

"The Practice of the Believer"

Ephesians 4-6

Part 17

Introduction: Last week in our study of Ephesians we looked at one verse.

Notice Ephesians 5:16

We focused on redeeming the time. This means that we are to seize the opportunities which are set before us. Last week we went back to Kadesh Barnia and watched as Israel came to Canaan and refused to trust in God's power and promises and so they did not move. They rebelled against Moses and desired a new captain to lead them back to Egypt. It was then that the glory of God appeared in the Tabernacle before all of Israel.

Numbers 14:6-10

⁶ And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes:

⁷ And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land.

⁸ If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey.

⁹ Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not.

¹⁰ But all the congregation bade stone them with stones. And the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel.

God then announced that all the numbered men would die in the wilderness and their children would then enter Canaan 38 years later. Israel then had a change of heart, but the door was closed. They missed their opportunity and even though they tried God was not with them.

Numbers 14:39-42, 45

³⁹ And Moses told these sayings unto all the children of Israel: and the people mourned greatly.

40 And they rose up early in the morning, and gat them up into the top of the mountain, saying, Lo, we be here, and will go up unto the place which the LORD hath promised: for we have sinned.

41 And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the LORD? but it shall not prosper.

42 Go not up, for the LORD is not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies.

45 Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them, even unto Hormah.

Israel had missed the opportunity and the door was closed. This is where we stopped last week. Today I want to continue this thought because there is something very important that we did not have time to consider last week.

➤ **The Will of God**

Notice Ephesians 5:17

It is vitally important that we know the will of God. In other words, we are to redeem the time BUT be sure the opportunity that you are about to grasp is of God.

Listen to the words of MacDonald:

"So, we should not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. This is crucial. Because of the abounding evil and the shortness of the time, we might be tempted to spend our days in frantic and feverish activity of our own choosing. But this would amount to nothing but wasted energy. The important thing is to find out God's will for us each day and do it. This is the only way to be efficient and effective. It is all too possible to carry on Christian work according to our own ideas and in our own strength and be completely out of the will of the Lord. The path of wisdom is to discern God's will for our individual lives, then to obey it to the hilt."

The word "understand" here in this verse has the idea of gathering the pieces of a puzzle and putting them together. It is our responsibility to know the will of God and to live in the will of God daily. Outside of the will of God our actions are futile.

This then brings up an important question, "How can I know the will of God?"

a. Surrender

To know the will of God for our lives we must be surrendered over to the Lord.

Romans 12:1-2

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

² *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

We cannot be living with one foot in the world and one in the church and expect to know God's will for our lives.

James 1:8

⁸ *A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*

b. Prayer

Colossians 1:9

⁹ *For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;*

c. Search the Word of God.

Let us be reminded that God speaks through His Word today. Therefore, not know the will of God means we must be feeding upon His Word.

Psalms 37:23

²³ *The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.*

Proverbs 3:5-6

⁵ *Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.*

⁶ *In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*

d. Be cautious of feelings.

Now let me explain that it is very important when seeking the will of God that we learn to set our feelings aside. We can desire something so much that we are then controlled by our own feelings and act outside the will of God. Let us notice an example.

Genesis 16:1-4

Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar.

² And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.

³ And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife.

⁴ And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes.

Abram desired to have a son so much that he ignored the will of God and married Hagar to father children. Afterwards he then had to live with the consequences.

Application:

This is what has happened to many people who were not able to set their own feelings aside. They get to the point where they desire something so much that they step outside the will of God to get it. Then comes the consequences. It not only impacts their lives but also everyone around them. No man is an island. When he steps outside the will of God to satisfy his own desires there is often lasting consequences.

I want to take you into the life of Nehemiah for a few moments to help you to see what the will of God looks like.

It was the will of God for Nehemiah to leave Babylon and go to Jerusalem to lead a wall building project. How did this all come together?

1. It started with a heavy burden.

Nehemiah 1:1-4

The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. And it came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace,

² That Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.

³ *And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.*

⁴ *And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven,*

This was a burden that Nehemiah could not escape from. Four months later he is still broken over the news that had reached him.

2. The open door.

Nehemiah 2:1-

And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence.

² *Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid,*

³ *And said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?*

⁴ *Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven.*

⁵ *And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it.*

⁶ *And the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him,) For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time.*

When the opportunity before us is the will of God we will never need to force our way through closed doors. God has ways of moving hearts and opening doors.

Esther 2:8-9

⁸ *So it came to pass, when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai,*

that Esther was brought also unto the king's house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women.

⁹ And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her her things for purification, with such things as belonged to her, and seven maidens, which were meet to be given her, out of the king's house: and he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the women.

God had a plan for Esther to be the queen and we can His hand opening doors as He moved the heart of the keeper of the maids.

Proverbs 21:1

The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.

3. The Provisions.

Nehemiah 2:7-10

⁷ Moreover I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come into Judah;

⁸ And a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which appertained to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me.

⁹ Then I came to the governors beyond the river, and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me.

¹⁰ When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.

Nehemiah did not need to have a fund raiser to get what he needed for the construction of the wall. God provided all he needed.

Application:

I show you verse 10 also to help you to understand that as we walk in the will of God there will be resistance.

When we follow the will of the Lord it is God's responsibility to provide what is needed and He will just as he did for Nehemiah.

Matthew 6:31-33

³¹ *Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?*

³² *(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.*

³³ *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

Conclusion:

I want to end with two thoughts.

- a. Sometimes the will of God is not what we desire.
- b. Sometimes God does not provide until we are committed.

Joshua 3:13

¹³ *And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the LORD, the LORD of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon an heap.*