

A right and a wrong way to follow God

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Sermon Summary

Hearing God

God speaks to us in several different ways. The greater the clarity with which you receive a word from God, the greater the opposition to that word. If you hear from God in a very significant, powerful way, there is a reason He is speaking so clearly – you are likely going to need to rely on that very clarity shortly down the road!

Most of the time, you are going to get a very subtle sense of the Lord's leading. Perhaps 90% of the time is like this – a witness on the inside. The other 10% of times (when we hear more clearly) may be through the inner voice, the voice of the Holy Ghost, the audible voice, and the Word of God. Romans 8:14 says "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God."

Colossians 3:15 echoes a similar principle: "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts ..." In other words, let the witness of God, the peace of God, be the deciding factor for you in your heart. If you are about to do something and you don't have peace on it, don't do it! Let the peace rule – not your mind. That's a choice we have to make all the time as children of God. Are we going to let the peace rule – or are we going to rule?

All that to say, the level of clarity Pastor Brad received on this change in how we meet on Sundays "sends up the red flags" that there will be opposition. To that end, this message is a teaching on how the enemy works to oppose the forward progress of God's people. It is being given in order to equip and prepare us! Satan is always going to look for ways to "get in." If we know the doors he can enter though, we can slam them shut and lock them up.

The Government of Heaven

You can actually follow the Lord wrongly. It is possible to obey the Lord – to follow Him, to do what He says to do – and yet do it incorrectly. There is a right and a wrong way to follow God. Take for example any parent who has an unruly child to whom they say "sit down and be still." There are two ways in which that child can sit down – in defiance or in sweet submission. While both ways are obedient, a defiant child can be sitting down and saying in their heart "I may be

sitting on the outside, but I am standing on the inside!” Technical obedience is not always beautiful. It is possible to obey without true submission ... and it is ugly!

You can obey without submitting. You cannot submit without obeying.

We have to remember that the government of Heaven is a kingdom. It is not communistic or democratic. God’s government is that of a kingdom. Jesus did not apologize for it. Jesus was not wishing for a democracy. In fact, He told his disciples to preach “the Kingdom of God.” (Luke 9:2) Jesus said news of the Kingdom was good news! Our understanding of the government of Heaven will shape the culture of our spiritual life (rightly or wrongly).

Kingdoms do not have presidents; they have kings! We need to substantially change how we think about government and governance as it relates to God’s Kingdom – because our democratic ideals do not fit in the Kingdom of God! Since it is our background and experience, the vast majority of American christians tend to apply the republic / democracy mindset to the Kingdom of God. This causes spiritual confusion. We often are looking for our “polling location” when God has already given us His direction! When we understand the government of God – and submit to it – the beauty of the kingdom will begin to flow in our lives like never before!

How does a kingdom work?

So, how does a kingdom work? Let’s look at how God expressed a kingdom model of governance through Moses. God’s plan for Israel’s freedom came through one person. He told Moses what His plan was. The Israelites packed their bags and left with Moses. All the people knew was “we’re leaving Egypt, ASAP, and we are going to a promised land.” They obeyed. They packed their bags and went into the desert. As soon as they encountered obstacles, however, the Israelites started complaining. They started murmuring. They started working against Moses. Look at Numbers 14 to see what happened:

And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, “If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness! Why has the Lord brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?” So they said to one another, “Let us select a leader and return to Egypt.” . . . Then the Lord said to Moses: “How long will these people reject Me?” (Num. 14:2-4, 11a)

Look at that: God says when the people rejected Moses, they rejected Him (God). Wow. The people wanted to vote for a leader. God was in essence saying “what kind of government do you think this is? I spoke to my servant Moses. I told him what to do. Follow him ... When you don’t follow him and reject him, you are rejecting Me.”

This is how the Kingdom of God works. God sets up authority and submission roles. “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother,’ which is the first commandment with promise: ‘that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.’” (Eph. 6:1-3) This is serious language. God is saying “if you don’t honor your father and mother, you are opening yourself up to a curse.” God is not going to do anything bad to a disobedient child, the curse that child would experience is simply the reality of violating spiritual laws.

