

Lesson # 9 -- The Practicality of the Will of God

Introduction

- A. It is important to understand and affirm that Christianity is rooted in the truths of Scripture, which in turn are based upon the work of God in history.
- B. It is also important to recognize that Christianity is a joyful, redemptive experience which has great value in the push and pull of the everyday world.
- C. The emphasis in this lesson is on that facet of the will of God which we will call its -- practicality.

I. The Practicality of the Will of God -- The Prayer Life.

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. I John 5:14,15

A. The explanation.

- 1. In regard to prayer the will of God has at least two facets.
 - a. One important provision of God's will for the believer is the privilege of prayer. We can talk with God and present our requests to Him.
 - b. The second truth has to do with how our Heavenly Father has made His will known to us. He has told us how to come to Him and what to ask for. We can pray according to His will.
- 2. The Apostle John, in speaking of these truths introduces our text with the word "confidence." It is interesting to see that the Greek word puts the emphasis on "boldness." We can come to God in prayer -- with a confidence that is based on Who God is (The confidence we have in Him), and the provision He has made for us (His will).
- 3. When we understand this Biblical basis for prayer -- we recognize immediately how practical the prayer life should be.

B. The instruction.

1. Because God has made known His will, in regard to our prayer life, our response should be that of learning how we are to engage in prayer and then everlastingly be at it.
2. The principle that is clearly taught by our text and other passages of the Bible -- is quite overwhelming -- it means that we can pray the will of God into existence in our life and for others.
3. When we know the will of God for other believers, and we are willing to pray for them, then we can have the confidence mentioned in the text that God will bring His will to pass in their life. A person can resist the will of God, but even so, as we pray we can be sure God is working even in that life.
4. As we considered in previous lessons a number of valuable benefits belong to every believer -- in the will of God. The following is only a sample.
 - a. The assurance of salvation, I John 5:13.
 - b. The enablement to live free from the world, Gal. 1:4.
 - c. The ability to live as a sanctified person, I Thess. 4:3.
 - d. The graces of joy, prayer, and gratitude, I Thess. 5:16-18.

C. The application.

1. The practicality of the will of God should now be immediately evident. Each of us have needs in our own life and know needs in the lives of others that we recognize can be met by prayer.
2. God has given to every believer the office of priest (I Peter 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6) and has stated what requests He will grant to us.
3. As we consider these truths, a nagging question keeps coming up -- it can be stated simply: "Why don't we pray this way and get the work done?"
 - a. We may not be on praying ground because of sinfulness, laziness, unconfessed sin, self-centeredness, ignorance, or even a lack of compassion. (I wonder how we will feel when we get to Heaven and realize all too clearly that our sinfulness deprived others of spiritual support.)
 - b. Perhaps the better answer to that question has to do with our tendency to be anti-supernatural. While we profess to be Christians and believe the Bible -- in actuality we do not really expect God to work -- and we live that way.

II. The Practicality of the Will of God -- Our Testimony.

For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. I Peter 2:15

A. The explanation.

1. Peter wrote to Christians who were undergoing severe trials and perhaps even governmental perscution. His epistles are filled with instructions of how to live as a believer in such difficult times.
2. A summary of Peter's counsel is found in the text above and in its context. The Holy Spirit led him to exhort the believers to be law-abiding and characterized by well-doing.
3. Peter's counsel has some profound principles behind it. We know there is no other way for a believer to respond in such a situation -- than by doing what is right. To live that way would be one means of explaining and spreading the gospel.
4. It is interesting that we have a letter from the non-Christian governor of Bithynia, Pliny the Younger, (I Peter 1:1) to the Roman Emperor Trajan. It is dated 111 A.D. In describing the Christians he stated the following.

. . . And that they bound themselves with an oath, not for a crime, but to commit neither theft, nor robbery, nor adultery, not to break their word and not to deny a deposit when demanded . . . (Anne Fremantle, A Treasury of Early Christianity. New York: Viking Press, 1953, p. 253-255)

B. The instruction.

1. Every Christian, at some time in life, will be in a situation in which there is misunderstanding, pressure, and perhaps even persecution. We have all asked ourselves, "What am I to do?" The Bible tells us -- "Do what is right. Make sure you live a life characterized by truthfulness, kindness, and righteousness."
2. The promise of the Scripture is that our well-doing will silence the slander, accusations, insinuations, and gossip of those who oppose us.
3. It is obvious that this counsel runs counter to what we want to do in a situation where we have been treated shabbily. Our "normal" approach is to bear a grudge, and find a way to strike back. Such a response will only cause our defeat.

