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Learning God's Will

by Sewell Hall

"Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17). The passage quoted clearly establishes the fact that we can determine the will of the Lord and that we are unwise if we fail to do so. But how can this be accomplished? The New Testament, given to us as our revelation from God, is not in the form of a code of law; rather it is a collection of biographies, history and letters.

Whether or not we learn God's will from the Scriptures depends largely upon the strength of our desire to learn it. The Scriptures may well be written as they are to confuse and deceive those who *"did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness"* (2 Thess. 2:10-12). Surely this is the unwise attitude of which the Ephesians passage warns.

Jesus prayed: *"I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes"* (Matt. 11:25). Babes are those who are poor in spirit, who hunger and thirst after righteousness. Jesus promised, *"They shall be filled"* (Matt. 5:3-6).

Illustration

Suppose an ambitious person begins work in a large office and is eager to please his employer. How can he know what will please him? There are at least three ways.

First, his employer may tell him some things directly. He may say, "I expect you here at 9 a.m. each working day. Your duties will be to type letters which I record and to file papers." This is a direct statement.

Second, some things are implied in what was actually said. For example, he knows that he is to use a typewriter and recording equipment as well as the filing facilities. These were not mentioned, but are necessarily inferred from what was said.

Finally, he may learn from observing other employees in the office. He can observe the dress, the language and conduct of those who please his employer and of those who displease him. By following the example of the ones who are pleasing, he will be able to please him also.

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Times of Services

Sundays - 2:00 pm Bible class, 3:00 pm Assembly Wednesdays - 6:30 pm Bible class

Application

The Scriptures authorize by direct statement or command. Jesus said, "*You are my friends if you do whatever I command you*" (John 15:14). The things which Paul and the other apostles wrote were the "*commandments of the Lord*" (1 Cor. 14:37).

Some other things God would have us do may not be stated, but are necessarily implied in other things which He has said. The Lord did not reveal directly to Peter that he should preach to the Gentiles; instead, he gave him a vision of animals which were formerly considered unclean, and said, "*What God has cleansed you must not call common*" (Acts 10:15). Yet, Peter learned from this that he "*should not call any man common or unclean*" (Acts 10:29). How did he learn that? By necessary inference from the vision God had given him.

Still other things may be known to please God because He has approved them in others. Thus, Paul wrote, "*For this reason I have sent Timothy to you ... who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church*" (1 Cor. 4:17,18). It was important for them to know Paul's practice, for when they practiced what he practiced, they were practicing what he taught by inspiration. It is the same for us.

And so, by direct statement, by inference and by approved example, we can know God's will for us.

Jesus Used These Methods

In withstanding the temptations in the wilderness, Jesus determined the will of God in each instance by one of these methods. By direct statement, He identified the evil in bowing down and worshipping Satan. Though no direct statement was to be found in Deuteronomy 6:16 regarding jumping from the pinnacle of the temple, Jesus correctly inferred from what was said that He should not "tempt the Lord" by testing His promise to protect Him. And from the example of the Israelites in the wilderness, He learned "*that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God*" (see Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4).

- by Sewell Hall, Embury Hills church of Christ, Atlanta, Georgia (copied from article in February 13, 1997 church bulletin called *BIBLE VIEWPOINTS*, The Fry Road church of Christ, Houston Texas).

Invite Others to Hear these Topics...

"Counterfeit Christians" August 5th

"Why So Many Churches?" August 12th

"Do I Have To Go To Church To Be Saved?" August 19th

"God's Plan of Redemption for Man" August 26th

Editor's Note: If you would like a Home Bible Study in the privacy of your home, or would like to study further over the phone, or by computer (email), please feel free to contact us: Mark J. Ward, 445 Touchstone Parkway, Brunswick, Georgia 31525, (912) 265-6936 - markjward@yahoo.com

Please visit our website at: <http://www.religiousinstructor.com/church>