Likewise God tells wives “submit to your husbands.” (Eph. 5:22) In God’s system, a child is to submit to their parents. A wife is to submit to her husband. Similarly, God tells the church to obey (with a beautiful, submissive heart) those who rule over us. “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.” (Heb 13:17) Pastor Brad will give account to God for Agathos – no one else in our body will have to give that account. The God-given authority parents have with their children is commensurate with the God-given responsibility they have for them. Parents will answer for how they stewarded the development of their children. The same is true for masters, husbands, and pastors.

Rom. 13:1 says “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.” A nation must submit to its leadership. The blessings of the Kingdom flow on the rails of authority and submission. Therefore, the enemy tries to disrupt that line of blessing by encouraging and inciting people to violate this spiritual law of authority and submission.

Murmuring: where it all starts

Thoughts lead to words and words lead to actions. So, why does God hate murmuring? Because all murmuring is from God’s arch-enemy! Murmuring is audible evidence of an anti-Kingdom thought process and predicates a host of anti-Kingdom actions. Look at these two practical scriptures from Paul’s letters of instruction:

Rom. 16:17,20 “Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them . . . And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly.”

2 Tim 2:23-26 “But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.”

Murmuring seems so obvious when we are of sound mind and there are not present pressures weighing on our thinking! We tend to think “I will know it is of the devil and I won’t let that happen.” Don’t be so naive. You rarely know when you are actually being used by the devil. The only way you can actually be sure to not be used by the devil is to know what the Word of God says and to lay boundaries within yourself – make vows with yourself – that there will be certain things you NEVER do!

- “I will not gossip.”
- “I will not murmur.”
- “I will not disobey my mother and my father.”

This is the only way you keep the enemy out! When the devil overplays his hand, then it becomes evident that it is him, but most of the time you will never know. So, watch out for the devil and don’t let him in through murmuring, “challenging”, etc. If you have issues with what we a leader in your life is doing – talk directly with them with a sweet heart and you will be sure to be part of the solution.

Unity

Take note that the children of Israel didn’t get to see the promised land. They became quite experienced in murmuring and critiquing Moses, but they never experienced the promised land for themselves. That is why 1 Cor. 10:11 says “Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.” Their stories serve as a great example of what NOT to do!

There is another group in scripture that God planned to lead into a promised land. They were sent out just like the children of Israel - except they actually experienced the promised land. When the believers in the book of Acts were sent out they successfully “turned the world upside down!” Why? How? Throughout the book of Acts we see they were in one accord! They were in unity! They did not always agree but they stayed in unity! Acts 1:14, Acts 2:46, Acts 4:24, Acts 5:12, Acts 15:25, and more. They were people just like we are, but they just said NO to division. Unity is where God’s blessings are commanded to flow! (see Ps. 133)

Keeping the Vision

Vision brings perspective and purpose to the small difficulties of progress. Keeping the vision is a key to possessing the promise. Prov. 29:18 says “Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law.” (ESV) If you have understanding of what the Lord is doing and you keep that vision of what He is doing before your eyes, you don’t care when trouble hits and there are obstacles. You just go and do what you’re supposed to do because you know the vision is from God.

Without that vision, you cast off your ability to hold steady in the storm. But, as Prov. 29:18 says, the person that holds on to the Word of God remains happy. If we don’t have the vision of “this is of God” then as soon as there’s trouble, we start complaining – because we interpret the difficulty as disapproval from God and therefore throw the vision out. For example, when Moses sent out 12 spies, 2 came back with a positive report. 10 spies, however, lost the vision that it was God that told them to go into this land He had promised. The 10 dissenting spies came back with a negative report. The seemingly towering difficulties awaiting them in the land was, to them, evidence of God not being with them in this plan. They wanted to abdicate the vision. Caleb, on the other hand, did not deny that there were giants in the promised land, BUT he said “if God is pleased with us they don’t stand a chance!” (See Numbers 14:6-9). Caleb interpreted the circumstances through the purposes of God, not the other way around. That’s profound.

God has a blessing for us. It is up to us whether we will actually ever experience it! It is fully there for us. But, as we move out on the vision, we will see some obstacles and how we respond to those obstacles will either undermine or support our process of “possessing His blessing.”

