

A HEART FOR GOD

LESSON 8: EXPERIENCING (SINCERE) JOY AND (TRUE) FREEDOM

BIBLE BOOK CLUB STUDY. AUGUST 1ST AND 5TH



TWO DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS OF “FREEDOM” (AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES)

WHEN MAN SAYS TO GOD: “THY WILL BE DONE” (SUBMISSION)

- **DAVID USED HIS FREEDOM TO CHOOSE OBEDIENCE AND SURRENDER TO GOD.**
- **DID THAT INSTANTLY MAKE DAVID’S PROBLEMS GO AWAY? NO, AND GOD DOES NOT PROMISE US A LIFE FREE OF TRIBULATIONS. WHAT DAVID EXPERIENCED WAS JOY, HOPE, COMFORT IN TIMES OF DOUBT OR FEAR, FRIENDSHIP AND LOVE FROM THOSE CLOSEST TO HIM, GOD’S FORGIVENESS IN TIMES OF FAILURE, AND THE REWARD OF DISCOVERING HIS ULTIMATE PURPOSE IN GOD’S PLANS.**

WHEN GOD SAYS TO MAN: “THY WILL BE DONE” (REBELLION)

- **KING SAUL USED HIS FREEDOM TO CHOOSE INDEPENDENCE FROM GOD.**
- **THE RESULT WAS A SPIRAL INTO SIN THAT LED TO ISOLATION FROM THOSE CLOSEST TO HIM, CONSTANT RAGE AND FEAR, VIOLENCE AND SLANDER TOWARDS DAVID AND OTHER INNOCENT PEOPLE, LACK OF COMFORT OR JOY OR PEACE OF MIND, AND ULTIMATELY THE LOSS OF RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND DEATH IN HIS OWN SINS.**

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO CHOOSE A LIFE OF SURRENDER AND OBEDIENCE TO GOD?

1) IT MEANS GETTING TO KNOW GOD. THE LORD WILL INVITE US TO RELATIONSHIP, BUT WE MUST TAKE THOSE FIRST STEPS TOWARDS HIM ONCE WE FEEL THAT INVITATION PULL AT OUR HEARTS. WE SHOULD NOT LET DOUBT, PRIDE, OR FEAR CLOSE OUR HEARTS AND MINDS. WHAT HAVE WE TO LOSE BY OFFERING THE SMALLEST GRAIN OF FAITH? WHAT HAVE WE TO GAIN?

- IT REQUIRES US TO RESPOND TO GOD WITH HUMILITY RATHER THAN DEFENSIVENESS. THIS IS NOT A NATURAL REACTION FOR HUMAN BEINGS.
- RELAX. LET YOUR DEFENSES DOWN FOR A MOMENT. GOD KNOWS THAT WE ARE SINNERS. HE IS FAITHFUL TO FORGIVE THE HEART THAT TRULY REPENTS OF ITS SINFUL STATE AND SINCERELY SEEKS THE LORD. GOD KNOWS WHAT WE HAVE DONE, WHO WE ARE, AND HE SEES OUR TRUE INTENTIONS. RECOGNIZE THAT THE SINS OF YOUR PAST WERE A BY-PRODUCT OF A LIFE APART FROM GOD. YOU ARE FREE TO CHOOSE TO TURN AWAY FROM THAT LIFE AND ANY PAIN THAT IT HAS CAUSED YOU AND TO SEEK GOD IN THE HOPE OF SOMETHING BETTER, DEEPER, AND MORE ETERNAL.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO CHOOSE A LIFE OF SURRENDER AND OBEDIENCE TO GOD?

2) IT MEANS INVESTING TIME IN GETTING TO KNOW GOD, STARTING RIGHT WHERE WE ARE. WE DO NOT NEED TO LITERALLY GO “INTO THE WILDERNESS” OR SECLUSION TO LEARN WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW ABOUT GOD. WE ARE STARTING A LIFELONG RELATIONSHIP. GOD IS GOING TO USE EVERY CIRCUMSTANCE OF OUR DAILY LIVES TO TEACH US, TRAIN US, AND PREPARE US FOR OUR PLACE IN HIS PLANS. IT IS A LIFELONG PROCESS, A MARATHON NOT A SPRINT. **BE PATIENT.**

• ***DON'T NEGLECT YOUR PRAYER LIFE!***

GOD IS LEADING THE WAY, SO BE SURE YOU ARE IN REGULAR COMMUNICATION WITH HIM, ESPECIALLY IN TIMES WHEN PRESSURE AND STRESS IS INTENSE. DAVID AND SAUL BOTH STUMBLED WHEN THEY ACTED WITHOUT CONSULTING FIRST WITH GOD. DAVID ENDED UP IN A PHILISTINE VILLAGE, BARELY ESCAPING WITH HIS LIFE, AND WE'VE SEEN THE RESULT OF SAUL'S FAILING TO LET GOD LEAD THE WAY.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO CHOOSE A LIFE OF SURRENDER AND OBEDIENCE TO GOD?

