

Sunday Night Equipping – God's Will (part 7)

The Way of Wisdom – Principle #2:

Overriding Principles:

1. In those areas specifically addressed in the Bible, the revealed commands of God (His moral will) are to be obeyed.
2. In those areas not specifically addressed in the Bible, the Christian is free to choose, but must remember that he/she is responsible for the decision that is made and ought to make a decision with spiritual expediency in mind.
 - *Spiritual* – means that the ends are in view, as well as the means to those ends – governed by the Moral Will of God – seeking to glorify God in every aspect of life!
 - *Expediency* – quality of being suitable or advantageous to the end in view

The Principle of Freedom:

I. The Principle of Freedom in the Nature of Law

A. Freedom of choice within revealed limits is the Creator's design!

1. Freedom of action within prescribed limits is assumed...
2. Adam and Eve were told that they could “eat *freely* from *any* tree of the Garden except from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”

B. Swimming on public beach... certain clearly forbidden behaviors

1. Some by National & State Laws (forbidding murder for example)
2. Some by Posted Signs (No swimming past the buoys or during certain weather)
3. A swimmer rightly assumes that he can do anything else not forbidden
4. You don't have to ask the lifeguard about whether you can build a sand castle, throw a Frisbee, or lay out to tan or whether you can float on your back or butterfly swim

C. Syllabus for a class – writing a paper

1. Guidelines: Length, Subject Matter, Grammar Rules, Stylistic Format
2. As long as you comply w/ rules, freedom on which sources you use, how you construct sentences (as long as grammatically correct), etc.

D. Apodictic/Normative Law – General, Casuistic Law – Specific

1. God's Law reveals Moral Will which implies freedom within stated limitations!
2. Biblically, the Lord gave principles – SIMPLICITY/CONCISENESS
3. Example: 10 Commandments, **Matt 5-7** Jesus' approach... Normative principles illustrated by concrete examples

E. Common Error: Doing away w/ “modern things” not found in scripture

1. “If a horse and chariot were good enough for David...” hahaha!
2. **Ex)** Amish people – not using electricity... or Churches not using powerpoint... etc.
3. **Hermeneutical Principle: Two options...**
 - a. Only do that which is commanded...
 - b. Freedom to do anything not forbidden...
 - If the 1st were true, it would be hard to fulfill consistently in practice...
 - The 2nd seems illustrated by consistent example of the Scriptures...

II. The Principle of Freedom in the Nature of Sin

A. *Sin defined as breaking God's Law*

1. **I John 3:4** "Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness."
2. **Rom 4:15** "for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no violation."

B. *To make a decision outside of the Moral Will of God is to sin.*

1. But, in making a decision not addressed by God's commands, as long as one's goals and attitudes are right, one cannot sin with regard to the decision itself.
2. If no biblical principles are violated in the process, such a decision is in realm of moral freedom
3. No moral law → No moral sin. RELIEF! Enjoy FREEDOM!
4. Be free of FALSE GUILT! – really incapacitating/debilitating... in some ways false guilt can be more debilitating because it is harder to identify and get rid of.

III. The Principle of Freedom in Specific Statements in Scripture

A. *Gen 2:16-17 Command to Adam and Eve*

1. Could eat *freely of any tree* except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil
2. Could gather and prepare the food in any way they desired
3. Could eat when they wanted to, chew as many times as they pleased, etc.

B. *Lev 11, Deut 14 Clean and Unclean food*

1. Unclean animals were outside the circle of God's moral will for Israel
2. Moral freedom of choice as long as they selected from the approved menu (clean)!

