

Water Brooks

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*A Christian Living
in a Sin-Filled World*

CONTENT

Editorial

by Dn Franco Wong

3

Dealing with Direction and Decisions

by Pr Joshua Yong

5

Dealing with Sin and Worldliness

by Rev Ko Linggang

15

Editorial

by Dn Franco Wong

Decisions, options and choices. Christians are not free from these dilemmas, or some consider freedom to choose. While not all things are sinful, some are not edifying. “*All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.*” (1 Corinthians 10:23). The world is very attractive and entertaining and is engineered to satisfy the flesh. Yes,

born-again Christians are still in this mortal flesh and are inevitably subjected to the temptations of the world. While we are in the world, we are not of the world anymore. We are new creatures in Christ Jesus. “*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*” (2 Corinthians 5:17). We are now spiritual people with a

new Master. We have a new life with new desires, and we want to keep ourselves holy, for our God is holy. And we have the ability now to choose that which is pleasing in the sight of the Lord. Let us read this issue with a reflective attitude and let God's word guide us to true satisfaction and contentment.

Dealing with Direction and Decisions



by Pr Joshua Yong

“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”

- Psalm 119:105

Many often think of the will of God as something mysterious and elusive. Whether it concerns our studies, jobs or relationships, we approach these crossroads of life desiring to know God’s will. Hence, we often speak of how we want to “discover,”

“find,” or “seek” God’s will. Yet, when we search the Scriptures, we notice that the Bible does not emphasise the idea of “discovering” or “finding” the will of God. While there is nothing wrong in expressing our desire to discover God’s will, in the sense of wanting to know God’s will so that we may obey Him, we must be careful not to think that we

have to discover or find God's will as if God's will is unclear or very difficult to find. Too often, we focus so much on an aspect of God's will that God has not revealed to us, and we neglect the aspects which God has already revealed to us. Instead, we see how the Bible emphasises the need to do or obey the will of God. The Bible does not present the will of God as something vague or difficult to discern. Instead, the Bible tells us that we have a light and a guide to direct us in our paths.

The word "will" means "desire". When we seek to understand God's will, we are really seeking to understand God's "desires". Ephesians 5:17 tells us that we must "understand" the will of God. The word

"understand" tells us that while we do not have to "search" for God's will as if it is missing, we must consider and ponder upon God's will to fulfil God's desires. This means that we have to know, be conscious, and have a good grasp of God's will and desires so that we might obey them. To this end, we must understand the different aspects of God's will to accurately "read" the "clock" of God's will. The Reverend Timothy Tow summarised the different aspects of God's will in his book, *The Clock of the Sevenfold Will of God*. If we properly understand the different aspects of God's will, we will then be able to obey and fulfil the will of God.

Rev Tow summarised the different aspects of God's will in this manner:

The General:

- 1) Preceptive
- 2) Desiderative

The Specific:

- 3) Directive
- 4) Cooperative
- 5) Punitive & Chastitive

The Extraordinary:

- 6) Permissive

The Predetermined:

- 7) Decretive

In this article, we shall focus on the preceptive, directive and cooperative aspects of the will of God.

1. Direction Comes From God

When we seek for direction in life, we are really seeking to know the directive will of God in our lives. The directive will of God describes the aspect of God's will, which directs and shows us what to do or where to go.

We all need direction to live godly Christian lives. We need direction to know what to study and which school to go to; we need direction to know our calling with regard to our vocation; we need direction when we seek a life partner in marriage. If we do not have any sense of direction, but are wandering around, driven by our feelings and impulses, then we will be so lost and confused in life.

In Psalm 86:11, David said, “*I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name.*” When David said, “*teach me thy way, O LORD*”, David was praying and crying out unto God. “The LORD” is the covenant name of God, describing the covenant relationship which God has with His children. As a loving God, He will guide His people. He will not allow His children to wander blindly in this treacherous and seductive world. But God’s people must follow in God’s direction.

In the beginning portion of Psalm 86, David prayed and cried unto the Lord. Psalm 86:1-7 says, “*Bow down thine ear, O LORD, hear me: for I am poor and needy. Preserve my soul;*

for I am holy: O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee. Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto thee daily. Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee. Give ear, O LORD, unto my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications. In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me.”

When David sought the Lord, he came unto the Lord in humility. He described himself as “poor and needy”. He acknowledged his own need and cried unto the Lord. If we want to know the Lord’s directive will for us, we must humbly

pray and ask the Lord to guide us and teach us. God's people at times do not seek the Lord's directing because they think they are able to chart their own course and plan their own future.

