

Lesson # 5 -- The Requirements Regarding the Will of God

Introduction

- A. We have found in our study together that there are four necessary ingredients to a successful Christian life.
 - 1. A knowledge of the will of God.
 - 2. Decisions of faith, love, and hope.
 - 3. The obedience in which the will of God is practiced.
 - 4. The reason we obey -- which is the glory of God.
- B. All the requirements regarding the will of God revolve in some way around one or more of these four.
- C. In this lesson I want to consider some of the passages of the Bible which will help us understand how we are to live for God.

I. The Will of God Requires a Decision.

If any one chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own. John 7:17 (NIV)

A. The explanation.

- 1. At this time in the ministry of the Lord Jesus there was a very sharp debate as to whether His teaching was to be accepted or not. Some went so far as to say He was demon-possessed (V20).
- 2. The Savior gave them the key so they could tell whether His teaching was of God or not -- it was making a spiritual choice to do God's will.
- 3. This verse explains why the believer will know that the Bible is the Word of God, even though he cannot answer the arguments of the non-Christian. Since he has chosen to do the will of God -- the Holy Spirit has given him an inner awareness, a witness, that the Bible is true. I John 5:9-13

B. The instruction.

- 1. This statement of the Lord Jesus is an important principle that applies to many facets of the Christian's daily life. In particular the emphasis is on the relationship between a decision to do God's will and the beneficial effects which will follow.

2. When we evaluate the other passages we have considered regarding the will of God, in the light of this verse, we see how necessary it is to make the necessary decisions.
3. A number of the promises, invitations, and commands of the Scripture underline this principle.
 - a. The commentary on the Old Testament people.

I am the LORD your God, who brought you up out of Egypt. Open wide your mouth and I will fill it. But my people would not listen to me, Israel would not submit to me. So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices. Psalm 81:10-12 NIV

Comment: This is a sad commentary which undoubtedly applies to each of us as well as O.T. saints. God had promised to supply their every need -- but they failed to come -- to ask -- to receive. The key was their decision.

- b. The invitation of the Lord Jesus.

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me
John 7:37,38

Comment: This invitation applies specifically to us. It includes almost all the other promises in that it has to do with the person and work of the Holy Spirit. What can we say as to the reason we do not thirst -- and come -- and drink -- and believe? All of these indicate decisions.

C. The application.

1. The principle with which we are working is very clear to each of us. We know that our decision to do God's will is related to the benefits which follow -- as cause is related to effect. This explains why we may know so much and have such weakness in our life.
2. The one element which is a mystery here -- is why we do not make the right choices. It is easy to say "We don't want to." Decisions which grow out of rebellion may be true sometimes but not often. Perhaps the answer is in the area of our priorities, we may not believe being a spiritual person is very important.

3. It may help us to think about those factors which influence our decision making. It is usually said that there are four areas which are decisive for us.
 - a. Our intellect (what we know or do not know).
 - b. Our emotions (how we feel about the subject).
 - c. Our body (our physical needs).
 - d. Our life (influences from people and circumstances).
4. As we consider these four areas we immediately see how easy it is to be confused and make wrong decisions. If we do not "sort out" our life and distinguish between important and unimportant factors -- we will never make much progress.
5. While our decisions are the key to our actions -- it is our intellect which is the key to our decisions. When we think correctly (establish the priorities based on the will of God) and put them into practice (obedience) then we find it easier to live the Christian life.
6. Too often we want someone else to make our decisions for us. That can only happen for a young child or for someone whose decisions must be made for them -- the criminal or one who is psychotic. It is very dangerous to give our will to someone else!
7. Some Christians want God to make their decisions. This may indicate sincerity but also poor teaching. God has given us His Word, a mind to understand it, and a will to put it into practice. He will never do for us what we can do for ourselves. If He did He would reverse what it meant for Him to create us.
8. Some people have great difficulty making decisions. They were probably raised in a home in which decisions were made for them or their parents always criticised them when they tried to make a choice. Such a life produces a great deal of immaturity and insecurity.
9. We must break through all the barriers which hinder us in this process of choosing to do the will of God. The most serious problem is found in our self-centered way of living. We have such a tendency to "give way" to our own desires. We must learn to "do what we know is right."

