

WHY THINGS GO WRONG AND HOW TO PUT THEM RIGHT - Part thirteen

Teaching #1815 - Sunday, June 28th, 2015, 6 p.m.

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When You Really, Really, Need to Know God's Will

John 10:1-16 - "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. [2] But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. [3] To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. [4] When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. [5] A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers." [6] This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. [7] So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. [8] All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. [9] I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. [10] The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. [11] I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. [12] He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. [13] He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. [14] I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, [15] just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. [16] And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd."

At the beginning of this series we studied the different *sources* of the problems we face. In the first few weeks we studied some of the problems that come from the *sinful choices* we make. These are problems of our own making. We studied how to *get out* and then *stay out* of those kinds of situations.

Then, in the next few weeks, we looked at problems that come from external situations that are beyond our control. Here, as we've been considering in the last few lessons, the key to moving ahead spiritually in difficult situations is to deal Scripturally with our *internal reactions* to external circumstances. I may not be in charge of the circumstances, and I may not *like* the circumstances, but there is always an element I have control over.

And it's what I do with *my* part of the situation that determines the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the spiritual growth I will achieve in the middle of the muddle. God holds me responsible for things like *worry, fear, and anger*.

But there are other kinds of problems that we should talk about. There are problems that come from *simply not having enough information to know what is the right thing to do*. There are situations that cause *confusion*. My heart may be right. I may *want* to do the right thing. I'm simply *not sure* what the right course of action is.

1) IT IS THE NATURE OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS THAT HE FUNCTIONS AS A DIRECT GUIDE IN THE DAILY STEPS OF OUR LIVES

This is not some incidental truth in these verses. It is repeated four times as the central theme in Jesus' mind:

John 10:3,4,16,27 - "To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. [4] When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice....[16] And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd....[27] My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."

This point should give us pause and comfort. It is the nature of a shepherd to direct the sheep. That's what shepherds *do*. In fact, they have no other duty than to *protect* and *direct* the sheep.

This understanding is basic to spiritual soundness and growth. There are, right now, about 2500 different religions, each with some revelation, or prophet, or leader giving direction to its followers. The claims to authority are mind boggling and endless. They range from demented leaders of destructive, mind controlling cults, to television personalities who tell you God wants you to send them \$500, to the person in the foyer who says, "**God told me to say this to you.....**"

In the middle of all this stuff, it is comforting to hear the voice of Jesus saying, "**Listen, you don't need some special prophet**

or mediator to get God's direction. I speak directly to my sheep. You can know my voice. You don't need to be led astray."

Church, value this truth. Treasure the fact that Jesus wants to talk to you directly. He wants your ear. He wants to deal with your life in a **personal** way. Never let anyone take that from you.

Here's an example of the leading of the Good Shepherd even when the one being led isn't aware of all the details of the path he's on. This morning at the close of the service I asked all the people in the congregation to stand together again for the truth of God's Word while not forsaking compassion toward those who reject it. Everyone responded after the morning message.

It was only after the service ended that one of the men came up to Reni and said, "Just tell Pastor Don that at our men's prayer meeting we all prayed for that difficult message. And then we prayed the whole church would rededicate itself to honoring God and His Word. Just make sure he knows that."

God will **direct**. Do get **advice**. **Advice** from others is fine. In fact, wise counsel is recommended in the Scriptures. But never let anyone else **speak for Jesus** to you. Never let anyone else **take His place**. He's the Shepherd. And you are His beloved lamb.

2) **THE FOUNTAIN HEAD AND MEASURING STICK FOR ALL DIVINE GUIDANCE IS THE BIBLE - GOD'S WORD**

Psalm 119:105 - "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

The specific purpose of the Word is spelled out in clear terms of **giving direction** and **avoiding obstacles**. That's what light on a pathway is for. The amount of time you give to the study of God's Word will have direct bearing on the guidance you receive from His hand.

Many areas we seek guidance on are **specifically spelled out** in the Scriptures. Other areas (and we studied this in detail earlier in this series) are covered in **principle**. Either way, it's arrogant and foolish to seek guidance on matters where God has already made His will known, yet I have not taken the time to find it out.

All other forms of guidance must be tested and measured by God's unchanging Word. No vision, dream, prophecy or spokesperson has any authority over my life. Everything else giving direction to my life must be examined and questioned until it is proven to be according to the teaching of Scripture:

1 Corinthians 14:29 - "Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said."

1 Thessalonians 5:19-21 - "Do not quench the Spirit. [20] Do not despise prophecies, [21] but test everything; hold fast what is good."

1 John 4:1 - "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world."

All of these verses, and other like them, beg the question. **How** are these revelations to be judged? By what **standard** do we measure them? How would the early church have known how to judge them before the New Testament was completed?

