

# ***Knowing the Will of God***

## **1. Jesus and the will of God.**

### **A. Jesus came to do the will of God**

The entire purpose for Jesus coming from heaven is summed up in one verse; "I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me (Jn. 6:38)."

Jesus does all that He sees the Father doing (Jn. 5:19 ff). Just as Christ sought the Father's will, so must we seek His (Jn. 15:10).

### **B. Jesus desired to do God's will**

In John 4:34 Jesus said, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work."

The greatest joy and satisfaction that Christ found in life was to do the Father's will. Indeed, Jesus' entire ministry is nothing other than submission to the will of the One who sent him. As one man has said, "The creative will of God, realized in obedience, sustains life."

### **C. Jesus accomplished the will of God because He sought the will of God**

John 5:30 says, "I can do nothing of Myself. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me."

In John 5:19 He also said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner."

It's Jesus' unqualified commitment to please the Father above Himself that guarantees that all He says and does is completely in line with the Father's will. If Jesus was just "doing" without looking at and listening to the Father, His

own will, not the Father's, would be all that He accomplished. Doing the will of God involves actively seeking it.

Even when Jesus knew that the time of His crucifixion was rapidly approaching, He prayed, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done" (Lk. 22:42). The "cup" to which Jesus refers is His impending suffering. Though facing the temptation to avoid the "cup" ordained by the Father, He accepts the will of God in spite of His desire that it might be otherwise.

Because of His absolute commitment to obeying the will of God, Jesus could say, "I always do those things that please Him" (Jn. 8:29).

## **2. The importance of the will of God to the believer.**

### **A. God wants us to know His will**

Paul admonishes us to be careful how we walk, "not as unwise men but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil (Eph. 5:15-17)." In the context wise use of time involves understanding God's will.

### **B. Salvation is tied to doing God's will**

In Matthew 7:21, entrance into the kingdom of heaven is dependent upon obeying God's will; "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven."

I Jn. 2:17 says, "the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever."

Though we are not saved by good works, good works are evidence of true faith. In the Bible, unbelief and disobedience are viewed as nearly synonymous terms (Ro. 11:30-31; Tit. 1:16; 3:3); the former expressing the condition of the heart, the latter the resultant behavior (cf. Ro. 10:10). In the same way, obedience to the will of God and belief go hand and hand. One cannot exist without the other.

### **C. Doing God's will demonstrates that we have a true relationship with Christ**

Jesus' true family is made up of those who do the will of God. For He said, "Whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother." (Mk. 3:35).

### **D. Knowing and doing God's will is essential for effective prayer**

As I John 5:14 says, we can have confidence that God will answer our prayers if we are praying according to His will; "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us."

The healed blind man said it well; "Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him" (Jn. 9:31; cf. Ps. 66:18; Prov. 15:29; Isa. 1:15; I Jn. 3:21-22).

## **3. How do we know what the will of God is?**

Five things should be considered when we seek God's will: the Bible, godly counsel, prayer, circumstances, and our walk with Christ.

### **A. The will of God and the Bible**

The Bible is our guide for living. Psalm 119:105 says, "Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path." Psalm 119:24 declares, "Thy testimonies also are my delight; They are my counselors." The best advice we could ever find has already been given to us. But it's up to us to search the Word of God, glean principles, and then apply them.

At times God's will is clearly spelled out.

For example:

### **It's God's will that we are holy**

I Thessalonians 4:3 says, "For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality. . ."

### **It's God's will that we give thanks in all things**

I Thessalonians 5:18 says, "in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

### **It's God's will that by doing good we silence unbeliever's accusations against us**

In I Peter 2:15 Peter tells us, "For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men"

### **It's God's will that at times we suffer for doing good**

I Peter 3:17 makes it clear that it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. Therefore, Peter says, "let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right (I Pet. 4:19)."

There are other times that God's will is not as clear. In these cases, the wisdom of godly counsel becomes invaluable.

### **B. The will of God and wise counsel**

Proverbs 11:14 says, "Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counselors there is safety" (cf. Prov. 24:6).

Some of the best guidance can come from godly people who are sensitive to the Holy Spirit and know the Word of God. These people will be able to help you glean principles from the Bible that may not be written in black and white.

In order to receive good counsel there has to be good input to work with. Hiding facts or presenting things in a way that "stacks the deck" in your favor accomplishes nothing. If you want to know God's will, you have to be willing to lay all the facts on the table.

