

UNDERSTANDING THE LORD'S WILL

Paul told the Ephesians, *"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is"* (Ephesians 5:17). This very brief and direct statement teaches us some very valuable lessons.

First, it teaches us that the Lord has a will. We often read of men having their conferences or synods to decide what they are going to believe or teach on certain subjects or issues. Instead of voting on what they are going to believe or teach they need to be seeking the Lord's will. They need to be as Ezra of old who *"had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments"* (Ezra 7:10). The Psalmist declared, *"For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven"* (Psalm 119:89). Jesus said, *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven"* (Matthew 7:21).

Secondly, this statement declares that the Lord's will has been revealed. That which has not been revealed cannot be known or understood, therefore when Paul calls upon the Ephesians to *"understand what the will of the Lord is"* he is telling us that this will has been revealed. If we turn back a couple of chapters in this same book we will find Paul telling us how this will had been unknown in times past but has now been revealed. He says, *"How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;"* (Ephesians 3:3-5).

A third, and equally important, lesson learned from this statement is the fact that the Lord's will can be understood. The Lord does not require the impossible of us. The very fact that we are instructed to *"understand what the will of the Lord is"* tells us that it can be understood. In fact, the passage noted above (Ephesians 3:3-5) where Paul informs these brethren that the mystery of Christ had been revealed by the Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets tells us also that the recipients of that revelation wrote that which was revealed and that it could be read and understood.

Many today suggest that *"we cannot understand the Bible alike."* What this statement really says is that the Bible cannot be understood for, in fact, there is no such thing as people *"understanding"* the Bible differently. The Bible doesn't teach you one thing and me something else. If you read the Bible and reach one conclusion and I read it and come to a different conclusion we have not *"understood it differently."* At least one of us has misunderstood. We both may have misunderstood but, for sure, we both have not understood. If you read and understand and I read and understand we will be in agreement since the Bible teaches the same to all.

Another lesson we learn from this statement is that effort must be made to understand the Lord's will. We can not understand that which we make no effort to learn or understand. Paul instructed Timothy to *"Study to shew thyself approved unto God"* (2 Timothy 2:15). Some translations read *"give diligence"* instead of *"study."* There must be the willingness to devote the time and effort to study that we may know and understand the Lord's will. Far too many are willing to rely on someone else (maybe the preacher, their parents or spouse) to tell them what is right or wrong and will not study for themselves. When we hear anything taught we need to be like those of Berea who *"were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so"* (Acts 17:11).

Once we study and *"understand what the will of the Lord is"* we must be ready to obey His will (Matthew 7:21). Jesus said, *"And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"* (Luke 6:46). Before Jesus ascended back to the Father he instructed His disciples to *"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned"* (Mark 16:15,16). On the day of Pentecost Peter convicted those Jews assembled on that occasion of their sin in rejecting and crucifying the Son of God and instructed them to believe (know

assuredly) that Jesus is Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). They then asked, "*What shall we do?*" (v. 37). Peter's reply is found in verse 38. He said, "*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*"

Do you wish to be saved? If so, could you find any plainer instructions than those given by Jesus? "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*" (Mark 16:16). Do you desire to have your sins forgiven? Again, could the means of receiving that forgiveness be stated any plainer than Peter stated it? "*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins*" (Acts 2:38).

Yes, the Lord has a will; it has been revealed and we can understand it. Will you obey it?

✍️ *James Hahn*