

MOODY DISTANCE LEARNING

Importance of Knowing God

Greg Wheatley:

Welcome to Radio School of the Bible and welcome to a brand new week in our study, God's Will for Your life as the topic for this quarter in Radio School of the Bible. I'm Greg Wheatley welcoming you into our classroom of sorts. Our instructor is Dr. Bill Thrasher, Professor of Bible and Theology at the Graduate School at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. We are together gaining some very valuable insight into what God's will is, and maybe exploding some of the myths along the way that you've held perhaps for a long time about what it means to know God's will. We certainly want to do that in a biblical fashion, and I know that Dr. Thrasher's desire is that you learn from God's word what God's will is.

Well here we are, the beginning of a brand new week, Dr. Thrasher. I think all of our students are refreshed and ready to dive right back in.

Dr. Bill Thrasher:

Well I trust so. The first thing we've asserted is that a person who wants to know God's will must understand God's purpose for their life. In the words of Jeremiah, "God's purpose for man is that we learn to comprehend and know Him." Comprehending and knowing Him we saw involved learning to trust Him and love Him and delight in Him. We want to build upon that, and this is our basic theme that we want to be expounding for some time and that is this, that a person who wants to know God's will must have a greater desire to know God than to know God's will.

I remember there a quote I read a number of years ago from A.W. Tozer. The quote says something like this. It says, "What comes into a person's mind when they think about God is the most important thing about that person's life." In fact, Tozer would say that if he knew – if you could know exactly what controls a person's thinking about God, you could predict the spiritual destiny of that person's life.

Well that sort of statement or quote was the origin and assignment I've given many, many times to hundreds of students, and that is this: To take one sheet of paper and to write down what comes to your mind when you think of God. I've done that many times myself or several times myself. Of course the key is to be as honest as you possibly can. You're not trying to write a list that you know is orthodox. Of course anybody can do that that's been around the Christian faith, but the idea is to discover what really are the controlling factors in my mind as I think about God.

I've discovered at times certain things are clearer than others. Some things are more predominant in my thinking about God, but it's what comes to your mind when you think about God is most important thing about us.

There was a book published a number of years ago in regard to one's thought life. I think the title of the book was *You and Your Thoughts*. The author asserted this. He said that right living begins with right thinking, and right thinking begins with right thinking about God. He said, "Until our thinking about God is different, our life will not be that much different than it ever has been." But the key to changing a life is in regard to changing our thinking about God.

I remember a number of years ago when we introduced a new course at that particular time in the undergraduate program. It was a course on the Christian life, and as I was structuring that course for the very first time I was thinking, "You know, I think I'll put a section in this course in regard to the attributes of God," because I'd seen that helped in my own life and it helped other people's lives. But as I developed that course, I discovered that I couldn't just develop a section on the attributes of God in relation to that course, but I needed to develop the entire course around. That was the structure for the Christian life.

The thing the Lord used to confirm that was a little passage in 2 Corinthians 3 that says, "As we behold God's glory, we are changed from glory to glory." In other words, the key to having a changed life is changing my focus and my perspective on beholding the glory of the Lord.

Greg Wheatley: As you're sitting there saying that I'm realizing that this is the importance of good theology isn't it.

Dr. Bill Thrasher: Absolutely.

Greg Wheatley: You think back many years ago when, I think, if I'm not wrong that theology was called the Queen of the Sciences. It is important. A lot of people see theology as sort of dry and boring, but it's not at all. It's vital to our faith isn't it?

Dr. Bill Thrasher: Absolutely. Certainly it's presenting it in the way that scripture presents it. Scripture never presents it as static truth, but truth that we are to respond to. That's certainly true in regard to the character of God. The foundational truth in all of theology is in regard to who God is, how He's declared Himself, and we said that's the basic message of scripture.

Now this idea of 2 Corinthians 3:18, beholding God's glory we are changed from glory to glory, it's not a matter of, "Okay, I've got that down. I've heard that one time," but quite frankly the very first thing on my prayer list is 2 Corinthians 3:18. I've asked God for years to show me how to develop in my life. How do you really do that? How do you behold God's glory as you go through life? All of us have responsibilities, but how do I behold God's glory in regard to those responsibilities?

Like I said, I continually hold that up as a prayer request. I feel like in some small ways God has given me some insight in regard to that, and I think the Lord has shown me at times as I go through life, rather than beholding the Lord I may be trying to "serve the Lord," but I'm beholding my to-do list. My eyes aren't on the Lord; they're on my to-do list, and it's subtly. Although I'm trying to be in conscious rebellion against the Lord at those time, but really I've lost contact and fellowship with the Living God.

Greg Wheatley: It's easy to do isn't it?