3) IT MEANS INTENTIONALLY ALIGNING OUR LIVES TO COME ALONGSIDE GOD, TO TALK AND WALK WITH HIM AND ALLOW HIM TO LEAD THE WAY. IN OUR EVERY DAILY CHOICE, WE CHOOSE OBEDIENCE TO HIS WORD, SUBMISSION TO HIS WILL, AND ALLOW OURSELVES TO BE RESHAPED FROM THE INSIDE OUT. IT STARTS WITH THAT SMALL KERNEL OF FAITH, WHICH GOD WILL CAUSE TO BLOOM INTO A TRANSFORMED LIFE.

- ***DON'T FORGET YOUR GOD-GIVEN RESPONSIBILITIES!*** THE TEMPTATIONS OF SIN AND THE STRESS OF DAILY LIFE SHOULD BE REASONS TO HOLD MORE TIGHTLY TO GOD'S WAYS, NOT SEEN AS EXCUSES TO FALL BACK INTO THE "ME FIRST" ATTITUDE. EVEN IN OUR TIMES OF THE MOST PRESSURE, THE MOST POVERTY, THE POOREST HEALTH, GOD STILL EXPECTS US TO FOLLOW HIS EXAMPLE IN HOW WE TREAT OTHERS. WE ARE TO REMEMBER OTHERS AND HAVE COMPASSION ON THEM AT ALL TIME IN THOUGHT, WORD, HEART, AND DEED, REGARDLESS OF OUR CONVENIENCE OR CIRCUMSTANCES. IN EVERYTHING HE DID, JESUS ALWAYS MADE TIME AND EFFORT TO THINK OF OTHERS AND ATTEND TO THEIR INTERESTS BEFORE HIS OWN, IN FACT, PUTTING OUR NEEDS AHEAD OF HIS OWN IS THE WHOLE OF WHY HE CAME TO EARTH TO DIE FOR US.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO CHOOSE A LIFE OF SURRENDER AND OBEDIENCE TO GOD?

**4) IT MEANS HOLINESS AND TRANSFORMATION—
IN THAT WE BECOME MORE LIKE GOD THE MORE
WE SUBMIT TO HIS WAYS. THE MORE TIME WE
SPEND WITH SOMEONE (GOOD OR BAD), THE
MORE THEIR CHARACTER RUBS OFF ON US.**

**WALKING WITH GOD MEANS WE BEGIN TO
MANIFEST HIS KINDNESS, MERCY, PURITY,
WISDOM, HUMILITY AND AGAPE LOVE. WE KNOW
THAT GOD WILL PROVIDE FOR ALL WE NEED.**

***“I WILL EXTOL THE LORD AT ALL TIMES; HIS PRAISE WILL
ALWAYS BE ON MY LIPS. I WILL GLORY IN THE LORD; LET THE
AFFLICTED HEAR AND REJOICE. GLORIFY THE LORD WITH ME;
LET US EXALT HIS NAME TOGETHER. I SOUGHT THE LORD AND
HE ANSWERED ME; HE DELIVERED ME FROM ALL MY FEARS.
THOSE WHO LOOK TO HIM ARE RADIANT; THEIR FACES ARE
NEVER COVERED WITH SHAME. THIS POOR MAN CALLED, THE
LORD HEARD HIM; HE SAVED HIM OUT OF ALL HIS TROUBLES.
THE ANGEL OF THE LORD ENCAMPS AROUND THOSE WHO FEAR
HIM, AND HE DELIVERS THEM.”* PSALM 34: 1-7. DAVID’S RESPONSE
TO GOD RESCUING HIM FROM THE BLUNDER OF TRYING TO ESCAPE SAUL BY
HIDING IN THE PHILISTINE VILLAGE (REMEMBER: PRAY FIRST, ACT SECOND).**

WALKING IN OBEDIENCE TO GOD

PRAY

POUR OUT YOUR HEART TO GOD, EVERY EMOTION. YOU ARE TALKING TO A FRIEND. EMOTIONS THAT ARE BOTTLED UP OR DENIED MAKE US VULNERABLE TO THE SAME JEALOUSY, ANGER, RESENTMENT, AND INSECURITY THAT DERAILED SAUL'S RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, HIS FAMILY AND FRIENDS, AND COST HIM EVERYTHING. OBEDIENCE DOES NOT MEAN LIVING A STERILE LIFE DEVOID OF EMOTIONS LIKE JOY AND PASSION.

HONESTY

JESUS TELLS US NOT TO RECITE ROTE PRAYERS. PRAYERS ARE NOT ABOUT PLATITUDES OR SAYING WHAT YOU THINK GOD WANTS TO HEAR. BE HONEST WITH HIM ABOUT YOUR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS. HE ALREADY KNOWS EVERYTHING THAT'S GOING ON WITH YOU. HE'S WAITING TO SEE IF YOU WILL TURN TO HIM IN TRUST FOR GUIDANCE, COMFORT, AND HELP. THE BIBLE SAYS WE WILL HAVE TROUBLES AND GRIEF, BUT EVEN WHEN THE WORLD FAILS US WE HOLD TO THE TRUTH THAT GOD WILL NEVER FAIL US.

