

Seeking the Father's Will

***“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”
—Philippians 2:5***

IN HIS LETTER TO THE church at Philippi, the Apostle Paul encouraged the brethren to have the mind of our Lord. To develop this

level of reasoning, it is necessary to study the Truth with all diligence, and to rightly divide the wonderful scriptures concerning the divine plan and God's ultimate purpose. The doctrines and teachings of the Bible are the basis and fundamental guide to our spiritual growth and guidance as New Creatures in Christ Jesus.

The high standards that are set forth in God's Word never change, and our conduct should be governed by the standard of truth and righteousness at all times. Our character development is the background for serving our loving Heavenly Father, and it enables us through Christ Jesus to enter upon a new walk of faith. In respect to this lifetime commitment, an understanding of God's wonderful character and purpose is essential. Those who are alert in their efforts to rightly divide the word of

Truth are walking in the light, and their service is acceptable to him.

JESUS' MINISTRY

Jesus' ministry is the most noble and outstanding example ever known. Even as he sought to know his Heavenly Father's will and purpose in his life, so also is it necessary for us in our Christian walk and service. For example, Matthew has recorded Jesus' actions when it came time for him to carry out the terms of his earthly ministry. We read, "Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee." (Matt. 4:12) He knew that it was his Heavenly Father's will that he select his disciples. "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him."—vss. 17-20

From Matthew's record, we further learn, "Going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him. And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people."—vss. 21-23

From the scriptural account, it is thus made clear that John's imprisonment confirmed the fact

that the time had come for the Master to preach the particular message that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. He had been anointed to preach at the time of his baptism, and he delayed this particular phase of the message until he had heard that John had been cast into prison.

JOHN'S MINISTRY

By studying and meditating upon the word of Truth, Jesus was able to understand the Father's will, and that his public ministry pertaining to the kingdom of heaven was not to begin until John had been imprisoned. This had been disclosed by Old Testament prophets who had foretold long before that the ministry of John the Baptist would be designed as a preparatory work that would precede the ministry of the Master. Concerning John's ministry, Isaiah wrote, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." (Isa. 40:3) Therefore, until John's ministry had been finished, Jesus knew that it was not yet time for his own public ministry to begin.

THE LOST SHEEP OF ISRAEL

Another example of how Jesus could properly serve his Father and be guided by the Holy Spirit of truth concerned his ministry to the Jewish nation. The scriptural record states, "These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."—Matt. 10:5,6

The Master's commission of service was thus limited to the Israelites and to a very specific time

and place. Thus were the disciples of Jesus directed to go only to the Jewish people at this early period of Jesus' ministry. It was not until three and a half years later that this same Gospel message was sent to the Gentiles. In subsequent years, the Gospel was then preached primarily to the Gentiles, and to those whom Jesus and his disciples had not been permitted to serve before that time.

JEWISH FAVOR ENDED

This changing situation as to the status of the Gentiles with relationship to the Gospel is understandable only when the word of Truth is properly divided, and the mind and will of the Heavenly Father is understood. Jesus was well acquainted with the Scriptures and knew that Daniel in his prophecy had revealed a period of special favor that was determined upon the nation of Israel. This period was designated as one of seventy symbolic weeks, which was actually 490 literal years. Jesus' ministry began just seven years before the full end of this special favor to Israel. Thus did he know that it was not the will of his Father that the message should go to the Gentile people before that period of time had been fully accomplished.

It is evident from this that Jesus limited his message of Truth in harmony with the Holy Spirit of God and his commands. This period of special favor to Israel ended three and one-half years after the Master's death. At that time, and in the divine providence, the apostles were informed through the Apostle Peter of the dispensational change. As a consequence, the Gospel was then extended to the Gentiles. Eventually, the proclamation of the

message was carried on almost exclusively among the Gentiles.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Just as it was important for Jesus to be acquainted with the will and purpose of his Heavenly Father, so should it also be with those who are now living during the closing years of this present Gospel Age. To understand what God's ultimate plan and purpose is for his human creation, we should do so intelligently and in accordance with his will.

Consecration to do the Father's will suggests making a diligent study of the Scriptures in order to be assured of what his will might be. To be acceptable servants of God and the Truth, it must be in harmony with his will as he has revealed it to us through his Word.

The special guidance manifested by Jesus in seeing that his disciples were directed in their service, suggests the care with which God desires all of his people to observe, and to have their consecrated lives governed by the principles of Truth. We are advised to use the sword of the Spirit to strike down human reasoning which could otherwise exalt itself above the knowledge of Christ.

In his letter to the church at Corinth, the Apostle Paul directed their attention to this by telling them, "Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; And

having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.”—II Cor. 10:3-6

When the proper time arrived for the Gospel message to be given to the Gentiles, the Apostle Peter was informed of it by a vision. In the material realm there is a proper time for sowing and another time for reaping, so in the outworking of the divine plan it is being carried forward in an orderly way to completion. Those who are consecrated to the Lord’s will and are cooperating with him should give all diligence to the task at hand. Paul said, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”—II Tim. 2:15

TRIALS AND TESTING

Satan’s efforts to stumble Jesus were along the line of suggesting to him a way of doing things which was contrary to the course that God had outlined for him. The Truth that was present during Jesus’ time was designed to chart a course for him, and the same is true of our time. Throughout the present Gospel Age, the Adversary has sought to becloud the Christian’s mind relative to the divine Word and will, and for the purpose of turning aside those who are desirous of pleasing God.

Thus does the apostle encourage the brethren in Christ to greater faithfulness and zeal in serving God. “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, hav-

ing itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”—II Tim. 4:2-8

CHRIST'S KINGDOM NEAR

The kingdom truths promulgated by Jesus and the apostles have lived in the hearts of a little flock of faithful believers throughout this present Gospel Age. In connection with the prophecies pertaining to the harvest work at the end of this age, there is brought to our special attention the fact that the Chief Reaper of the harvest is invisibly present, and is conducting the work of harvest in accordance with the wonderful will and purpose of the Heavenly Father.

Now that the prophecies pertaining to the end of this Gospel Age are being fulfilled to all whose eyes and ears of faith have been opened, let us lay fresh hold upon these truths and fully appreciate the fact that through them God has given us specific instructions pertaining to our present activity, and that by adherence to these instructions we can show ourselves approved unto him. This message of Truth will bring restitution blessings for the world under the establishment of Christ's future

kingdom. The church is nearly completed and will soon be united with the Lamb in glory.

Meanwhile, we have not yet reached the dark night of trouble which will close the privileges of proclaiming the Truth, and there is no evidence that the Lord wishes us to make any change in the message. It is still his will that we make known the wonderful plan and purpose concerning the sin-sick and dying human family.

Let us continue to seek an understanding of the divine will, and realize the responsibility which it imposes to lay down our lives in service and sacrifice as did our Captain and Redeemer, making known the glad tidings of his coming glorious kingdom to be soon established in all the earth.

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