C. The application.

1. The passage under consideration reminds us of the importance of our daily life as a testimony to the truthfulness and the power of the gospel.
2. The emphasis in our text on the will of God is to the effect that our well-doing fits into the plan of God. He will use such a testimony for His glory. Peter speaks of well doing at least two more times in this Epistle.

For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing. (3:17)

Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator. (4:19)

3. It is remarkable that the words "will of God" appear in all three of these passages where Peter is speaking of "well doing." This is not coincidence. When people lie about us we cannot live in the will of God -- nor win -- by lying about them. The same thought applies in all the areas of our life. What Peter is talking about is the principle given by the Lord Jesus, when He said:

Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets. Matt. 7:12

4. The personal application of these principles to our own life is rather obvious.
 - a. We must make sure that we do not bear a grudge against those who have wronged us. When we do we are saying that it is right to seek vengeance (the content of the grudge) and that we are waiting to do so. It also says that God is not in control of the situation -- so I must take charge. Grudge bearing is a very serious sin. (Rom. 12:17-21)
 - b. We must forgive those who have wronged us. We must not wait for them to ask for forgiveness because that is a part of what it means to bear a grudge. (Matt. 6:14,15)
 - c. We must make sure we respond to people and life by what Peter calls "well doing." In summary it means to be a truthful, kind, and righteous person. (Matt. 7:12)

III. The Practicality of the Will of God -- Our Service.

And when he (God) had removed him (Saul), he raised up unto them David to be their king, to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will. . . For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers . . . Acts 13:22,36

A. The explanation.

1. The contrast in these verses between Saul and David is very interesting. The implied reason why King Saul was removed and David given the throne -- is that Saul did not do God's will and God knew David would. This is borne out in the message of the prophet Samuel, who said to Saul:

Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king. I Samuel 15:23

2. In the clearest manner possible, God states that the person He approves of and delights in, "a man after mine own heart," is one that chooses to live in harmony with His will. This does not mean that we earn God's approval by obedience -- but that such obedience indicates what the person desires -- to honor God, to be like Him, and to fellowship with Him.
3. We also see in this passage how David "served his own generation by the will of God." He was able to be such a successful king, unify the nation, establish true worship, and then prepare for the building of the temple -- because he did the will of God.
4. In these two verses we see the practicality of the will of God in a twofold manner -- in David's life. First of all in his own spiritual life, as expressed in the Psalms he wrote, and then in the way God blessed him as the king.

B. The instruction.

1. In the first lesson of this series we were reminded that the will of God was often described by the word "way." And now we see how appropriate that is. The will of God is the "way" a Biblical believer lives, it is the standard of his conduct, it is that which establishes the priorities and goals of his life. No wonder the Lord Jesus said, "I am the way . . ."
2. If we are to serve God and one another -- then the will of God is the pattern and blueprint for us.

C. The application.

1. In this contrast of Saul and David, in regard to the will of God, we are taught a great lesson.
 - a. Consider all that Saul lost -- by not doing the will of God.
 - b. Consider all that David gained -- by doing the will of God.

2. The passage that clearly illustrates this is the description of David's anointing.

Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him (David) in the midst of his brethren, and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward . . . But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him. I Samuel 16:13,14

3. This sad story from the Old Testament brings the issue into your life and mine. The measure of our spirituality, our service, and our Biblical success -- is determined by our relationship to God through His will.
4. The one indication of what both Saul and David thought about God, whether He was worthy of honor, worship, and obedience was clearly disclosed through their relationship to God's will. Saul was a believer, but his own will was all-too-often more important than the will of God. David was a believer, but the will of God was very important to him -- even though he failed in obey in regard to Bathsheba and Uriah.
5. We must ask as to what our daily life is saying about our estimation of God. It's our life -- not our words that tell the truth.