

Doing God's Will

Exodus 23:20-33

Thank you for joining us this week as we continue our study through Exodus. We are now about halfway through the book of Exodus. The rest of Exodus tells us what happened at Mt Sinai. God reveals Himself to the children of Israel in ways they have never seen. They learn more about Him and experience Him at a whole new level. As we study this part of Exodus, we hope you will also learn more about Him and experience Him at a level that you have not known Him before.

As we are going through this section of Exodus, don't lose sight of the big picture. Some of these chapters are filled with lots of small details, and sometimes we wonder why all this information is in the Bible. If you start to feel that way, remember where this fits in God's story. God is building a kingdom, and He will redeem what was lost to sin; He will restore His kingdom in the whole world. We know the children of Israel go on and fall away from the true God, but from the children of Israel comes one called Jesus. Through Jesus, God will get it all back! God's plan will not be thwarted.

His story has twists and turns which don't always make sense to us. But remember, His heart is for the whole world to know Him, and this will happen. Understanding this brings purpose to all the Bible because every part points to this end goal. The Holy God of Mt Sinai has not changed; we must humble ourselves before Him and join His team. Don't lose sight of the end when Jesus will be the King of Kings, and we will have the privilege of serving this great king.

I give you this short introduction to remind you of the big picture. God's plan will be accomplished, He was working then, and He still is at work despite how things appear. I thank you again for joining us on Hope for Today; let's go with Bible teacher, J. Mark, for a closer look at today's lesson.

The most important desire anyone can have is to do the will of God. But who is God? Can we know Him? I am grateful to tell you that, yes, we can know Him. We can know Him by the revelation He has given us of Himself in the Holy Scriptures. It is a true revelation. We can base our faith upon it. And by that same revelation, we can also know His will for us.

In His Word, God reveals to us His will. He tells us what His will is and how to do it. In Israel's experience, they found that in DOING GOD'S WILL, God was providing, guiding, and fulfilling His purposes through His promises. There are lessons from the experiences of Israel for us. We are looking at Exodus 23:20-33.

20. *Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared.*

21. *Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him.*

22. *But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries.*

23. *For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off.*

24. *Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works: but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images.*

25. *And ye shall serve the LORD your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee.*

26. *There shall nothing cast their young, nor be barren, in thy land: the number of thy days I will fulfil.*

27. *I will send my fear before thee and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee.*

28. *And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee.*

29. *I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee.*

30. *By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land.*

31. *And I will set thy bounds from the Red sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto the river: for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand; and thou shalt drive them out before thee.*

32. *Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods.*

33. *They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee.*

In Israel's experience we find several PROMISES which encourage us to walk in the will of God.

The first is,

The Promise of Secure Control.

The LORD said, "I'm going to send my Angel before you." I believe in the ministry of angels. God has a ministry of angels for those who love and serve Him. In the case of Israel, He said, "I'm going to send my Angel before you, to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared." The guiding angel was to be there as a constant companion. That is a promise of secure control. He was going to guide them, protect them and bring them to the place which God had prepared for them.

There is a warning attached to this, a very important warning. God said to them, "Beware of him and obey him. Do not provoke him, because if you provoke him and do not obey him, he will not pardon your transgression." I was impressed with the statement that He made about this angel. He said, "For my name is in him."

Some Bible scholars believe this is an appearance of God Himself. There must be more to this heavenly being than just an ordinary angel. This may have been God taking on a physical form to identify Himself with the people of Israel. He said, "If you will do what I am telling you to do, obey my voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries." I'm impressed with this. God is saying if you are on my side, I will be on your side. You must make the choice. You must come on My side, and then I will come on your side. To Israel, He gave the promise of secure control in guiding them to the Promised Land.

In the second place, there is,

The Promise of Secure Constraint.

He warned them here again, "You must destroy all the gods of those other nations. You shall not bow down to their gods nor serve them. You are to utterly destroy them and not have anything to do with them. Overthrow them and break down their images." God is a very jealous God. He spoke about that several times to the people of Israel. He is a jealous God, so He doesn't share His place with any other object of worship.

He challenged them: "You must define your loyalty. You must make sure that you serve only the LORD God that brought you out." So, He urged them, and the promise was that they would have secure constraint if they were to do this. Then they would be His in a unique way, and they would be doing His will.

Now notice verse 25: "And you shall serve the LORD your God, and he shall bless your bread, and your water, and I will take sickness away from the midst of you." He would supply their total needs. They

would lack nothing. When the people of Israel defined their loyalty this way, God set a secure constraint upon them so that no evil would befall them. He would supply their bread and water, and their physical bodies would be blessed because He would take sickness away from them. Even their animals would not be barren or give premature birth to their young. But everything would work out for them, and their days would be fulfilled.

What a beautiful picture this is of God's constraint for His people in doing His will. God's constraints are really for the good of those who follow Him. They mean blessing to those who want to do His will.

There is a third consideration in

The Promise of Secure Conquest.

Pay close attention to what God says next. This is God's promise to the ancient people of Israel. He said, "I will send my fear before you and will destroy all the people to whom you shall come." First of all, God expected to work through divine psychology. He would strike fear into the hearts of their enemies. He said, "I will make your enemies turn their backs on you. I will send hornets before you to drive out the occupying peoples." The divine method is first by fear and then by hornets in verses 27 and 28.

Divine strategy would not drive them out all at once but little by little. He said, "I will not drive them out in one year, for the land will be overrun by wild beasts, and you will have the disadvantage." So, God had a strategy He was going to follow in the secure conquest of the land which He had given to them. The borders are mentioned in verse 31.

There were also divine directives in verse 32. They were not to make any covenant with these nations or with their gods. They were to be there in a unique relationship with God.

Sometimes when we read these passages in the Old Testament, we wonder why God made such choices. But it is better for us not to argue with Holy Scripture or to argue with the LORD. Simply accept what God intended and what He is going to carry out. So the conquest was under His direction, and the conquest was secured if they would follow His plan and program.

No one can doubt what God wanted His people to do. It is written here clearly. No one can doubt to whom He spoke: He spoke to the children of Israel. But the question which comes to you and me is not so much what God wanted then and to whom He spoke then, but the question is how you and I relate to Him. He is the God of Israel. He is also my God, and He will be your God, too, if you will trust Him. Doing God's will allows us to experience His promises of secure control, secure constraint, and secure conquest.

Believe me; God is on your side if you are on His side. So why don't you place your faith in Him and do His will now?

Thanks, J. Mark, for this teaching on God's will. This is a big topic and these insights from Exodus are helpful. We thank God for the promises found in His Word. We believe the key to knowing God's will is knowing Him. Two good ways to know Him are, one, through studying His Word and, two, by living life with other people who also know Him. We wish you success as you get to know Him right where you are.

If you'd like a copy of today's teaching, or if you have any questions, here are a few ways you can contact us. The best way is through email. Our email is hope@heraldsofhope.org. If you don't have email, no problem; just write to us. Our address is: Hope for Today, Box 3, Breezewood, Pennsylvania 15533. Or you can connect with us on our website. Our website is heraldsofhope.org. On our website you will find other resources and under the "Listen" tab, there is other teaching similar to this one. If you go to the "Connect" tab, you can message us directly. Again, our website is heraldsofhope.org.

Thank you so much for joining us. We look forward to being with you next week. Till then, go with God and enjoy growing in your knowledge of Him and living out His will.