

Seeking and Obeying God's Will

John 7:1-18, NKJV

¹ After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for He did not want to walk in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill Him.

² Now the Jews' Feast of Tabernacles was at hand.

³ His brothers therefore said to Him, "Depart from here and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may see the works that You are doing.

⁴ For no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world."

⁵ For even His brothers did not believe in Him.

- *We witness something startling in regard to Jesus' half-brothers. They were not only unbelieving and skeptical toward Jesus—they were sarcastic and downright hostile!*

⁶ Then Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready.

⁷ The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil.

⁸ You go up to this feast. I am not yet going up to this feast, for My time has not yet fully come."

⁹ When He had said these things to them, He remained in Galilee.

- *Jesus clearly stated that his half-brothers were of the world. They identified with the world and the world identified with them.*
- *The hostility his brothers exhibited toward Jesus reflected the same hostility the world exhibited toward Jesus.*

¹⁰ But when His brothers had gone up, then He also went up to the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret.

¹¹ Then the Jews sought Him at the feast, and said, "Where is He?"

¹² And there was much complaining among the people concerning Him. Some said, "He is good"; others said, "No, on the contrary, He deceives the people."

¹³ However, no one spoke openly of Him for fear of the Jews.

- *The Jews had many questions and opinions about Jesus. Some said He was a good man, while others accused him of being a deceiver.*
- *The contrary opinions the people held about Jesus were shrouded in fear because the Jewish religious leaders threatened the people not to speak about Jesus.*

¹⁴ Now about the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and taught.

¹⁵ And the Jews marveled, saying, "How does this Man know letters, having never studied?"

- *Whenever Jesus spoke, His words impacted people. The people were astonished at the depth and authority of His words. "How does this Man know letters, having never studied?"*

¹⁶ Jesus answered them and said, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me.

¹⁷ If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.

¹⁸ He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him."

- *Jesus confronted their questions about His identity, His authority, and His teachings—“My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me.”*
- *Jesus’ statement is bold and clear. He declared that His teachings came directly from God!*
- *Then Jesus provided the way in which we can know if His teachings are from God—by desiring to do God’s will! “If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.”*
- *Later on in the New Testament it clearly indicates that Jesus’ half-brothers came to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah, and they became His devoted followers.*
- *In the Upper Room when the 120 believers gathered together in Acts, Chapter one, Jesus’ half-brothers were named among the faithful believers. “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.” (Acts 1:14).*
- *Apostle Paul referred to James, the pastor of the church in Jerusalem, in Galatians 1:19 as “the Lord’s brother.”*
- *Jude identified himself as the brother of James, indicating that he too was a half-brother of Jesus. (Jude 1).*
- *Jesus’ half-brothers no longer saw Him simply as their brother, but as their Lord, their Creator, their Saviour—in short they saw Him as God. They worshipped Him!*
- *How could Jesus’ half-brothers who grew up with Him fail to recognize who Jesus really was?*
- *How were Jesus’ half-brothers eventually converted and put their faith in Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God?*
- *Simply put, when they were confronted by the resurrected Christ they responded to His words through obedience and put their faith in Him. Once they chose to do the will of God and not their own wills, everything Jesus taught became abundantly clear.*
- *Some unbelievers refer to themselves as “honest skeptics.” What they mean is that they are open to believing in God if someone could provide sufficient evidence.*
- *However, the reason this attitude never leads to faith or recognizing the truth of the Gospel is because there is no desire on the part of the person to do God’s will. They fail to recognize their lost and hopeless state and their desperate need for God and His salvation.*

Matthew 7:7-8, NKJV

⁷ “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.”

- *Asking, seeking, and knocking indicate a deep desire and desperate need on the part of the person. This describes those who desire to know God’s will. God has promised that they will receive, find, and it will be opened to them!*
- *There are people, both Christians and unbelievers, who really don’t want to know God’s will. They do not want to change but want to continue in activities or a lifestyle that is destructive and contrary to God’s will.*

- *When we have a deep desire to know the will of God it means there is also a deep desire to obey His will once He reveals it to us.*
- *Our deep desire makes us willing to spend our time and energy in prayer and studying God's Word and to use our resources for His purposes.*
- *There is a cost in seeking to know God's will but there are precious priceless rewards to be gained—living a fruitful life filled with God's eternal purposes. "The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing; But the soul of the diligent shall be made rich." (Proverbs 13:4).*

"If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine..."

- *"The golden rule for understanding spiritually is not intellect, but obedience. If a man wants scientific knowledge, intellectual curiosity is his guide; but if he wants insight into what Jesus Christ teaches, he can only get it by obedience."*
- *"If things are dark to me, then I may be sure there is something I will not do. Intellectual darkness comes through ignorance; spiritual darkness comes because of something I do not intend to obey."*

John 8:31-33, NKJV

³¹ Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.

³² And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

³³ They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can You say, 'You will be made free'?"