When there are so many choices and decisions to make, it is easy to feel overwhelmed, but when we cry out unto the Lord and seek direction, we know that God will answer, and God is gracious and merciful to guide His children.

2. Direction Through Revelation

David not only prayed for the Lord to teach him God's way, but David also said, "I will walk in thy truth". God has given

us His truth, and in His truth, He has revealed His will. This is known as the preceptive will of God.

The word "preceptive" refers to God's will revealed to us in His Word. The precepts, laws and commandments God has given to His people, are all part of God's preceptive will. The psalmist describes the Word of God as a lamp and a light. When we consider God's preceptive will, we already know what God desires of us in many aspects of our lives. God's preceptive will tells us that our sanctification is the will of God (1 Thess 4:3). God's Word also reveals to us that it is the will of God for Christians to suffer for Christ's sake (1 Pet 3:17).

The Ten Commandments are part of God's preceptive will revealed to us. Through the Ten Commandments, we know that it is God's will for us to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy; we know that we must not tell lies or covet. We also know through God's Word that we must repent and return to the Lord when we fall into sin.

God's preceptive will, which is God's Word, has already revealed God's will regarding many aspects of our lives. When we seek God's direction for us, we must do so in light of what God's Word has already revealed to us. God's Word shines clearly and brightly to direct us.

Before the Scriptures were completed, God directed

His people through visions and dreams, through the prophets and angels, and by speaking directly to His people from heaven. For example, in Genesis 12, when God called Abram to leave the Ur of the Chaldees, God spoke directly to Abram. In Genesis 15:1 when God wanted Abram to prepare the animals in the cutting of the covenant, God spoke to Abram through a vision. When David was anointed as king in 1 Samuel 16:13, the Lord sent Samuel to reveal God's will.

Today, the Scriptures have already been completed, and since we have the complete Word of God in our hands, God no longer reveals His will through visions, dreams, and extra-biblical prophecies.

God directs and guides us today through His Word. God directs us either through the clear commands in Scripture or through the principles we can draw from Scripture.

When we face specific decisions or choices to make, how should we approach them? We must consider and evaluate these choices in light of the principles revealed in God's Word. This is God's directive will for us. We can consider whether something we want to do is, in the very first place, lawful. For example, when deciding whether to take up a particular job offer, we should consider the commands and principles given to us in God's Word. If the job requires us to lie, then we know it is

against the Word of God, as revealed in the Ten Commandments, and we cannot take up that job. If there is a decision we want to take that goes against certain commands or precepts revealed clearly in God's Word, we know immediately that this cannot be God's will for us. God will not contradict His own Word.

In seeking God's direction through His Word, we can also seek the counsel of godly men and women who are able to guide us through the counsel of God's Word. The Bible speaks of the importance of the multitude of counsellors (Prov 15:22). But it is important to seek wise and godly counsel. Wise and good counsel is given through God's Word.

3. Direction Through Providence

God also directs us today through His providence. This is where God works through the circumstances of life. But we must be careful always to interpret the circumstances we face in life in light of the written Word of God. God cannot lead us through a circumstance that contradicts His written Word. An example of a circumstance is what we often describe as “open doors” and “closed doors”. Not every open door is God’s will, but a closed door means God is directing us elsewhere. For example, when Paul suffered a shipwreck in Acts 27, he ended up on the island called Melita. God directed Paul providentially through

the storm he met at sea and caused him to land in the Island of Melita. There in Melita, Paul would minister to the islanders for three months.

It is one thing to know God’s directive will for us, but it is another thing to obey God’s directive will. We want to know God’s will, but we must also seek to obey God’s will. David not only asked the Lord to teach him God’s way, but he said he would “walk” in God’s truth. What should we do once we know God’s directive will for us? We must respond with willing obedience.

When we walk in God’s directive will, we will experience the peace of God. This is not a subjective emotive peace, but it is the

peace in knowing that God is pleased with us and that God is with us. When we obey God's will and when we walk in it, God is pleased and glorified, and He will bestow His blessings and help us. This submission and obedience to God, and the divine help from God is known as the "Cooperative Will of God."

