

# LORD, TEACH US YOUR WAYS

Part I

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Many of us remember the days of the Charismatic Renewal that occurred in the United States and other countries during the 1960's and 1970's. God was moving mightily. People were being sovereignly saved, delivered, and filled with the Holy Spirit. God was moving in more places than one could count. There was a continual excitement. Yes, indeed, they were marvelous days.

Those of us who lived through those days could say, without doubt, that we saw God's mighty acts. But sadly, many who saw those miraculous acts have lost their fervor, or worse yet, they are no longer following the Lord. Why?

I believe the reason is that many became accustomed to experiencing only God's acts. Sadly, when God's deeper call came to learn His *ways*, they were unwilling to do so. Psalm 103:7 states:

He made known his ways to Moses; his acts to the children of Israel. (KJV).

The New International Version puts it this way:

He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel.

Indeed, the Israelites made it very clear both to Moses and to God that they did not want to learn of God firsthand. Just after God had given Moses the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai, Scripture tells us:

When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance and said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die." Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning." The people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick

darkness where God was. (Exod 20:18-21 NIV).

We must ask ourselves, "Are we any different?" Unfortunately, I believe the answer is, for many of us, "No." We are very much like the Israelites of old. We still want to be amazed by God's miracles, benefit from His blessings, and prospered by the world's standards! And all of this through God's hand of course. But how many of us are truly willing, like Moses, to settle into learning God's ways and not just to experience His acts?

## What Are God's Acts?

To put it simply, God's *acts* are what He does. For most of us, God's acts are the answers to our many prayers...a job, a healing, financial provision, and so forth. And I thank God for answered prayers!

But there are two real dangers when we focus on God's acts rather than His ways. The first danger is that frequently answered prayers can breed in us a false assumption that God must be pleased with us because He answers our prayers. This assumption is not always accurate.

Remember the children of Israel during the forty years of wandering in the desert? As to blessings and answered prayer, I can find no record in the Bible of anyone who was more blessed than these people. Their shoes never wore out, their clothes never wore out, not one of them was ever sick - and by the most conservative estimates there were over a million of them! God shaded them from the desert sun with His cloud by day and warmed them with His pillar of fire by night. They ate food they did not need to work for and drank water from the Rock that accompanied them. (I Cor 10:4). Never was there a people so blessed by God.

But what was God's opinion of them? What did He say about them?

So, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of

testing in the desert, where your fathers tested and tried me and for forty years saw what I did. That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, 'Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known by ways.'" (Heb 3:7-10 NIV).

The King James Bible says God was "grieved" with them. "Angry" and "grieved" are strong words - especially when used to express God's view of a people whom He had so blessed. Yes, the Israelites were mightily blessed by God, but by no means did they have His approval. So we see then that God's blessings are not to be mistaken for His approval.

The second danger of being focused on God's acts, as opposed to His ways, is that when His acts are not to our liking, we pull away. We turn our backs on God. Oh, we may still go to church, but on the inside we have pulled away. I think this is what happened to many from the Charismatic Renewal days. Indeed, I believe it happens after every mighty time of revival. When God, by His Holy Spirit, slows down the miraculous and wants His people to grow up spiritually, we don't like it. We are not being blessed, amazed, and prospered anymore. And many simply drift away.

### God's Ways

Therefore if we are serious about maturing in Christ, we must seek to learn His *ways*. Early on Moses recognized that although he had seen God's acts, he truly didn't know God or His ways. While speaking with God, Moses asked of Him:

"...if you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor in your sight...." (Ex 33:13 NIV).

Notice that Moses listed two reasons, or benefits, of knowing God's ways: 1) so that I may **know you**, and 2) so that I may **continue to find favor** with your. Moses knew that neither true knowledge of God nor His continued favor could endure for one who only knows God's acts. Moses wanted more and he wanted it to last. We know God answered Moses' request. For Psalm

103:7 says, "...he made known his ways to Moses...."

Let me make a distinction here because there are those who have God's favor even when they only know His acts. This category of believers are what I call the "little children" spiritually. They are the new believers. Certainly these newly born again "little children," regardless of their chronological age, find favor in God's eyes.

It is only when we refuse to grow up in the Lord that we lose His favor. One who has been born again for 20 years and wants only to continue to know God's acts, but refuses to seek His ways, will no longer enjoy favor in God's sight. That is not to say God doesn't continue to bless him or her with answers to prayers, and so on. But remember the Israelites in the wilderness for 40 years...they had God's blessings. He took care of them. But they did not have His approval.

### What Is the Human Reaction to God's Ways?

If you are anything like me, your flesh doesn't readily embrace God's ways. Flesh does all in its carnal power to resist God's ways. Why? Because there is no room for our flesh to raise its ugly, selfish head in the presence of God's ways. We have a record of Jeremiah's reaction to learning God's ways: He was quite blunt with the Lord. He said, "O Lord, you deceived me, and I was deceived." (Jer 20:7 NIV). Those are very strong words of the flesh crying out.