C. *Lev 22:18-33 Freewill offering*

1. Voluntary displays of love... not required
2. Freedom within limits for there are prescribed instruction on what sacrifice was acceptable as a valid expression of worship

D. *Deut 23:21-23 Vows*

1. Particular expression of promise to God was left to free choice of the believer, but once the vow was made the moral will of God required that it be kept.
2. Vow is **a decision regulated by the moral will of God, not determined by it.**

E. *Rom 14-15, I Cor 8-10 Eating Meat*

1. Eating in itself is not a moral issue... freedom of choice
2. **Gen 1:29-30** God gave plants for food... **Gen 9:3-4** God gave animals to eat, but not the blood... **Deut 14** Restrictions on types of animals allowed to eat... **Acts 10:12-15** God cleanses these foods – acceptable to eat...
3. Concern for others, though, is important for correct expression of freedom **I Cor 9**

F. *II Cor 9:7 Giving*

1. "just as he has purposed in his heart"
2. Emphasis is not so much on act of giving as the attitude. The amount is left up to the individual to decide/determine (personal, freely made decision)
3. Generosity, Enthusiasm, Cheerfulness – this is stressed!

G. *I Cor 7 Marriage/Singleness*

1. Classic Example of the principle of freedom within the moral will of God
2. ***Freedom which is regulated...***

The Principle of Responsibility:

Understand our freedom brings a feeling of **relief** *as well as* an understanding of **responsibility**. **Rom 14:5** exhorts us to “be fully convinced in [our] own mind” in matters of freedom for “each one of us will give an account of himself to God” (**14:12**).

Typical expressions used today such as “God showed me, told me, revealed to me” are used in explaining the right school, job, person to marry, ministry to be a part of, etc. Meanwhile as one searches the NT, one will discover the glaring absence of such phrases as it relates to decisions.

Apostolic Examples

1. **Titus 3:12** “When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, make every effort to come to me at Nicopolis, for ***I have decided*** to spend the winter there.”
2. **I Thes 3:1-2** “Therefore when we could endure it no longer, ***we thought it best*** to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy, our brother and God’s fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith.”
 - Knowing that the believers in Thessalonica would undergo persecution (**3:4**) without the benefit of experienced leadership (**3:5**) Paul, Silas, and Timothy developed a plan whereby the church would be encouraged and strengthened
3. **Phil 2:25-26** “But ***I thought it necessary*** to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need; because he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick.”
 - Paul thought it necessary not because God had specifically told him, but because of the situation... 1. He wanted to dispel the Philippians anxiety with joy thereby reducing his own concern for them (**2:28**). 2. Epaphroditus was anxious to get home to let everyone know he was alright (**2:26**). 3. Paul was able to send this letter of thanks to the Philippians.
4. **I Cor 16:3-4** “When I arrive, ***whomever you may approve***, I will send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem; and ***if it is fitting*** for me to go also, they will go with me.”
 - Collecting an offering to send to the Jewish believers in Judea who were in dire straights (**Rom 15:25-26**). For his part, Paul would set his apostolic seal on the gift by sending out the messengers with personal letters or he might accompany the gift
5. **Acts 6:2-4** “So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, ‘***It is not desirable*** for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. Therefore, brethren select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.’”
 - The apostles were being distracted from accomplishing the priorities that Christ had given to them, and so something needed to be done. After analyzing the situation, they came up with a wise, practical plan that would meet all the relevant needs. They then established qualifications that were appropriate for the task.

6. **Acts 15:22, 25, 28-29** “Then *it seemed good* to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas—Judas called Barsabbaas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren... *it seemed good* to us, having become of one mind, to select men to send to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul... For *it seemed good* to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials: that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell.”
- Peter reviewed the historical work of the Holy Spirit to bring salvation to the Gentiles through the grace of the lord Jesus (**15:7-11**)
 - Barnabas and Paul related the confirming ministry of the Holy Spirit who produced supernatural signs and wonders through them as they preached the gospel to the Gentiles (**15:12**)
 - James cited relevant Scripture passages stating that God was “taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name.” (**15:14-18**)
 - The Holy Spirit had already given His guidance before the council met – worked through Peter to bring salvation to the gentiles, miraculously confirmed the evangelistic ministry of Barnabas and Paul among the gentiles, and inspired the writers of Scripture to foretell the inclusion of the Gentiles in the church – for this reason they could say the decision “seemed good” to the Holy Spirit and to them.
 - What occurred was an application of Scripture – determining what “seemed good”
 - Reasonable desire to promote unity in the church.