Like Caleb and Joshua it is important that we focus on keeping the vision . . . this really is of the Lord. God has something for this family or we would not be doing this. This is likely, in fact, a move that many churches are making all over the globe. That said, not all of those churches will enter into the promised land. The blessings God has for them in this will only happen for those that stay sweet, stay unified, and keep the vision. Keep the vision and go! Don’t stop to murmur. Don’t go with a mindset of “looking for perfection.” Instead, look for purpose! Namely, your purpose. Have a heart that says to God “God, what’s my role in this? What can I do? How can I help? How can I be a blessing?”

A Mindset Shift

God wants us to get out of this mentality of being a spectator / consumer. This new way of gathering will mean that everybody participates. We need to take the mindset that says “I am going to go to church to receive” and throw it away. We never should have had it in the first place because it is not scriptural at all. (See 1 Cor. 14:26 “Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.”)

In the house church setting, the people are the ones that are going to provide for that house church. While the teaching-to-discussion document is going to provide a framework for the conversation, the people are going to put the flesh on those bones. We need to prepare to go to the house church by saying “Lord, give me something to bring. Give me something to share”. . . asking the Lord “just give me a nugget, show me something in this.” God will answer that prayer if you are serious! And you will share that nugget with the house church and others will share similar things with the house church and it will be rich! But that will only happen if we don’t have the mindset at the house church that says “when I show up, things will happen on their own and I will get fed.”

We have to cast off that mindset! There is an opportunity for everyone to get to participate – to have a voice!

Conclusion

As we, as a body, begin to “move out” on this vision of a new church model, we must remember the lessons that came from the Israelites. We are preparing to leave a land that has limitations and the Lord wants to bring us into a new land that is filled with promise and will bring excellence for us! However, the vast majority of the Israelites (including Moses) never got to see the fruit of the promised land – but instead died in transition. Whereas an un-submitted heart and a murmuring tongue can thwart the plans of God in our life, unity of heart and keeping the vision causes us to receive His promises . . . and this process of learning how to step-out at God’s lead applies to every area of our lives!

This is going to be awesome, but we have to do it together!

Scriptures

“As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.” (*Romans 8:14*)

“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts . . .” (*Col. 3:15*)

And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, “If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness! Why has the Lord brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?” So they said to one another, “Let us select a leader and return to Egypt.” . . . Then the Lord said to Moses: “How long will these people reject Me?” (*Num. 14:2-4, 11a*)

“Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.” (*1 Cor. 10:11*)

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother,’ which is the first commandment with promise: ‘that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.’” (*Eph. 6:1-3*)

“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.” (*Eph. 5:22*)

“Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.” (*Heb 13:17*)

“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.” (*Rom. 13:1*)

“Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them . . . And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly.” (*Rom. 16:17, 20*)

“But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.” (*2 Tim. 2:23-26*)

“These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication . . .” (*Acts 1:14*)

“So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,” (*Acts 2:46*)

“So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: ‘Lord, You *are* God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them . . .’” (*Acts 4:24*)

“And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon’s Porch.” (*Acts 5:12*)

“it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,” (*Acts 15:25*)

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity! . . . For there the Lord commanded the blessing - Life forevermore.” (*Ps 133:1,3b*)

“Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law.” (*Prov. 29:18, ESV*)

“But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; and they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: ‘The land we passed through to spy out *is* an exceedingly good land. If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, ‘a land which flows with milk and honey.’ Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the Lord is with us. Do not fear them.” (*Numbers 14:6-9*)

“Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.” (*1 Cor. 14:26*)

Points to Ponder . . .

- 1) What’s the difference between obedience and submission? Why is that difference important? How might that difference play out in practical terms?
- 2) Review Numbers 14, particularly verse 11a “Then the Lord said to Moses: ‘How long will these people reject Me?’” Does that verse challenge your thinking in any way? If so, how?
- 3) What is the difference between “stopping to murmur” and “stopping to ask directions?” Have you noticed that difference before when you follow the Lord? How can you check your heart before “stopping” - in order to see if you are truly looking for direction? In what ways do Mary (mother of Jesus) and Zacharias (father of John the Baptist) demonstrate these two different ways of engaging in the unknown with God? (See Luke 1)
- 4) Look again at Prov. 29:18. How does it relate to Mark 4:16-17 (namely, those that give up the Word because of tribulation)? What decisions / mindsets predicate being one who does not give up the vision / Word upon pressure?
- 5) How do you know what God is doing in a season? Think of specific instances where you know you found His leading and walked in it. What did you do to know His leading? How did you know how to walk it out?