

Lesson 3**Putting God's Will First (1)**

In the previous lessons we saw that God demands self-denial. Jesus said that one must deny himself to be his follower (Mark 8:34). Part of the principle of self-denial is learning to put God's will first.

In preaching to Felix, Paul taught about "righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come" (Acts 24:25). What does self-control have to do with becoming a Christian? The answer is everything. One will not and cannot become a child of God until he suppresses his own will and gives preference to the will of God.

Man Has His Own Way

Man has his own idea of how he ought to live and conduct his life. What he thinks seems right to him (Prov. 14:12; 16:25). However, it differs greatly from the thinking of God. His ways are higher and greater than man's (Isa. 55:9-10). Following his own plans, man is led to destruction (Prov. 16:25).

Examples can be found throughout the Bible of those who had their own ideas. When Naaman heard the instructions from the man of God to dip seven times in Jordan, he revealed

his disappointment saying, "Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper" (2 Kings 5:11). In the days of the judges "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judg. 21:25). Paul lived in good conscience while he was persecuting the church (Acts 23:1). The Jews were rejected by God because they ignored God's will and went about to establish their own scheme for being righteous (Rom. 10:1-3).

The Proverbs writer warned, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths" (Prov. 3:5-6).

God's Will Is Revealed in His Word

The mind of God has been revealed by the Spirit to the apostles and prophets (1 Cor. 2:9-13; Eph. 3:3-5). We can now read and understand what God's will is (Eph. 3:3-5; 5:17; John 8:32). The righteousness of God (God's plan for righteousness) is revealed in the gospel



The Jordan River, in which Naaman first refused to dip seven times.

(Rom. 1:16-17). It is his grace that teaches us how to live (Titus 2:11-12).

We Must Accept God's Will and Put It First

If we are going to serve God, we must suppress our own will and submit to his. Only those who do the will of the Father enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 7:21). Those in the church are those who are subject unto Christ in everything (Eph. 5:24). The word "subject" is a military term that means to "line up under."

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The repentance that God demands of us in becoming his children (Acts 2:38; 17:30-31) involves a change of mind (cf. Matt. 21:28-29). This is a change from following our own will to submitting to the will of God. Then, it is no longer us, but Christ who lives in us (Gal. 2:20).

If we are truly converted to the Lord, we will put the Lord first (cf. "sanctify the Lord God in your hearts," 1 Pet. 3:15) in all things. Thus, it is not just a matter of submitting to the will of the Lord

in becoming a Christian, but accepting it in "everything" (Eph. 5:24).

Questions

1. What does self-control have to do with becoming a Christian? _____

2. Cite some examples of those who wanted to follow their own will instead of the will of God.

3. To what does "the righteousness of God" refer (Rom. 1:17)?

NOTES

4. What does the word "subject" mean (Eph 5:24)? _____

5. How does repentance relate to self-control? _____

6. What does "sanctify the Lord God in your hearts" mean (1 Pet. 3:15)? _____

7. We are to subject ourselves unto the Lord in _____

8. We must learn to _____ our own will and _____

 to the _____ of God.

9. Write Mark 8:34 from memory. _____

10. What practical lesson(s) have you learned from this study?

