

Some Thoughts on Divine Guidance

Byron Howell - 10/14/09

How does God provide guidance for us today? We know from scriptures that He has spoken to people directly in the past, but does He speak directly to us today? What is the role of inspired scriptures? How can we determine whether what we are thinking is aligned with God's will?

The topic is one that generates many diverse opinions. There are some things we don't know & some things we can know because God's word has revealed them to us.

Some uncertainties about divine guidance:

1. How exactly does God work to influence us? We pray for wisdom and He may send us challenges so we can learn. We pray for help and a friend may appear at just the right time. We pray for guidance, wrestle over options, and then decide on a course of action. - How does God providentially work in our lives to make “all things work together for good” (Rom. 8:28)?
2. If Satan can put thoughts into our head to try to influence us, does God do the same? (2 Thess. 2:10-11 does say that God will send a deluding influence to those who do not love the truth and refuse accept it.) More importantly, how can we determine the source of any thought that we may have, and how we should respond to that influence?

Some certainties about divine guidance:

1. In OT times and in early NT times, the Holy Spirit spoke directly to prophets and apostles so that they could inerrantly proclaim God's word and write inspired scriptures. (Gal. 1:11-12, I Cor. 2:9-13, I Pet. 1:21, John 16:13, Heb. 2:3-4). Furthermore, the inspired scriptures are complete (Jude 3, 2 Pet. 1:3, Gal. 1:8-9, 2 Tim. 3:16-17) – we have them all and they are all we need to know God's will for us.
2. God miraculously intervened with men in history (I Sam. 3:1-10, Acts 9:3-4), but we should be careful not to assume that passages promising something to the apostles and prophets always promise that to us today. For example, the apostles were told by Jesus that He would send the Spirit to guide them (the apostles) into all truth (John 16:7-14). Some early Christians had the gift of prophesy because the H.S. was given in miraculous measure by the laying on of apostles' hands (Acts 8:14-18). So what is the purpose of the Holy Spirit received at baptism (Acts 2:38, Rom. 8:9, Gal. 4:6)? He is God's “seal of promise” (Eph. 1:13) or down payment. We know he is there is because the Bible tells us so. Certainly, God is still involved in our lives today. He invites us to ask for his help (Matt. 7:7) & He makes things work out for good (Rom. 8:28).
3. We know that the Holy Spirit intercedes on our behalf before the throne of God “with groanings too deep for words” (Rom. 8:26-28). But what does the Spirit do in us – and how does he do it? How are we to be led by the Spirit (Rom. 8:14)? The Spirit's instrument is the word (Eph. 6:17).

| <i>Holy Spirit</i> | <i>Action</i> | <i>Word of God</i> | <i>Holy Spirit</i> | <i>Action</i> | <i>Word of God</i> |
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| Gal. 5:22 | Brings fruit | Col. 1:5,6 | Rom. 8:11 | Dwells in | Col. 3:16 |
| Eph. 3:16 | Gives strength | Acts 20:32 | Titus 3:5 | Saves | James 1:21 |
| John 6:63 | Makes alive | Psa. 119:50 | 1 Tim. 3:16 | Justifies | Rom. 5:1;10:17 |
| John 3:5,8 | Gives birth | 1 Pet. 1:23 | Heb 10:15 | Witnesses to us | John 5:39 |
| 2 Thess. 2:13 | Sanctifies | John 17:17 | Rom. 8:14 | Leads us | Psa. 119:105 |

4. ***When trying to determine whether an idea in our minds is in harmony with God's will, the only reliable way to validate it is by a proper application of scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16-17).*** Subjective feelings and/or visions are not reliable (Paul in I Tim. 1:13 & Acts 23:1; Col. 2:16-23).