PRAISE

WE DON'T PRAISE GOD BECAUSE WE HAVE THE ILLUSION (OR DELUSION) THAT EVERYTHING IS PERFECT IN OUR LIVES. WE DO NOT PRAISE GOD IN HOPES OF REWARD FROM HIM. IT'S NOT ABOUT BEING SELF-RIGHTEOUS OR PUTTING ON AIRS OF PERFECTION BEFORE GOD OR MEN. WE PRAISE GOD BECAUSE HIS WAYS AND THE HOPE THAT COMES FROM RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM PRODUCES HEARTFELT GRATITUDE AND JOY IN US.

WALKING IN OBEDIENCE TO GOD

SEEK WISE COUNSEL

DON'T SURROUND YOURSELF WITH YES MEN AND ENABLERS. SEEK OUT PEOPLE OF BIBLICAL INTEGRITY AND HONESTY WHO WILL GIVE YOU HONEST AND OBJECTIVE PERSPECTIVES ON YOUR SITUATIONS. HAVE FRIENDS WHO CAN AND DO GIVE YOU HONEST ADVICE. SEEK PEOPLE WHO WILL REMIND YOU TO LOOK TO GOD IN TIMES OF PAIN, DOUBT, UNCERTAINTY, AND TEMPTATION.

WAIT FOR GOD'S TIMING

WE ARE A SOCIETY OF IMMEDIATE GRATIFICATION. WE SEE A PROBLEM, WE WANT TO SOLVE IT (USUALLY BY OUR OWN MEANS AND WISDOM). REMEMBER, HOWEVER, THAT GOD IS SOVEREIGN OVER ALL THINGS OF THIS WORLD, INCLUDING THE FLOW OF EVENTS IN OUR LIVES. WHEN WE DEVELOP THE PATIENCE TO WAIT ON GOD'S TIMING AND TO KEEP OUR EYES ON HIM, WE DEVELOP SERENITY AND STABILITY AND PEACE OF HEART.

WAIT FOR GOD'S VINDICATION

WHEN WE'RE ATTACKED, MALIGNED, SLANDERED, OR OTHERWISE PRESSURED BY OTHERS, OUR INSTINCT ONCE AGAIN IS TO RESIST, TO BECOME DEFENSIVE, TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM BY OUR OWN MEANS. BUT SUCH A RESPONSE CAN PLUNGE US INTO TROUBLE—IT CAN CAUSE US TO HARM OTHERS IN RETALIATION (AN EYE FOR AN EYE). SUCH ACTIONS INEVITABLY DEEPEN OUR OWN HURT BY ADDING SHAME AND REMORSE OR CLINGING TO OUR ANGER. REMEMBER ALL THE MANNERS OF EVIL THAT WERE DONE TO JESUS? NOT ONCE DID HE RESPOND IN KIND, IN FACT HE ORDERED TURNING THE OTHER CHEEK RATHER THAN "AN EYE FOR AN EYE". BE PATIENT. GO TO GOD, FOR HE WILL BRING THE TRUTH TO LIGHT IN YOUR FAVOR.

WALKING IN OBEDIENCE TO GOD

DEVELOP GOD'S P.O.V.

THROUGH THE DAYS OF SAUL'S PERSECUTION AND GOD'S DELIVERANCE, DAVID LEARNED TO SEE THE THINGS OF THIS WORLD AS GIFTS FROM GOD RATHER THAN AS ENTITLEMENTS OR RIGHTS. WHAT IS IMPORTANT IN THIS WORLD—JOBS, TITLES, REPUTATIONS, ACCOLADES—OFTEN HAVE LITTLE TO DO WITH GOD'S PRIORITIES. REMEMBER THAT WE SEE ONLY OUR TINY SEGMENT OF HISTORY. GOD SEES THE WHOLE OF TIME FROM BEGINNING TO END AND HAS A PLAN FOR OUR COLLECTIVE SALVATION.

A LIFE OF SUBMISSION MEANS CARING ABOUT GOD'S OPINION AND DESIRING RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM. IT RECOGNIZES GOD'S GOODNESS IN TIMES OF JOY AND TIMES OF SUFFERING. IT TRUSTS IN HIS PROVISION AND HIS PLANS FOR OUR FUTURE.

THE MOST IMPORTANT GOAL WE CAN HAVE IN THIS WORLD IS LIVING A LIFE THAT PLEASES GOD.

*"FOR I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE FOR YOU,"
DECLARES THE LORD, "PLANS TO PROSPER YOU
AND NOT TO HARM YOU, PLANS TO GIVE YOU
HOPE AND A FUTURE." JEREMIAH 29:11*

REFERENCES:

- ***“A HEART FOR GOD”*, REBECCA MANLEY PIPPERT, IVP BOOKS, 1996**