The cooperative will of God is an aspect of God's will which speaks of our responsibility in responding to the will of God. Many often focus on the seeking or the discerning of God's will, but the real challenge for all of us is obedience to the will of God which has already been revealed. If God has already revealed His will and we do not respond in obedience then we will have to face God's

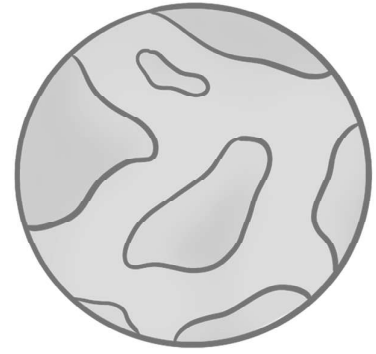
chastisement. But if we respond in obedience, then we are "cooperating" with God and are in God's cooperative will.

The cooperative will of God is taught in the account of Abraham servant who went to find a wife for Isaac. Genesis 24:27 records for us his testimony: "*And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I being in the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren.*"

The Bible says God led the servant as he was already "*in the way*". The phrase "*in the way*" does not mean to be an obstacle to the unfolding of God's will. We sometimes use the expression "*in the way*" to

describe the forming of a hindrance to someone or something. But here, this phrase “*in the way*” means to be “within” or “along” the way. Being in God’s way is to walk in the way that God wants us to walk. It is to be in obedience to God’s way.

As we walk “in God’s way,” we will then enjoy the blessing of His divine guidance and leading. The blessing of walking in God’s way is to experience God’s leading each step of the way. There is no happier place we can be than to be in the centre of God’s will.



Dealing with Sin and Worldliness

by Rev. Ko Lingkang

Introduction

While we are in the world, the world's system of sin and worldliness surrounds us. We cannot avoid it. Daily we are immersed in the world's education system, economy, politics, culture and ethos. If we are not careful, the way of the world will quickly influence us, and we ourselves become worldly and fall into sin.

To deal with this, the solution

cannot be that we be physically removed from the world – that is simply not possible. As believers, we are in the world but must seek to not be of the world. As Jesus prayed in John 17:15-16, *“I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world”*.

What we need is for God to protect us from falling into the wickedness of the world. For that, we must be sanctified by God's truth, for His Word is truth (John 17:17). That is likewise the exhortation in Romans 12:2: *"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God"*. Our minds can only be renewed and enlightened by the perfect Word of God. In the Bible, we have all the necessary wisdom to equip us to fight against the wiles of the devil.

In this article, we will seek to draw on various passages throughout Scripture to help us to know how best to deal with sin and worldliness.

What is Worldliness

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."
- 1 John 2:15-17

In order to know how to deal with a matter we must first understand it. 1 John 2:16 defines worldliness succinctly as *"all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life"*. It speaks of all the desires, motivations, and thinking of the world's system. It is one that is rooted in the sinful lusts of

men, seeking for things that their carnal flesh and covetous eyes desire, or that their egotistical heart boasts of. These are the methods that Satan employs to tempt men and cause them to turn away from the will of God towards the sin of the world.

Worldliness can manifest in a wide variety of ways. It could be in the form of blatant overt sins such as adultery and all manner of sexual sins that pander to the desires of the flesh; material gain through fraudulent means; or the vain pursuit of worldly status and acclaim. All of these indulgences are clearly sinful. But it could also be in subtle ways where we could be worldly without even realising it. For one, if we covet in our

hearts after sensual or sinful things, we have already broken the 10th commandment for we have entertained the desire for worldly things. When we are greedy or indolent, we are pandering to the fleshly wants of the comforts and ease of life. When we are motivated by men's praise, we are led by the pride of life and not the glory of God. There are indeed so many ways that our deceitful hearts can tend towards worldliness. Basically, any time we put the things of this world over and above God in our lives – whether it is our careers, our hobbies, our entertainments, even our family life – we are being worldly.

John's warning is clear – such love for the world is

not something that any believer should entertain. Those who continue in such a way, the love of the Father is not in him!

Worldliness is Enmity with God

“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”

-James 4:4

Understanding what worldliness is, the next thing we must understand is how dangerous it is in the sight of God, and how Scripture so soundly condemns it. For example, James 4:4 describes those who are worldly as adulterers and adulteresses. It is not referring to physical

adultery (though some who are worldly do commit such) but spiritual adultery. These are the ones who claim to be faithful to God but are in consort with the things of the world. James very directly warns that anyone who seeks to befriend the world is an enemy of God. That is indeed a very terrifying prospect. To have the Almighty God, the most powerful Being in the whole universe to be against us – that is not a position that anyone would want to be in!