- *In John, Chapter eight, Jesus continued to develop the principle of knowing the truth by saying, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*
- *Previously in Chapter seven, Jesus said, "If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine..." Now Jesus says that the result and reward for knowing and obeying the truth is freedom!*
- *Verse 33 explains why the unbelieving Jews were unable to recognize that Jesus' words were true. They had no desire to do God's will nor did they see their need. They failed to recognize that they were in need of both salvation and redemption. "They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can You say, 'You will be made free'?"*

Matthew 6:14-15, NKJV

¹⁴ "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

¹⁵ But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

- *If a Christian wants to know if forgiveness really has the power to set us free from bondage and torment, we need to be willing to obey God's Word and forgive everyone who has hurt and wronged us.*
- *The Bible says that we can "rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory." (1 Peter 1:8b).*

- *However, the only way we can know if this can become a reality in our hearts and lives is by being willing to do the will of God and obeying His word. “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4). To rejoice is our choice.*

Philippians 4:6-7, NKJV

⁶ Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

⁷ and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

- *The only way to know if it is true that we can be set free from anxiety and the burdens of life no matter what we may be facing is to take all our needs before God in prayer with a heart filled with thanksgiving.*

Philippians 4:8-9, NKJV

⁸ Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

⁹ The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

- *The only way we will know that we can have hearts filled with God’s peace is by obeying God’s Word and meditating on the goodness of God.*

Philippians 4:10-13, NKJV

¹⁰ But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity.

¹¹ Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:

¹² I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

¹³ I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

- *In verse 10, Apostle Paul used himself as an example of these principles. “But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again.”*
- *Paul didn’t rejoice because his needs were met, he would have remained content either way. He rejoiced because he recognized their spiritual fruitfulness in their care and love for him.*

¹¹ Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:

- *Paul then shared a principle which enabled him to live a contented life, “for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content.”*
- *The Greek word for “to be content” that Paul used in this verse is αὐτάρκης (autarkēs) and it means “pertaining to being happy or content with what one has, content with the circumstances in which one exists, sufficient in oneself, strong enough or possessing enough to need no aid or support, to be content with one’s lot and independent of external circumstances.”*

- *Contentment gives us the strength and inner resources to be happy and satisfied independent of circumstances.*
- *Paul then stated how he received this unshakeable contentment that is independent of circumstances, “for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content.” Contentment is not a gift, a personality trait, or a special impartation. Contentment must be developed, cultivated, and learned through our relationship with Christ by obeying His Word.*
- *The Greek word for “learned” used in verse 11 is μαθηάω (manthanō) and it means “to learn from experience, often with the implication of reflection; to learn, to come to realize.” As we meditate and reflect on God’s Word we begin to realize more and more who He is and His perfect character which develops a deep contentment in our hearts.*
- *In verse 12, Paul described the amazing depth of contentment he had developed. “I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.”*
- *When Paul said in verse 12, “Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry” he employed a completely different Greek word for “learned.” The Greek word is μυέω (myeō) and it means, “to learn the secret of something through personal experience or as the result of initiation—‘to learn a secret’; to initiate into the mysteries.”*
- *Paul then described the secret He had discovered that empowered him with unfailing strength to be content no matter what he faced. “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” In other words, Jesus is always enough!*
- *We need to learn this secret that Jesus is enough no matter what we face, whether it is life or death, gain or loss, sickness or health, joy or sorrow.*
- *The way we learn these “secrets” of a victorious life is by being willing to obey God’s Word—if we are willing to do His will.*
- *And if we’re not immediately willing, we can ask God to make us willing to be willing.*
- *Often, Christians are tempted to compromise God’s standards, truths or His plan for their lives to avoid persecution or hardship.*
- *There are two sources of persecution—internal and external.*
- *Internal persecution arises from an internal war between our fleshly and sinful impulses and our new nature that desires to walk in obedience to God. “For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another.” (Galatians 5:17).*
- *A person can avoid being persecuted by the flesh and tormenting sinful impulses by simply giving in to them and letting them rule over us. Of course, this will lead to a path of dissipation, destruction, and havoc.*
- *When Christians refuse to give in to their fleshly impulses and submit to the leading of the Spirit, the result is victory, fruitfulness, and freedom.*
- *External persecution arises from the world around us as we choose to allow the light of Christ to shine through us as we live godly lives by expressing God’s love, mercy, grace, and holiness and by sharing our faith with those around us.*
- *We don’t have to pray that God would stop persecution against Christians. That choice does not lie with God but with Christians. Worldwide persecution would cease today if no Christian ever again shared the Gospel and completely hid their faith in Christ. However, very soon the Gospel message would cease to be proclaimed.*

- *We should pray protection, strength, comfort, and wisdom for persecuted Christians and for the salvation of those they are witnessing to, including their persecutors.*
- *While persecution can result in great trials, suffering, and hardships, compromise is much more costly. Compromise leads to eternal loss, not only for the Christians, but for those with whom they fail to share the Gospel.*
- *Compromise robs believers of God's divine purposes for their lives now, and the rewards, crowns, and inheritances He desires to bestow on us for eternity.*

2 Timothy 3:12, NKJV

¹² Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

- *God's Word promises that all who desire to live godly lives in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*
- *Persecution comes in many forms, but there are two questions we must answer in the affirmative if we are willing to do God's will.*
- *Is Jesus enough no matter what we face or what we experience?*
- *Is Jesus worth it no matter what we face or what we experience?*
- *"Everything hinges on your view of Scripture. Either Scripture will be the lens through which you view the world or the world (science, politics, worldview, etc.) will be the lens through which you view Scripture. Ultimately one or the other will be your authority." (Rachel Miller)*
- *The only way you will know if what Scripture says is true is by being obedient to it.*
- *If we want to understand that God is faithful we need to trust Him.*
- *If we want to understand about holiness we need to be willing to walk in repentance.*
- *If we want to understand about love we need to be willing to sacrifice.*
- *To have a high view of Scripture is not to believe it is inerrant but to obey it and apply it to our lives!*