It takes a strong unyielding determination to resist the self-preserving cry of the flesh when God begins to teach us His ways. Everything in our natural man wants to remain the same - "Please, Lord, I don't want to change."

### Why do We Have This Reaction to Learning God's Ways?

I believe this process of learning God's ways is hard for us because it involves a continual dying to self-will. It includes the crucifixion of our will and personal desires.

You see, to really come to know God's ways, we must be willing and determined to allow God to replace our self-will and desire with God's will and God's ways in our lives. Our ways must yield to His ways. And our ways include our will!

It is in this process that God is wanting to transport us from the hold this natural world has on

us into the freedom of serving our risen Lord in the supernatural realm. Once we fully realize that we are indeed "aliens and strangers" in this world, as Peter calls us (I Pet 2:11), and we become firmly planted in God's realm, His ways begin to control and direct us.

The good news is that we are not alone in this process. It is not up to us to "make it happen." How can we be sure of this? Because Scripture tells us, "for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." (Phil 2:13 NIV). It is God who is really accomplishing this yielding in us. We need only cooperate in His grace for it to be done!

### **Paul, A Man of God's Ways**

Scripture gives us the opportunity to taste the fruit of one in the New Testament who, like Moses, had learned God's ways. The Apostle Paul continually displayed this fruit of God's wisdom, power and grace. He clearly recognized the principle of dying to his own self-life and allowing the Christ-life to take its place. He wrote:

Therefore we do not lose heart.  
Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. (2 Cor 4:16-17 NIV).

Moreover, Paul saw the necessity of the cross' work on his flesh. He knew that he would never experience that resurrection power of God's will and ways in his life unless his own will died. His words ring with this understanding:

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Gal 2:20 NIV).

You see, God's ways invariably separate us from the world and its ways. As long as we are slaves to the ways of the world we cannot know God's ways. Paul understood this as he penned the following under the guidance of the Holy Spirit:

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. (Phil 3:7-14 NIV).

### **Daniel, A Man of God's Ways**

I believe Daniel of the Old Testament gives us a sterling example of a life lived from its very early years dedicated to learning God's ways. Let us examine his life.

We first meet Daniel when he had been taken to Babylon as a captive of King Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel was a young man, "without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace." (Dan 1:4 NIV). In short, Daniel had everything going for him according to the world's standards. He was put into the king's service and offered food and wine from the king's table.

But look what Daniel did. He summoned the chief guard and asked to be allowed to eat only vegetables and to drink only water. He specifically

requested not to be forced to eat the royal food. The official agreed and we learn that, "At the end of the ten days they (Daniel and his friends) looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food." (Dan 1:15 NIV).

This pattern of self-discipline and dedication to the things of God, as opposed to the things of this world, continued throughout Daniel's lifetime. Much later we read that Daniel had a vision in which an angel said to Daniel, "Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them." (Dan 10:12 NIV).

Thus we read of an angel telling Daniel that because he had long ago set his mind to gain understanding, and to humble himself before God, his words were heard. Are we not reminded of Moses here? He also asked God to teach him His ways so that he may know Him and find favor with Him.

You will note as you read all of chapters 9 and 10 of Daniel, the angel calls Daniel highly esteemed several times:

He instructed me and said to me, "Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding. As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed. (Dan 9:22,23 NIV). A hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. He said, "Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you,..." (Dan

10:10,11 NIV).

Imagine that! An angel came to Daniel and actually told him that he was highly esteemed in the heavenly realm! What an awesome thought! Wouldn't we all give anything to be in that position? But wait...would we really give up ANYTHING to be highly esteemed in the spirit realm as was Daniel? Some of us wouldn't even want to give up the royal food and drink of the king's palace!

Notice that Daniel spent a lifetime choosing the ways of God. It is a process in which one walks day after day, year after year. It is a lifestyle. We know Daniel chose to reject the king's food, he sought God for the correct interpretation of the king's dreams, he faced his friends being condemned to death in the fiery furnace, and he faced the den of lions rather than betray his God.

It was only after all these events that Daniel was told that his words were heard and his prayers answered even as he spoke them because he was highly esteemed in the heavenly realm.

I urge each of you to read Daniel's prayer in Daniel, chapter nine. It is one of the most mature, powerful, godly prayers we have in the entire Bible. Only one who was intimately acquainted with the ways of God could have prayed with such humility, vision, and power.

In Part II of this teaching we will examine God's methods and every day life experiences God uses to teach us His ways. As we increase our level of understanding we are more able to cooperate with the Lord as He works in us to train us in His ways.

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