It is therefore clear that worldliness is indeed a very serious sin in the eyes of God. It is something that we must very fastidiously guard against and protect our children from. Just as we would not want to be at enmity with God, surely, we would not want our

children to be in such a situation either. Especially if our children are younger and still under our jurisdiction, we must be careful to guide the worldview that they adopt, the values that they learn, and monitor the entertainments that they indulge in. There is a myriad of different ways that Satan would use the world to entrap our children, and as parents we must be vigilant and watchful. We must guide our children to be wise and discerning. We will not be able to protect them forever or isolate them from every worldly thing, but what we can do is equip them to know how to make wise choices for themselves. Recognise the seriousness of worldliness and sternly guard against it.

Loathe to be counted as an enemy of God!

Worldliness Must Be Mortified

“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:”

- Colossians 3:5-6

Knowing this, we should do all we can to ensure that we do not ever fall into the dangers of worldliness. The Biblical instruction then is to ‘mortify’ all parts of us that tend towards such sin. This word is translated from the Greek word ‘*nekroō*’, which means to put to death, to subdue, or to deprive of power. It is the

source of our English prefix ‘necro-’, related to death or corpses. The meaning here is clear – we must mortify the parts of us that are worldly – any deviant sexual sins, lustful and wicked desires, impurity, and covetousness. These must all be decisively gotten rid of, be put to the grave along with our old man that used to pursue after such things. This is not just a gentle nudging that coaxes us to try to be better, but a call for the firm execution of all worldliness so that the fleshly desires are subdued and no longer have any hold over us.

Practically, what this means is we must be very strict and disciplined with our heart and the things that we tend towards. We must very honestly evaluate our lives

and sternly cut out parts of our lives that we know would cause us to be worldly. If we realise that scrolling through social media or spending too much time on the Internet is inciting lust or covetousness in our hearts, then we must be willing to take decisive action against it. If we find that our jobs are consuming too much of our time and energy, causing us to neglect the means of grace, then a difficult choice must be made. If we must, change jobs, keep away from those friends, cancel that subscription, delete that app. Do whatever is necessary to reorientate your life away from worldliness and towards God. Surely, we would not want the wrath of God to come against us. What in your life do you need to mortify?

Godliness Not Worldliness

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.”

Titus 2:11-12

Now that we have put aside sin and worldliness, it must be replaced with something else – godliness and contentment. If we were previously indulging in activities and practices that led us astray but have now mortified them, then that void must be filled. Mortification is but one side of the coin; we must also pursue the positive virtue of godliness. That is what Titus 2:12 calls us to do – that as we have disavowed

all ungodliness and worldly lusts, our attention must now be focused on living a sober, righteous and godly life. That is what sanctification is. It is God working in our lives, turning us away from the sins of the world and helping us to grow in Christ. Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we continually shake off the hold that the world has over us and increase in our desire for the things of the Lord.

The world will continually urge us to want more – more money, more prestige, more pleasure. It feeds on our covetous desires and worldly lusts. Going down that path will breed ungodliness and cause us to fall into all manner of sin. However, when we put those aside and instead seek

more of that which is right – more piety, more humility, more sanctification that is what enables us to be godly. Simply put, it is a life devoted to God. The choice is set before us – will we seek the world, or will we seek after God? Will you recognise that it is in Christ alone that we can have all satisfaction and fulfilment in this life? Will you remember all that God has done for us in Christ, and love Him with all your heart, soul, mind and strength?

May we take heed to the lines of this familiar hymn:

*“Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will
grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and
grace.”*

The world will continue to clamour for our attention, filled with all its glitz and glamour. But beneath that attractive veneer is the calamitous depravity of godlessness. We must recognise worldliness for what it is – that it is sin and an abomination to God. We must actively turn away from it, to mortify it, and seek to cultivate godliness in all aspects of our lives. Only then can we be *“the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world”* (Phil 2:15). Let us all seek to hold forth the Word of light and shine brightly as beacons of Christ in this sin-darkened world.

The world and all the lust thereof will one day pass away, but our life in Christ

is eternal. We must be continually immersed in the Word of God that He can sanctify us with His truth, for “*Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word*” (Psalm 119:9). Let us wait upon the Lord and plead before His throne of grace, asking that He will grant us the strength and conviction to mortify the deeds of the flesh and pursue after a life of godliness and contentment in Him.