shall know of the doctrine.” Here, you see, is a shading of the meaning that is very instructive. Our common version says: “If any man will do his will.” But that is a very great requirement. How can I be sure, says one, that I am doing God’s will? Yea, more; how can I be sure that I even understand that will, to say nothing of doing it? Nay, my child, says the gracious and tender Saviour, I do not ask as much as that. The needle is not asked to steer the ship, but only to be passive to the influence of the pole; and you are not asked to execute God’s will, but only to yield to it.

God’s will is eternally and unchangeably aright. More than this; in all our work and service for Him, He has willed the true and best way before we undertake that service.
Fall in with God's plan concerning you. This is the right advice. Keep in such
communion with Him that you shall constantly be in the current of His will, whether you
know it or not.

Yet how easily we deceive ourselves at this point. I yield myself to God's will as I
yield to my horse and let him draw me over the road which I am traveling. But I hold the
reins all the while in my hands to guide it whithersoever I choose. Ah, that is what we do
constantly; put bits into the mouth of God's will, and hold the bridle in our hands, and let
God have His way with us through our having our own way. Yield your will if you
would have your will! The conflict, the discord, the strife of the world can never be
healed till every "I will" falls on its knees and yields up its scepter and says, "Thy will be
done."

Willing and Working.

Put the emphasis, moreover, on the word do. If any man is willing to do His will. It is
one thing to be willing to do; and it is one thing to be willing to do; and it is another thing
to be willing to will. Many a Christian has been willing to will God's will who has
turned back when it came to the doing of God's work. Let our willing and our working
be yoked up together, and let neither one hold back while the other pulls. Hear how the
Lord conforms these two: "No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back is
fit for the kingdom of God." What a graphic picture of divided service! Working for
Christ, yet wishing for the world; the hands stretched forth in toil, but the heart all the
while tugging at those hands to make them let go at the very first convenient opportunity.
Concerning such our Saviour's deliberate verdict is, "Not fit for the kingdom of God."
So vital does the Saviour deem the inner consecration that He does not want unwilling
servants in His kingdom. If one has the arms of Samson for strength, and yet has the eyes
of Lot's wife for looking back, he is rejected from the service of Jesus Christ. Therefore
I lay redoubled emphasis on consecration. He wants hearts yielded to God, and then will
there be hands stretched forth to God. The heart is the man himself. If that heart be
consecrated it has eyes that will see the way of duty, even when no man has observed it.

"For as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God." The word here
used should be especially noted. It marks the character of maturity and attainment in the
Christian life. There are two words "sons" in the New Testament, the one meaning
children and the other sons. "As many as received him, says John, "to them gave he
power to become the children of God." That is, simple faith in Jesus brings us into the
family of God; and, being begotten of God, we are the children of God. But, says the
Apostle Paul, using the same word, "a child differeth nothing from a servant, but is under
tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father."

The child belongs to the family, has a seat at the table with the parents, and that is a
high honor; for he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than the man of this
world. But, alas! How many Christians remain all their lives in the condition of
sanctified babyhood, talking evermore in the dialect of infancy? Just as little children
prattle about their birthday, and are always telling how old they are, you find many
Christians who rarely open their mouths without dating back to their conversion, as
though they were the end and all of their Christian lives, to be converted and saved,
instead of going on unto perfection.
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Full-Grown Sons.

“But,” says the apostle, “ye are not simply children, but full-grown sons,” and “because ye are sons, God hath sent forth His Spirit into your hearts, crying Abba, Father.” Little children have to be looked after by their nurses lest they go astray; they have often to be forced to walk in the right way; yea, even sometimes they are so stubborn and refractory that they have to be carried against their wills they meantime kicking and resisting at every step. Not so with the full-grown obedient son. He moves according to an intelligent inward prompting in the way that he should go. It is this idea which the apostle here brings out. “As many as are led by the Spirit they are the sons of God.” They do not need petty regulations and constant family discipline, “I will guide thee with mine eye,” says the Lord. “Be ye not as the horse or ass the male, which have no understanding, whose mouths must be held I with bit and bridle lest they come nigh unto thee.” The Lord’s eye is the Christian’s pole star, to which the sanctified will should turn as the needle of he compass. Shame on us, that so many of us have to be jerked with the bit of adversity and jostled with the bridle of chastisement to make us go in God’s way. Even wayward, denying Peter rises up to condemn us at this point, for we read that when the “Lord turned and looked on Peter, he went out and wept bitterly.” Blessed be Simon Barjona, though he was a denier and blasphemer for a moment, he was not either a horse of a mule for all his lifetime, as are some of us.

My brethren, have you this mark of divine, that you are daily led by the Spirit, so that your outward going is evermore the result of an inward guidance?

Some Practical Tests.

Let me apply two or three practical tests. It is a most solemn and urgent duty of Christians to bear witness for Christ among the unsaved. But the Spirit must convict before you can convert. The impressions of the Holy Spirit are double – upon the Christian worker and upon the inquirer. The Spirit laid one hand on the eunuch as he sat reading Isaiah in his chariot, and he laid another upon the Evangelist Philip, and said: “Go near and join thyself to this chariot.” The Spirit called Paul to go in Macedonia, and in Philippi, the chief city thereof, he opened the heart of Lydia to attend unto the words which he spoke. This is the divine method – to bring the preacher, and the prepared lesson together. How much time it will save us! How much waste of effort if we can only be directed to our spiritual double and close in with him at once. “For as many as are led by the Spirit, they are the sons of God.” They get their orders daily from heaven; they work under the great Superintendent of the church, who knows how to fit all the parts of parts of His divine enterprise into each other. It is a high attainment – the very highest.

Spiritual Spontaneity.

So essential is the inward impulse to the outward service, that God actually accepts the will for the deed. Hear His words: “If first there be a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that which he hath not.”
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How God delights in spiritual spontaneity! The penny pushed from the open hand by the impulse of the Holy Ghost is worth more to Him that the pound wrung from the reluctant grip by the dunning of church beggars. I am so much impressed with the importance which God attaches to sweet voluntariness in Scripture, that I am often tempted to resolve never to beg a cent for God again, but rather spend my energy in getting Christians spiritualized, assured that they will certainly become liberalized. /as I was reading my Greek Testament the other day, I was delighted with the discovery concerning a well known text: "God loveth a cheerful giver." The word cheerful is our word for "hilarious." And I have to imagine the word put into action. "Will you give me a thousand dollars for missions?" Ha! ha! ha! I should be delighted to, since God has so wonderfully blessed and prospered me." "Will you contribute a hundred dollars toward our evangelistic work this winter?" Ha! ha! ha! I am only too glad for the opportunity to give, since I have so abundantly received." How much better that sounds than the doleful "Oh, dear! I am tired with the never-ending calls of money, money, money." But this hilarious giving is not possible except the Spirit is dwelling richly within it. For only the Spirit shows the greatness of that salvation which we received through Christ, and the greatness of our consequent obligation. As says the psalmist: "When the Lord turned again our captivity, we were like them that dreamed. Then was our mouth filled with laughter and our tongue with singing. Then said we, 'The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad!'" If we knew how great things the Lord has done for us, what should we be not ready to do for Him? And this we can only know by the illumination of the Spirit. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the thing that are freely given to us of God. This knowledge is power. This knowledge begets loving and grateful activity. O Holy Spirit, arise within us. Grant us the heavenly impulse by which to work out our heavenly calling. This is my prayer for you, believers.

For you that are not saved, my exhortation is: "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost,"

End

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