

Willing and Obedient - Sunday, July 20th 2014

**If you are willing and obedient,
you will eat the good things of the land; Isaiah 1:19**

Beloved in The Lord,

One of the great things about the Bible is that God speaks very clearly. We will understand what He is saying if we tune ourselves in to listen. God does not leave us in the dark or guessing as to His will. God speaks very clearly. Our text today is a good example of this. Through His prophet Isaiah, God is speaking firstly to the children of Israel, but also to all of us. He says very clearly:

***“If you are willing and obedient,
you will eat the good things of the land; “***

If you are willing and obedient you will experience blessing. God could not have said it more clearly. If we are to experience His blessing in our lives, we must be willing and obedient to follow His will and walk in His ways. This is a principle that is borne out all through the Scripture. Where a person, family or nation is willing and obedient, God’s blessing rests upon them. The opposite is also true for we read in the next verse:

***“but if you resist and rebel,
you will be devoured by the sword.”
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”***

Do you see how simple and clear this is? If you will be willing and obedient, you will experience blessing, but if you resist and rebel, then you will experience a curse – you will be devoured by the sword. As I reflected upon this principle which is so clearly stated here, I began to wonder where the Church would be, where we could be, if we were willing and obedient to God in all things.

As a Congregation we are striving to be willing and obedient, and I believe that we are seeing the blessing that flows from this attitude toward God and His Holy Word. I encourage all of us to continue both individually, and corporately to walk in obedience to God and His Word.

We do have a very powerful and cunning enemy, who is working day and night to try to derail us. He is always trying to find some way to cause us to disobey God and to step outside of His will and purpose. It is of vital importance that we are aware of this and that we are always on guard.

We read in 1. Peter 5:8-11

“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”⁹ Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

¹⁰ And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

¹¹ To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.”

I quoted this whole passage as there are a number of important points we need to look at briefly.

Firstly we are exhorted to be alert and of sober mind all the time. We need to understand that life is a constant battle. We cannot afford to sit on our blessed assurance, fold our hands and bask in the warmth of God’s love and grace. We are constantly in a battle field. The war is between good and evil and it is unceasing. We need to be on the alert watching over, guarding our heart and our faith.

We need to be reading God’s Word daily. We need to be praying every day, we need to be in constant communication with God all the time. The devil can only harm us if we let him. He tempts us, but we do not have to give in to the temptation. He cannot make us sin. We sin when we choose to sin.

That is why Peter exhorts us: ***“Resist him, standing firm in the faith..”***

In order to resist the devil, we need to be strong in the faith. In order to be strong in our faith we must be in God’s Word daily. We need to feed our faith and we need to exercise our faith. This is so very important and I cannot stress it enough. We need to read God’s Word every single day!!! No exceptions.

Peter also reminds us that it is Jesus Himself who restores us and makes us strong, firm and steadfast. That is if we trust in Him. If we try to resist the devil in our own strength, relying upon our own wisdom and resources we will fail dismally. We will not get far relying upon self. We need Jesus. We need God The Holy Spirit empowering us from within. Apart from Him we cannot do anything.

That is why we are taught to walk in the Spirit. What does it mean to walk in The Spirit? It means to entrust your life completely to God. To hand over the reins to Him completely. To be willing and obedient in all things. It means to fully trust in Him.

This is what we ask for in the Lord's prayer when we pray: "Your Kingdom come; Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." To walk in the Spirit we need to pray something like: *"Take Thou my hand and lead me; O'er life's rough way; With Heavenly manna feed me from day to day; without Thy grace and favour I go astray. Take Thou my hand O Saviour; choose Thou my way."*

This is a very powerful and effective prayer, if you pray it and live it. If you decide not to take a single step without Jesus, not to make a decision without Him, you cannot go astray. You place yourself in a place where you are truly blessed. You are in God's protection and provision. While we walk with Him we are secure.

If you are a person of great importance, and you have body guards that surround you, then you are secure as long as you stay within their bounds. If you decide to walk away from your body guards, out of their circle of protection, then you are no longer secure.

If we walk outside of the bounds of God's Word, if we walk outside of His will, if we are not willing and obedient; then we are no longer under the shadow of His wings and we place ourselves in danger.

In both The Old and New Testaments, people are depicted as sheep. Sheep need a Shepherd, especially in Biblical times in Biblical lands. Without a shepherd the sheep were extremely vulnerable and were easy prey for wolves. Not only that, sheep were not capable of finding grass to graze on or water to drink. They easily got lost and could fall down a craggy slope. The shepherd knew where to find food and water and he also protected and cared for the sheep. While the sheep followed close to the shepherd they were secure.

Jesus is The Good Shepherd, who loves His sheep. He gave His life for His sheep, He shed His own blood that we may be part of His herd.

He said: ***"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹² The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. ¹³ The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.***

¹⁴ "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— (John 10:11-14)

You see Jesus is The Good Shepherd. He loves us. He does everything to protect us. He is the real Shepherd; He is The Way, The Truth and The Life. He is the true way for us to walk. Only when we are in His herd, are we secure and blessed. We live in peace and have true life.

All other ways, all other prophets and teachers are false shepherds. They are counterfeits. Only Jesus and Jesus alone is the Good Shepherd. Only by believing and trusting in Him can we get to Heaven.

A blessed life is ours when we trust and obey with all of our heart. When we do our testimony is expressed by David:

“The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures,

he leads me beside quiet waters,

³ he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths

for his name’s sake.

⁴ Even though I walk

through the darkest valley,

I will fear no evil,

for you are with me;

your rod and your staff,

they comfort me.

⁵ You prepare a table before me

in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil;

my cup overflows.

⁶ Surely your goodness and love will follow me

all the days of my life,

and I will dwell in the house of the Lord

forever.

When The Lord is your Shepherd, then truly, you lack no good thing. He cares for all your needs both physical and spiritual.

There is no greater testimony than “The Lord is my Shepherd”. There is no better way to live life than to trust and obey God in all things. To be willing and obedient always.

May we make a commitment today to be willing and obedient to our Lord in all things.

As we begin each new day we need to offer ourselves to Him as a living sacrifice. We need to ask Him to take us by the hand and lead us. Resolve not to step outside of His will.

If we do, our life will truly be blessed.

May God help us.

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All Bible quotations taken from New International Version Bible.