II. The Will of God Requires Spiritual Decisions.

Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.
Eph. 6:5-8

A. The explanation.

1. In his exhortation to Christian slaves the apostle makes it clear what it means for a believer to do the will of God. Three characteristics of slavery form the context of his thought.
 - a. A slave belonged to his master.
 - b. A slave was bound to the authority of his master.
 - c. A slave served only his master.
2. These three characteristics are true for every Christian.
 - a. We belong to God by the right of creation and redemption.
 - b. We are under the authority of God through the Bible.
 - c. We are to live only for the glory of God.
3. The difference between the slave and the Christian has to do with a spiritual decision. God has given us that choice -- to obey Him or not to obey Him.
 - a. In this issue of our choice is found the mystery of why God created the human race as well as the why of redemption. It is that He would have a group of people who would choose to love and serve Him -- simply because of His greatness.
 - b. God could enslave and coerce us, and that would be for our good, but He desires our choices and decisions to be motivated by love for Him.
 - c. Paul's statement is clear: The slave of Jesus Christ (the consistent Christian) is one who does the will of God from the heart.

B. The instruction.

1. The use of the word "heart" indicates our "spirit," "the inner man," "the inmost character."

- a. The condition of the heart determines one's character.

For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. Matt. 12:34

- b. A continual sinful choice will train the heart in evil.

Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin, beguiling unstable souls, an heart they have exercised with covetous practices . . . II Peter 2:14

- c. Salvation changes the heart.

But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit . . . Rom. 2:29

- d. We must guard and train our heart.

Keep thy heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life. Prov. 4:23

- e. An untrained heart will hinder our Christian walk.

Then he (the Lord Jesus) said unto them, O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Luke 24:25

- f. An unguarded heart is vulnerable to Satanic influence.

But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit . . . why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart . . . Acts 5:3,4

- g. We must choose not to harden our hearts.

Wherefore, as the Holy Spirit saith, Today if ye will hear His voice (hear or read the Bible), harden not your hearts . . . Hebrews 3:7,8

2. From these passages, and the text "doing the will of God from the heart" we realize how important it is to make the right decisions -- and starting with our "heart."

3. This leads us to the realization that our decisions are very powerful and determine the kind of a person we will become and what kind of a life we will live.

4. Every believer has areas of life that indicate we have made some wrong decisions in the past. I am referring to patterns of attitude, response, and actions such as gossiping, doubt, criticism, lust, bitterness, covetousness, anger, fear, complaining, manipulation, and self-centeredness.
5. In order to "do the will of God from the heart" it will be necessary to confess such sins, correct our failure to obey God in what caused the sin, forgive those involved, and then learn to change our pattern of life to conform to God's will. This may appear impossible -- but it is not -- because of the way the Holy Spirit enables us. (Rom. 6:16-18)

C. The application.

1. If the Christian slave could, by the grace of God, transcend his natural dislike for his master -- and learn to obey him with respect and sincerity of heart -- then we can easily learn, as free people, to obey the Lord Jesus and His will.
2. This brings us back to the question: Why do we fail to make the decisions we know we should?
 - a. While our failure may not have been rebellion when the patterns of sin started in our life -- it can only be called that if we hesitate to deal with them now.
 - b. One truth that is always present in our failure to do the will of God -- is caused by our abysmal misunderstanding of Who God is.
 - 1). It is a rejection of His wisdom.
 - 2). It is a rejection of His love.
 - 3). It is a rejection of His holiness.
 - 4). It is a rejection of His faithfulness.
 - 5). It is a rejection of His ability.
 - 6). It is a rejection of His Fatherhood.
 - 7). It is a rejection of His promises.
 - 8). It is a rejection of His Word.
 - 9). It is a rejection of His will for our life.
3. This brings us to the shocking realization that the kind of a life we live -- is largely based on our decisions. We may have been seriously hurt as a child or even as an adult, but we are not the victims of our past or present. We are redeemed people.
4. Where do we begin? With our heart!