### C. The will of God and circumstances

The apostle Paul traveled to many cities proclaiming the gospel and starting numerous churches. He desired to reach the ends of the earth for Christ and wanted to continue his ministry in Asia and Rome (Ro. 1:13; Acts 16:6; 19:21). Yet, Paul was hindered from achieving his desires.

Because Paul was a man of God and because Jesus Himself commanded His followers to be His witnesses in the "uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts. 1:8), we might conclude that God wanted Paul to go to Rome and Asia. But Acts 16:6 explains that Paul was forbidden to preach the word in Asia by the Holy Spirit. Though God desires the gospel to be spread unto "the uttermost part of the earth" He didn't desire for it to spread by Paul at that time. God's sovereign control of circumstances determined what His will was.

We, therefore, cannot conclude that simply because we see spiritual value in something it is God's will for us to do it. Someone once said, "When God closes a door He always opens a window," but from a different perspective one could say, "When God closes the door, leave it closed!" There could be a very good reason why the door is shut.

### D. The will of God and prayer

Paul prayed for the believers in Colossae that they may "be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Col. 1:9). He believed that by prayer the knowledge of God's will could be obtained.

In Matthew 7:7-11 Jesus told us, " Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!"

James said, "You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motivations, that you may spend it on your pleasures" (Ja. 4:2b-3).

If we want to know God's will we need to ask Him what it is. We don't get answers because we don't ask questions. The way God answers prayer clarifies His will. If we ask, and it is in accordance with His will, He will answer our prayer as we asked. He won't give us a stone if we ask for bread. Yet sometimes, unknowingly we ask for things that are ultimately detrimental to our lives. We ask for a stone thinking that we are asking for bread. Or, as James said, we ask with wrong motivations. In these cases God does not answer as we request. Yet even this is a blessing for it clarifies the will of God and gives us direction.

### **E. The will of God and desire**

We will not know the will of God if we don't really want to know it. When we live ungodly lives we cannot sense God's leading. We are numb to the prompting of His Spirit. We do not recognize His voice among the many voices that are calling.

Romans 12:1-2 tells us not to be conformed to this world but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds that we may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

We are not to be conformed to the world, that is, we are not to outwardly blend in with it, for there is no relationship between the world and the reality of who we are as Christians. Instead, we are to be transformed. That is, the reality of Christ in us should change both the inside and the outside as well. The end result is that we prove what the will of God is. To "prove" the will of God is to test it in order to discover what it is.

When our lives are transformed we will be able to discover the will of God.

There is no telling how many Christians are living bankrupted lives because they had never actively sought to put God in the decision making process. How many are paying the price because they decided to go their own way?

We must truly desire God and His will to find it or we will be going through constant disappointments and distress. We have seen that the greatest

joy Jesus could experience was in doing the will of the Father. How many of us can say the same?

#### **4. Why don't we follow the will of God?**

The most basic reason we do not follow the will of God is because we desire our will above His. Our primary concern is not, "Thy will be done," but "My will be done." Prayer is simply a means to my own ends. If the cosmic power in the sky can make my dreams a reality I'm all for His involvement in my life. If He doesn't want to help, I'll do it myself.

Secondly, obedience can be painful. It can involve suffering. I Peter 4:1-2 says, "Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God." No Christian wants to be sinful, but neither does he want to suffer to become righteous. If suffering involves the will of God, many think "it's not for me."

In modern America, the idea of suffering for God is so removed from our thinking that Christians often interpret trials as God telling them to bail out, or leave. Because of this numerous people have dropped out of their marriage or quit their jobs only to find the same problems following them wherever they go.

The will of God cannot be determined by circumstances alone. It often involves suffering for doing what is right.

***CONCLUSION:*** When determining God's will ask yourself these questions:

1. Do my desires contradict any principles or clear teaching in the Bible?
2. What do godly friends (elders, my pastor, others) think about my decision?
3. Do I feel at peace about it when I pray? I don't just mean a happy feeling. I mean, do I have a clear conscience and confidence that I am not trying to rationalize or justify my decision? Is there nagging doubt that keeps reoccurring?
4. Are the doors clearly open for me to proceed ahead? Are circumstances such that I feel confident that nothing is blocking the way?
5. Am I really praying for God's will to be done, or am I praying that no matter what happens I will proceed ahead? Remember we have an incredible ability to justify almost any decision we have.
6. Am I walking in obedience to Christ so that I can distinguish His voice from among the many voices that are calling me?

If our desires do not line up with the answers to the above questions we can be sure that we are not in God's will. If a few line up but others are questionable, we should proceed with caution. If all of them line up we can feel fairly confident that our desires are in accordance with God's perfect plan for us.