Dr. Bill Thrasher: It certainly is. In fact, it's really a work of God – and I would say this to our listeners – for Him to break through and to show us things that we've been maybe doing for many years that are wrong, but to help us do that because sometimes we can just live in deceit, that we don't really in our experience know what it means to behold the glory of the Lord. In other words, as I would be doing this broadcast the greatest thing of concern to God with me is that I'd beholding Him as I do this, as I see His faithfulness, as I depend upon Him for the words to speak. So whatever God's will is for your life, certainly that is the key to it, learning to behold His glory.

Greg Wheatley: It really is freeing isn't it, because as we said I think in an earlier program, it's not so much: Do the following five things; jump through these hoops. It's getting to know a person with whom we have a relationship, and allowing that to change who we are on the inside.

Dr. Bill Thrasher: I think that's the crux of it, and I think to make it anything else is to short circuit what really the deep thirst and desires of our heart are. We do thirst to be intimate with one, and that thirst can only be fully fulfilled by being intimate with the God who can live inside of us.

In regard to we've said this is crucial and in regard to the development of the Christian experience, we wouldn't have to go to many scriptures in a sense to certainly point out this obvious truth. In fact, in Romans 12:1 – 2 he says, "I urge you therefore by the mercies of God." See, it's a response to God, who God is and what He's done for us, "that you present your body as a living and holy sacrifice, which is acceptable to God and which is your spiritual service of worship. And don't be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what the will of God is."

What we are saying is the starting place is the mercy of God. The starting place is what God is like. So there's no way to develop the Christian experience without coming to solid Biblical conclusions and convictions about the character of God.

The Psalmist, he said it this way. He says, "Those who know thy name will trust in Him." Those who know the name of God, that it's God's name, His character, will put their trust in Him. It's impossible to trust somebody you don't know. That's Psalms 9:10.

Then Proverbs 2:1 - 5, the writer of the Proverbs is encouraging us to seek God. Then when he comes to his conclusion there in those five verses of chapter two, in verse five he equates the fear of the Lord with the knowledge of God. There can be a certain understanding of the fear of the Lord that can be crippling, and there can be a Biblical understanding of the fear of the Lord that can be very freeing and very refreshing.

In fact, God says, "There are countless benefits that He pours upon the one who fear Him." He even says that man's basic problem is, "There is no fear of God before their eyes," Romans 3. But the only way to develop an appropriate fear of Him is to develop a knowledge of God, and it's a balanced knowledge of God.

My thinking of the fear of the Lord, I had a – in fact in my thinking, wrong thinking, but I don't think I could have understood Exodus 20:20. It says, "Fear me, but don't be afraid." There's a type of terror that's not a Godly terror, but it's a type of – it's like what some people call a prohibitive conscious, where a person is afraid to do what is wrong, but they have no zeal to do what is right. There's no courage to love.

Greg Wheatley:

That's very common isn't it? Maybe among religious people who really don't have a relationship with God, but who know that they ought not to do the following things, and as you say there's a fear factor there, isn't there?

Dr. Bill Thrasher: Absolutely, and there's something missing. I mean I don't think one will give their heart, their life to a cause that is just based upon afraid in a sense to do wrong things. Now certainly there needs to be, there should be – part of the fear of God is that we should be afraid to do the wrong things, afraid to displease God. But there's also a – what – trust. Fear has to be balanced by trust.

There I think it's a balanced understanding of God's character that keeps us in that balance. So in every area whether it's learning to trust God or love God or delight in God, it's always a response to truth that God has communicated about Himself to us first. He's taken the initiative.

Perhaps a wonderful place to conclude in regard to today's broadcast is that familiar verse in Isaiah 26 where it says, "The steadfast of mind that will keep in perfect peace because he trusts in thee." See, the experience of peace, the experience of any Godly quality in our life is based upon – what – the character of God.

Now wherever you are today, God knows your circumstances and He wants to communicate Himself in the midst of those circumstances. Maybe they're pleasant. Maybe they're extremely unpleasant. But God wants to communicate Himself to you. He knows your thoughts and God wants to uproot thoughts about Him that are not of Him, that are not true, not in line with His truth. He wants to put in your mind things that are of Him. As Jesus said, "You shall know truth and the truth shall set you free."

Greg Wheatley: A great place to stop for today. The time goes quickly when we're learning these valuable insights from God's word. There's much, much more and we trust that you'll stay with us in this quarter as we explore God's Will for Your Life with our instructor, Dr. Bill Thrasher. Thanks, Dr. Thrasher.

For Dr. Bill Thrasher I'm Greg Wheatley. I hope you'll join us again next time on Radio School of the Bible.

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