The Bible answers that question. The early church **knew** how vulnerable it would be to error but for one very important practice that it maintained:

Acts 2:37-42 - "Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" [38] And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. [39] For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." [40] And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." [41] So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. [42] And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."

Whatever you think is the most important thing in the church, and wherever you put doctrinal teaching on your list, always remember this - ***the New Testament puts teaching at the top of the list for the church.*** The doctrines of the New Testament are the ***standard*** by which everything else is measured. And they are the ***lifeblood*** by which everything else of value is sustained.

3) **GOD GIVES GUIDANCE THROUGH OUR OWN THOUGHTS**

Proverbs 20:27 - "The spirit of man is the lamp of the LORD, searching all his innermost parts."

Notice the ***spirit*** of a man is written with a small "s". This is not identified as the ***Holy*** Spirit. This is the ***human*** spirit - your mind - the process of your own thoughts. Solomon says, under the right conditions, God will use my own thoughts to put His guidance into areas where I might normally make huge mistakes.

But there is a catch here. David deals with this same principle:

Psalm 19:12-14 - "Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults. [13] Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression. [14] Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer."

God does not direct His input into just ***any*** kind of thought life. This all relates to the previous point. As God's Word rules my life, God's input into my life become stronger and clearer - ***even into areas that aren't specifically mentioned in the Bible.***

The trick to having God direct my thoughts isn't found in being ***brilliant***. It's found in being ***holy*** and ***submissive*** to the will of God I already know. ***If I make it my desire to please the Lord in everything I know now, He will make sure my life is going where He wants it to go down the road.***

4) **THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S WILL FOR SPECIFIC DECISIONS IS DIRECTLY DEPENDANT UPON EXPOSURE TO HIS GENERAL WILL FOR ALL OF MY LIFE**

Our text from John makes this point in a very blunt way: **John 10:5** - "A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."

Jesus is such a great teacher. He makes this point so clearly and directly. ***Why won't sheep follow a stranger?*** Jesus says it is because they ***do not know the stranger's voice.*** But ***why*** don't they know the stranger's voice? Because they have ***never gotten used to listening to the stranger*** - **Psalm 1:1-2** - "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; [2] but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night."

Followers of the Shepherd delete competing voices. They spend all their time listening to the true shepherd. His is the voice they have been ***constantly exposed to.*** If they sat around, listening and giving their time and attention to some other voice, they would soon come to ***think*** of that voice as the one to follow.

Now, keeping all this in mind, ***how important is it when Pastor Don says, "Make sure you come and bring your family to church regularly on Sunday."***

"How often do I have to come, Pastor Don?"

Well, the Bible doesn't tell me how often. But, keeping this principle of exposure to the Good Shepherd's voice in mind, one thing is for certain: ***Too much exposure is far better than too little.*** Are we really worried that our kids are going to get ***too much*** of the Shepherd's voice into their minds while their young? Do we really think that thirty minutes more sleep will keep them from the thieves Jesus talked about, who are constantly after the following of the sheep?

Let's get real here. Is the basket ball game, or hockey tournament, or dance class - or the scholarship, or career, or trip

around the world more important than their exposure to the voice of the Shepherd?

It is the plain assumption of Jesus in our text that His sheep will spend **so much** time being exposed to Him, and alternately, **so little** time exposed this world's culture of conformity that they will just naturally find their hearts **recognizing** His voice like a baby in the mother's womb will recognize her voice before it's born.

Remember guidance isn't gained by **brilliance**. It's gained by **commitment and dedication**. If I don't give much time to the Shepherd, I'll constantly struggle with knowing His will. There simply are no **tricks** to obtaining it.

5) **DON'T ALLOW THE DETAILS YOU DON'T KNOW OF GOD'S WILL TO CROWD OUT THE APPLICATION OF THE DETAILS YOU DO KNOW**

John 10:27 - "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."

Be careful with this short verse. It says more than we think. Jesus' sheep are **not** identified as those who merely **hear** His voice. Lots of people **hear** the voice of Jesus (in conscience, Scriptures learned as a child, the godly counsel of parents, etc.). Jesus says his sheep are specifically identified by their commitment to **following** Him.

If I'm not following Jesus, guidance is snuffed out. There is **always** more of God's will to be immediately obeyed than I think. The trick to **obtaining** guidance in areas of uncertainty is to be **immediately responsive and obedient in areas I already know**.

Examples abound. A student is praying about which university he should attend. He can't seem to hear God's voice. Is God not guiding his life? Yes, He **has** and **is**. That student has already been told it is against God's will for him to date that unsaved girl. Or God has already spoken to him about his unchaste habits with her on dates. Or God has already spoken to him about his bad attitude to the rules his parents have at home.

The point is, when the sheep decides to **forsake the clear voice of the shepherd** at those points, he will never find guidance on any other points. We can all make application of that truth in different ways to our own circumstances.

More next week.