Apostolic Exhortations

1. **I Cor 6:1-6** – Ought to be at least one man who could be trusted to make fair judgments and settle disputes. Administration of justice involves making decisions, some moral (discernment of right and wrong, guilt and innocence) and some nonmoral (determining best means to execute an equitable judgment).
2. **I Cor 7** – Some issues fall within the area of freedom where the decision is left up to the believer. Paul gives advice together with reasons showing the wisdom of his counsel. “good” and “better”
 - **Uses those terms in the sense of “advantageous”**
 - Better to be single because circumstances of the time period were tough on families, and single people are freer to serve the Lord without distraction of family commitments.
 - Better to be married than to be consumed with passion – despite whatever problems marriage might bring, the potential for holy living would be greatly enhanced.
 - Men w/ unmarried daughters “let him do what he wishes, he does not sin” (7:36)
 - Believing widow is free to be married, as long as the man she wishes to marry is a Christian. Although Paul felt that she would be happier if she did not remarry...
3. **Eph 5:15-16 & Col 4:5** – Be careful how you live – be spiritually opportunistic!
4. **Deut 1:13, Acts 6:3, I Tim 3:2, Titus 1:8**
 - Sound judgment are required qualifications for those who would lead God’s people.

Acquiring Wisdom

J.I. Packer – “Wisdom is the power to see, and the inclination to choose, the best and highest goal, together with the surest means of attaining it.”

In the examples above we saw that in each case, the decision maker made a value statement regarding his decision as it appeared to be the best way to accomplish some worthy objective.

See the connection between Seeking Wisdom & Wisdom being a GIFT!

Prov 2:4-6 “If you seek her [wisdom] as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; Then you will discern the fear of the Lord, and discover the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding.”

THE PROPER ATTITUDE

1. Reverence **Prov 9:10** “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom...”
2. Humility **Prov 11:2, 15:33** “... With the humble is wisdom.”
3. Teachableness **Prov 15:31** “He who listens to reproof will dwell among the wise.”
4. Diligence **Prov 8:17** “Those who diligently seek me will find me.”
5. Uprightness **Prov 2:7** “the Lord stores up sound wisdom for the upright.”
6. Faith **James 1:5-8** “if any lacks wisdom ask of God... let him ask in faith...”

THE PROPER APPROACH

1. Ask God for wisdom
 - **James 1:5-8**
 - He challenged believers to accept their trials with joy because of character development that would result. Ask God for wisdom to develop proper perspective toward trials.
 - Faith does not reserve the right to reject God’s wisdom after it is given, but submits in advance to the higher ways and thoughts of the Lord. *Gaining wisdom not only for the trial at hand, but through the present trial for future application.*
2. Seek wisdom in the pages of Scripture
 - **Psalms 119:97-100** “O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.⁹⁸ Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, For they are ever mine.⁹⁹ I have more insight than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation.¹⁰⁰ I understand more than the aged, Because I have observed Your precepts.”
3. Seek Wisdom through personal research
 - Pros and Cons Sheet... Count the Cost...
4. Seek Wisdom through wise counselors
 - **Proverbs 11:14** Where there is no guidance the people fall, But in abundance of counselors there is victory. (see also **13:20, 15:22**)
 - Some are able to offer spiritual insight and others relevant personal experiences
5. Seek Wisdom from life itself
 - **Prov 30:24-28** God has built wisdom into nature which men would do well to reflect upon. (see also **Prov 6:6-11** “Go to the ant...”)
 - Practicing the truth allows one to reach greater depths of wisdom (**Heb 5:12-14**)